Heyer's Heroes

An Investigation into Georgette Heyer and Her Literary 'Mark' on the Regency Hero

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Abstract

Georgette Heyer, a writer most famous for her Regency romances, has not entered the portals of any literary canon, yet her writing has had an impact on the literary world in terms of her contribution to popular fiction. The body of Scholarship on Georgette Heyer is not large and this thesis seeks to contribute to and extend previous research through an analysis of her heroes, in particular, the Regency hero. This investigation into her heroes reveals that Heyer was influenced by the heroes of both literary and popular writers and, in turn, helped to create a new genre of romantic hero.

Georgette Heyer's two prototypes, 'Mark I: The brusque, savage sort with a foul temper' and 'Mark II: Suave, well-dressed, rich, and a famous whip', have their roots in literary tradition. A study of her novels reveals the heavy influence of pre-twentieth century writers, particularly Charlotte Brönte, Lord Byron, and Jane Austen, and the twentieth century works of Baroness Orczy.

In the Regency novels, Heyer's heroes are suave, sophisticated men: Corinthians, top-sawyers, leaders of fashion – the type of archetypal hero one might expect in popular historical romance fiction. Indeed, Heyer's novels are of fundamental importance in the creation and popularising of this archetype. Georgette Heyer also redefines the romantic genre by introducing the rake as a type of anti-hero and subverting the heroic norm with dandified and plain men also playing the heroic role. Through Georgette Heyer's contribution to the Regency romance, the Heyer hero has become a recognised and frequently replicated type.

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To my sister Kimberley, thank you for loving Georgette Heyer as much as I, for your words of wisdom, and for your zest (and sometimes patience) in listening to me discuss my topic.

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Preface

The association of Georgette Heyer and Kawerau is an unlikely one. Kawerau is a small New Zealand town situated near two extinct volcanoes – Mount Edgecumbe and Mount Tarawera. Its biggest landmark is the pulp and paper mill, which is also the town's main source of income. Georgette Heyer is a British historical fiction writer who has been dead since 1974. Yet, this famous romance novelist and Kawerau are connected, through me.

Georgette Heyer has been one of my favourite writers for many years now. It started when I was a teenager living in Whakatane and my mother and I had gone on a shopping trip to Kawerau. Wandering into a second-hand bookstore, Mum saw two Georgette Heyer books on a shelf. She told me how she had read Heyer as a teenager and said I would like her too. At this stage in my life, I was a romantically-minded teenage girl, who loved Mr Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) and wished the world still dressed in Regency clothes. We bought the two novels and I carried home and read *April Lady* (1957) and *Charity Girl* (1970). I was hooked. Thankfully the Whakatane Public Library was relatively well-stocked with Heyers and the next few years saw me voraciously reading and re-reading all the Georgette Heyer's I could get my hands on.

Kawerau was the start of my association with Georgette Heyer and since then, I have had many great adventures collecting her works. I have visited bookfairs and secondhand bookstores literally from one end of the country to the other. My quest for her novels has seen me crawling on all fours, delving into boxes in a race against other collectors. I have gone on holidays only to ring up home asking if someone can check my bookshelves to see if I am missing a particular title I may have just found. Always interesting, sometimes frustrating,

the search for Georgette Heyer novels has been a rewarding experience and I am greatly indebted to Georgette Heyer for the many happy hours of pleasurable, and sometimes laugh-out-loud, reading.

Born on the 16th August 1902, Georgette Heyer published her first novel, *The Black Moth* (1921), when she was only nineteen. Jane Aiken Hodge, author of her 1984 biography, *The Private World of Georgette Heyer*, describes the experience:

> It had begun as a serial story, told to amuse her brother Boris, who suffered from a form of haemophilia, and was never very strong. When he was thirteen and his sister seventeen, just after World War I, they went to Hastings for him to convalesce from a bout of illness and, she said, she made up a story to 'relieve my own boredom, and my brother's'. Their father heard some of this, thought well of it, and suggested that she prepare it for possible publication.[1]

I was in my mid-twenties before I read *The Black Moth* and was pleasantly surprised at how much I enjoyed it. Heyer puts her all youthful enthusiasm and imagination into the plot and the book demonstrates her potential as a writer and her ability to tell an entertaining story.

As her writing career continued, Heyer, herself, was aware of her growing popularity as a writer, particularly for her Regency romances. John Sutherland says of the Regency romance that it is a 'genre…distinguished by Georgette Heyer, crudified by Barbara Cartland, and mass marketed to this day by Mills and Boon.'[2] Sutherland also notes that 'Georgette Heyer and Barbara Cartland… during the 1940s', established 'themselves as Queens of the Regency reigning over two territories: one highland, one lowland.'[3] Despite Heyer's success and obvious superiority over her contemporaries, she was not accepted as a serious

[1] Jane Aiken Hodge, *The Private World of Georgette Heyer* (London: Arrow Books, 2006), p. 7.
[2] John Sutherland, *Bestsellers: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 88.
[3] Sutherland, p. 96.

writer, and this lack of literary respect towards popular romantic fiction found her occasionally deprecating the style she could write so well. In a letter to her publishers about her 1941 publication of *Friday's Child*, she wrote:

> Spread the glad tidings that it [*Friday's Child*] will not disappoint Miss Heyer's many admirers. Judging from the letters I've received from obviously feeble-minded persons who do so wish I could write another *These Old Shades*, it ought to sell like hot cakes. I think myself I ought to be shot for writing such nonsense, but it's unquestionably good escapist literature, and I think I should rather like it if I were sitting in an air-raid shelter, or recovering from flu. Its period detail is good; my husband says it's witty – and without going to these lengths, I will say that it is very good fun.[4]

Friday's Child is 'very good fun' and the fact that it can still be bought today, almost seventy years since it was first published, shows Heyer's enduring popularity. Rosemary Goring once wrote of Heyer, 'It's time she was resurrected from the genre cleansing that despatched the historical romance to the bottom of the literary pit'[5], and certainly her continuing reputation as a 'Queen' of the Regency romance invites a closer inspection of her works. This thesis seeks in part to do this by exploring the heroes, particularly the Regency heroes, in the novels of Georgette Heyer.

Romantic heroes are built up out of archetypes and Chapter One looks at the historical heroes and heroic types that influence Heyer, particularly the Byronic hero, Charlotte Brontë's iconic hero, Mr Rochester, and the male heroes from the pages of Jane Austen. Chapter Two explores how Heyer developed her two-type heroes, Mark I and Mark II, and examines the transformation her characters have undergone in conforming to these two types. Chapter Three analyses Heyer's subversion of the heroic types she helped to create, and how this

[4] Hodge, p. xii.

[5] Rosemary Goring, qtd in Westman, Karin E., 'A Story of Her Weaving: The Self-Authoring Heroines of Georgette Heyer's Regency Romance', in *Doubled Plots: Romance and History*, edited by Susan Strehle and Mary Panniccia Carden (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2003), p. 165.

links more to realism than a traditional romantic novel. Finally, in Chapter Four, there is an examination of her version of the reformed rake formula, which also suggests a modifying of the traditional romantic model. The conclusion summarises how Heyer has taken traditional heroic types and reformed them into her own unique types. For this reason, Georgette Heyer has helped to transform the genre of Regency romance and has given the world of romantic fiction the Heyer hero.

Chapter One:
Georgette Heyer and the Romantic Hero

Georgette Heyer, who published over fifty novels between 1921 and 1972, created for her readers a world of love and romance, dashing heroines, and gallant heroes. She was an innovative and original authoress, re-creating the Regency period with such vivid detail that, on her death, several newspapers described her as 'one of the great queens of historical fiction', 'the 20th century Jane Austen', and as a writer who 'gave her name to a recognizable genre of fiction.'[6]

Heyer's influence is undeniable. According to Deborah Lutz, 'The world of the regency romance is a very singular one; it even has its own language, primarily developed from Georgette Heyer's influential regencies.'[7] This is reinforced by Jennifer Kloester who writes, 'Georgette Heyer's novels are stylish constructions with exemplary syntax and faultless punctuation as well as a rhythm and cadence of language that has the power to carry the reader away into the world of the English Regency'.[8]

The popularity of the Regency romance revolves in part around the decadence of the period – a sparkling, opulent world created by the *bon ton* (or upper class), filled with dissipation and debauchery where lavishness reigned. Fortunes were won and lost in single sittings. French, Oriental, and Egyptian furnishings, sometimes combined, took pride of place in drawing rooms. Days consisted of Venetian breakfasts, horse rides in Richmond Park, Cotillion balls, and moonlight revels at Vauxhall Gardens. Life in the Regency world was either a great pleasure or, if you were unfortunate enough to be born outside the world of

[6] Rosemary Goring, qtd in Westman, p. 209.
[7] Deborah Lutz, *The Dangerous Lover: Gothic Villains, Byronism and the Nineteenth-Century Seduction Narrative* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2006), p. 18.
[8] Jennifer Kloester, *Georgette Heyer's Regency World* (London: Arrow Books, 2005), p. xv.

the ‘upper ten thousand’, even greater misery. It is the lives of the privileged, who are preoccupied with making a good marriage, choosing the right waistcoat, and gossiping about their acquaintances that are the subject of Heyer’s fiction. Embedded in this glittering Regency world recreated in Heyer’s novels are the characters themselves. Beautiful heroines, dressed in their best muslin gowns complete with the iconic empire waistline, pink silk stockings, and long white gloves, have graduated from the schoolroom as fresh-faced debutantes ready to embark on their first season. And then there is the hero.

The Regency hero is a man to be admired. He is handsome, wealthy, and adored. He has impeccably-tied cravats, sumptuous waistcoats, champagne-polished Hessian boots, and of course, those tight breeches. The twenty-first-century viewer has only to imagine Colin Firth in his role as Mr Darcy in the 1995 BBC production of *Pride and Prejudice* to capture the mental image. Naturally, the outward appearance of the Regency gentleman is not the only attraction. A Regency hero can horse ride across the roughest hunting terrains, drive his high perch phaeton ‘to an inch’, be adept with both the sword and duelling pistols, ‘strip to great advantage’ when boxing, and hold the world at bay with his greatest weapon – the quizzing glass. His world was an era of languor and wealth, and with England ever successful in the Napoleonic wars, there was nothing too taxing for the ‘well-breeched’ Regency male. His greatest problem was boredom, the result of a self-indulgent lifestyle, which led to a tired emptiness that was then either fed by ‘wine, women and song’ or buried in a country house with horses, dogs, and hunting.

Part of recreating the Regency period is creating heroes who move with ease in their environment and look the part. In her Regency novels, Georgette

Heyer not only produced convincing Regency men, she also separated her heroes into two prototypes which she described as, 'Mark I: The brusque, savage sort with a foul temper' and 'Mark II: Suave, well-dressed, rich, and a famous whip'.[9] Mark I is typically an older man, usually dark-haired, sometimes harsh-featured, often with a well-built frame, and always with a domineering manner. Mark II is the golden-haired pin-up boy of the Regency. Impeccably dressed, he is kind, confident, and generally ranges in age from the early twenties to early thirties. The Heyer hero in both his Mark I and Mark II guises has become a prominent addition to the twentieth century romantic hero for both continuing the clichéd romantic prototype and for the distinctive adaptations Heyer has made of his characteristics.

The male protagonist of popular historical romantic fiction of the latter twentieth century is predetermined to fit a prescribed criterion. Amongst an array of heroic attributes, a romantic hero must be handsome, rich, and strong – the type of man women dream of, and the type of man women use escapist literature to find. Georgette Heyer, who wrote what A. S. Byatt called 'good escape literature'[10], created out of her two prototypes, an assortment of heroes who fulfil most women's fantasies.

The clichéd hero of the twentieth-century romance novel comes in the form of Fabio, straight from the cover of a Mills & Boon book. His virile, manly form stands immovable on the deck of a ship; his frilled shirt is open, broad chest out. One hand grips the hilt of a sword and the other rests on the naked back of a beautiful, yet vulnerable, woman who is wrapped around his legs gazing

[9] Hodge, p. 49.
[10] A. S. Byatt, 'Georgette Heyer Is a Better Novelist Than You Think', in *Georgette Heyer: A Critical Retrospective*, edited by Mary Fahnestock-Thomas (Saraland, AL: PrinnyWorld Press, 2001), p. 278.

adoringly into his handsomely chiselled face. This hero is the protector. Everything for this woman is safe, except her virtue.

The Fabio-figure is not a hero from the pages of Georgette Heyer; the closest she has probably come to anything similar is the physical description of Sir Anthony Fanshawe the 'mammoth'[11] from *The Masqueraders* (1928), and though she may have called her historical romances 'froth'[12], she would be the first to repudiate any suggestion that her novels bear any resemblance to the mass-produced romances of Harlequin and Mills & Boon. In fact, Heyer published only once with Mills & Boon in 1923 with *The Transformation of Phillip Jettan*, which she later let Heinemann reprint as *Powder and Patch* in 1929, complete with a different ending. Yet, in regards to the Mills & Boon hero, what this often two-dimensional and sexualised version reveals is that the hero can undergo multiple transformations within the genre of popular romance fiction and still be recognisable.

The Fabio-figure in a Mills & Boon novel fulfils the criteria of the hero. Like any Georgette Heyer hero, he is dashing, brave, and worthy of the heroine's love. The key difference, apart from their writing styles, between these heroes is their writer's attitude to sex. To Heyer, sex 'is important, never all important. It is the marriage of two minds that matters most.'[13] Heyer may not write the bodice-rippers of Catherine Coulter, Victoria Holt, or Amanda Quick, popular among many readers of Regency romances, but, as Catherine Belsey says:

> The source of our knowledge is intertextual. Popular romance is clearly rooted in the nineteenth-century novel, with its recurring commitment to the project of disentangling true love from false.

[11] Georgette Heyer, *The Masqueraders* (London: Pan Books, 1985), p. 20.
[12] Hodge, p. 125.
[13] Hodge, p. 49.

> The structure of many of the formula romances is already to be found in *Pride and Prejudice* and *Jane Eyre*.[14]

Heroic archetypes are also found. From the suave and sophisticated to the raunchy and rugged, all romantic heroes can be traced in their origins to the archetypes that first inspired them. Just as a reader can compare archetypal traits in popular fiction with elements of a Heyer novel, the heroes of a Heyer novel are also identifiable in earlier fiction. The question to ask is who were Heyer's influences and how are they manifested in her heroes?

Georgette Heyer was a writer and a reader. She loved Jane Austen (her favourite) and William Shakespeare[15] (whom she could readily quote), and acknowledged a fascination with the Brontës. She was also influenced by the fiction of Baroness Orczy (particularly the Pimpernel's bored aristocratic exterior which hides a strong man), Sir Walter Scott, and Samuel Richardson.[16] Her reading material helped shape the defining attributes of her two heroic prototypes: Mark I is generally attributed to the influence of Charlotte Brontë and the Byronic hero, with Mark II reminiscent of Austen's heroes.

E. R. Glass and A. Mineo, who dedicate two paragraphs to the hero in their essay 'Georgette Heyer and the Uses of Regency', interestingly place her heroes into three categories named 'A', 'B', and 'C', which sees the Austen influence present in both her Mark I and II categories. 'A' is the 'Darcy – Rochester' type defined as 'proud, intolerant, aloof, sarcastic', which fits with the bad-tempered Mark I. 'B' is the 'Rochester – Darcy' type who is 'blunt, frank,

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[14] Catherine Belsey, 'Reading Love Stories', *Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 31.

[15] Harmony Raine, 'The Georgette Heyer Compendium', in *Georgette Heyer: A Critical Retrospective*, edited by Mary Fahnestock-Thomas (Saraland, AL: PrinnyWorld Press, 2001), p. 357.

[16] Karin E. Westman, 'A Story of Her Weaving: The Self-Authoring Heroines of Georgette Heyer's Regency Romance', in *Doubled Plots: Romance and History*, edited by Susan Strehle and Mary Panniccia Carden (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2003), p. 168.

humorous, reformed rake', certainly evident in both Mark I and II, and 'C' is 'Knightley – serious, calm, reliable, unobtrusive, paternal'.[17] Glass and Mineo do not elaborate on their reasoning behind calling 'A' and 'B' 'Darcy – Rochester' and 'Rochester – Darcy'. This would have been useful as the reversal of the pairing does little to change our imagined concept of these heroes as it is the list of attributes which determine each category, not the character names. Their coupling of Rochester and Darcy also strongly highlights an apparent misreading of Jane Austen and her most famous hero. Mr Darcy in his external form may appear to be 'proud, intolerant, aloof', but this is only at the start of the novel. As his character develops, Darcy emerges as a slightly reticent, yet kind and loving man who has, as Elizabeth Bennett comes to realise, 'no improper pride'[18] but that which is usual in gentlemen of his station.

Despite the correct recognition of the literary heroes and writers who have influenced Heyer, Glass and Mineo's placement of her heroes into three categories does not recognise and places restrictions on Heyer's development of Mark I and II. The writers suggest that 'A' becomes 'extinct' as Heyer moves predominantly onto 'B' and 'C'. For this reason, they put forward that she moves away from the 'swashbuckling adventure' (definitely not Mr Darcy) which characterises her early historical novels and experiments 'with a vein of elegant comedy' which see her heroes assume 'more Austenian features'.[19] However, to say that Heyer moved away from the 'A' prototype does not correspond to all her heroes in the later novels. For example, in the final Regency romance, *Lady of Quality* (1972), written not long before her death, Oliver Carleton is not a

[17] E. R. Glass and A. Mineo, "Georgette Heyer and the Uses of Regency", in *Georgette Heyer: A Critical Retrospective*, edited by Mary Fahnestock-Thomas (Saraland, AL: PrinnyWorld Press, 2001), p. 428.
[18] Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 1994), p. 270.
[19] Glass and Mineo, p. 429.

swashbuckling hero but is most definitely an 'A' under Glass and Mineo's description, with elements of 'B' present. Glass and Mineo finish by pointing out that 'we can trace the prototypes of Georgette Heyer's heroes from the Scarlet Pimpernel and Mr Rochester, to Knightley by way of Darcy.'[20] This statement is perhaps the most correct of their observations.

Baroness Orczy's influence on Georgette Heyer, which will be discussed in depth in Chapter Two, is most prevalent in Heyer's early Georgian novels when she was first writing and experimenting with styles. In regards to her Regency romances, it is Charlotte Brontë who perhaps made the biggest initial impact on her heroes. Georgette Heyer's son, Sir Richard Rougier, said his mother's 'heroes were modelled on Charlotte Brontë's Mr Rochester'[21] and Heyer herself expounded on the allure of this enduring hero in an unpublished essay titled 'Mr Rochester':

> It is an accepted fact that women form the bulk of the novel-reading public, and what woman with romantic leanings wants to read novels which have as their heroes the sort of men she meets every day of her mundane life? Charlotte [Brontë] knew, perhaps instinctively, how to create a hero who would appeal to women throughout the ages, and to her must all succeeding romantic novelists acknowledge their indebtedness. For Mr Rochester was the first, and the Nonpareil, of his type. He is the rugged and dominant male, who yet can be handled by quite an ordinary female: as it might be, *oneself*. He is rude, overbearing, and often a bounder; but these blemishes, however repulsive they may be in real life, can be made in the hands of a skilled novelist extremely attractive to many women. Charlotte Brontë, immensely skilled, knew just where to draw the line. She doesn't allow Mr Rochester's rudeness to take the form of unendearing vulgarity, any more that she permits his libertine propensities to show themselves, except in retrospect.[22]

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[20] Glass and Mineo, p. 429.
[21] Cassandra Jardine, "Georgette Heyer Made Me a Good Judge of Character", in *Georgette Heyer: A Critical Retrospective*, edited by Mary Fahnestock-Thomas (Saraland, AL: PrinnyWorld Press, 2001), p. 475.
[22] Hodge, pp. 105-106.

While it is obvious in an examination of her works that Rochester is one of the original sources of inspiration and a continuing one during her writing career, it is also clear that Heyer used Mr Rochester as her model for Mark I, not Mark II. The description that Rochester is 'rude, overbearing, and often a bounder' matches her Mark I description of the 'brusque, savage sort with a foul temper'. Heyer also reflects Brontë in that the 'less reputable' experiences of her heroes with 'libertine propensities' are only ever referred to 'in retrospect', never occurring in the present. With the Rochester-inspired Mark I, Heyer created a hero who would captivate women and sell books. The italicised '*oneself*' reveals that Heyer understood what women wanted in romantic fiction – through escapist literature they could be just as worthy of this masculine hero as Jane Eyre.

Georgette Heyer may not have enjoyed all Charlotte Brontë's books; she once wrote, '…and while I appreciate the rich melodrama of *Jane Eyre*, I cannot away with *The Professor*, or *Shirley*, and find *Villete* not quite my cup of tea…' [23], but she certainly appreciated the creation of Brontë's most famous hero. Her entertaining description of the physical appeal of Mr Rochester in her article further highlights the admiration she has for Charlotte Brontë and the iconic hero Brontë created:

> She had the genius to state that he was not a handsome man, thus lifting him out of the ordinary run of heroes. What, in fact, did this ugly hero look like? Had he a squint, or a harelip? Charlotte knew her job better than that! 'He had a dark face with stern features and a heavy brow.'[24] Promising we think, already a little thrilled. But what were his defects? We learn that he had a chest too broad for his height, and we find nothing to disgust us in this. Nor is it long before we read of his 'colourless, olive face, square massive brow, broad and jetty eyebrows, deep eyes, strong features, firm, grim

[23] Georgette Heyer, 'Books About the Brontës', in *Georgette Heyer: A Critical Retrospective*, edited by Mary Fahnestock-Thomas (Saraland, AL: PrinnyWorld Press, 2001), p. 49.

[24] Heyer is quoting Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 1994), p. 98.

> mouth – all energy, decision, will,'[25] and like Jane, we succumb to this splendid creature.[26]

The features of Mr Rochester are adapted by Heyer into many of her Mark I heroes. The Marquis of Rotherham from *Bath Tangle* (1955), Miles Calverleigh from *Black Sheep* (1966), and Oliver Carleton from *Lady of Quality* exemplify the physical influence of Mr Rochester.

Mark I and Mr Rochester both contain the elements of the Byronic hero, the leading hero of the Romantic period, named for Lord Byron and his poetry, but taken from more than one source of literature. Interestingly, Byron is a much-talked of figure in Georgette Heyer novels who, unlike Beau Brummel (an influential figure of his day and one of the characters in *Regency Buck* (1935)), never makes an appearance. It is clear from Mr Rochester that Byron influenced Brontë, and in turn, Brontë has influenced Heyer.

The Byronic hero is typically personified in Lord Byron's *The Corsair*, *Childe Harold*, *Lara*, *Manfred*, and *Cain* as 'a man greater than others in emotion, capability, and suffering.'[27] Peter L. Thorslev, Jr. whose book *Byronic Hero* examines 'the major hero types of the Romantic Movement', and in particular, 'the heroes which were to be important in the works of Byron'[28], defines the following characteristics of the Byronic hero:

> The Byronic Hero…is invariably courteous toward women, often loves music or poetry, has a strong sense of honor, and carries with him like the brand of Cain a deep sense of guilt. He is almost invariably sympathetic in spite of his "crimes," none of which involve unnecessary cruelty…he has been ensouled and humanized…[29]

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[25] Heyer quoting *Brontë*, pp. 152-153.
[26] Hodge, p. 106.
[27] David Perkins, ed., *English Romantic Writers*, second edition, (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1995), p. 849.
[28] Peter L. Thorslev, Jr., *Byronic Hero* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1962), p. 23.
[29] Thorslev, p. 8.

The clichéd Byronic figure is that of a wanderer, escaping his tragic past, who travels the world trying to find peace. *Canto III* of *Childe Harold* emphasises the isolation and exiled status of the Byronic hero: 'Where rose the mountains, there to him were friends; / Where rolled the ocean, thereon was his home…'.[30] Lord Byron's words also capture the isolation Mr Rochester experiences as a result of the betrayal he faced from both Bertha's family and his own. Pressured by his father to marry wealth, Bertha is chosen as a suitable bride, the history of her family's madness kept hidden until after the wedding. This event is crucial as the catalyst for Rochester's misery and the reason 'Mr Rochester's visits [to Thornfield] are rare'.[31] The following lines from *Childe Harold*, 'But in man's dwelling he became a thing / Restless and worn, and stern and wearisome'[32], signify what Thornfield has become for Mr Rochester before he meets Jane, as it is a constant reminder of his tragic past. Charlotte Brontë, however, gives her Byronic-influenced hero a happier ending than one of Lord Byron's heroes. Rochester tells Jane, 'After a youth and manhood passed half in unutterable misery and half in dreary solitude, I have found for the first time what I can truly love – I have found *you*.'[33] Even though it takes more than a year before Jane and Rochester marry, tragedy is eventually replaced by joy. Heyer plays on this theme in *Venetia* (1958) where Lord Damerel, modelled on a Byronic hero, plays the role of an exile escaping his past. Home has become a fleeting stop as he lives up to the infamy gained in his youth. Like Rochester, it takes the love of a virtuous woman to help Damerel escape his past.

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[30] Canto III, 13, 109-111, in David Perkins, ed. *English Romantic Writers*, second edition (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1995).
[31] Brontë, p. 90.
[32] Canto III, 15, 127-128, in Perkins.
[33] Brontë, p. 278.

Two Byronic types present in Georgette Heyer's novels, which she often parodies, are 'the Hero of Sensibility, and the Gothic Villain'.[34] The 'Hero of Sensibility', recognised, says Thorslev, in such novels as Samuel Richardson's *Sir Charles Grandison* (1753) (a favourite read amongst Heyer's heroines) and Henry MacKenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771), is 'distinguished not by daring exploits or superior intelligence, but quite simply by his capacity for feeling, mostly for the tender emotions – gentle and tearful love, nostalgia, and a pervasive melancholy.'[35] A famous 'Man of Feeling' from Mrs Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) is Valancourt:

> He first wins Emily's heart, as a matter of fact, because he can discuss her favourite poets and novelists, teach her new songs while he accompanies her on the lute, and share her enthusiasm for the rugged scenery of the Pyrenees. But Valancourt is at best a weak and passive hero. He is never around when Emily needs him most…[36]

The 'Man of Sensibility' may have fulfilled the heroic requirement of eighteenth century women, but even for them he was waning into parody. Heyer, through her literary influences, also saw the 'Hero of Sensibility' as a man to be mocked and ridiculed and certainly not one worthy of being the leading hero in her stories.

In *The Grand Sophy* (1950), Cecilia thinks she has discovered her 'Hero of Feeling' in the beautifully delicate Augustus Fawnhope who sighs 'verses to her left eyebrow'[37], only to realise that her 'gentle' poet lacks what the storybooks fail to mention. Fawnhope may not have the 'pervasive melancholy' of a true 'Man of Feeling', but, like Valancourt, he cannot fulfil Cecilia's needs, as Heyer humorously describes. Fawnhope is quite incapable of being depended on for practical purposes, such as procuring a chair or hackney when it rains, and is

[34] Thorslev, p. 21.
[35] Thorslev, pp. 35-39.
[36] Thorslev, p. 51.
[37] Georgette Heyer, *The Grand Sophy* (London: Pan Books, 1976), p. 159.

always being fobbed off by waiters 'with a table in a draught'.[38] When her younger sister is dangerously ill, Fawnhope impractically brings 'a poem he has written, on a sick child'.[39] Even his dialogue when Cecilia breaks off her engagement reveals Heyer's parodying wit:

> "Noble, noble girl!" Mr Fawnhope said, much moved. "I honour you for this frankness, and must ever deem myself fortunate to have been permitted to adore you. The experience has purified and strengthened me: you have inspired me with a poetic fervour for which the world may yet thank you, as I do! But marriage is not for such as I am. I must put aside the thought. I *do* put it aside!…[40]

In this over-dramatic speech, Augustus Fawnhope treats a notable jilting as soul-enriching, turning his hardship into inspiration for his writing. From Fawnhope, it is easy to understand why the 'Hero of Sensibility' became a parody. Romance readers do not want their hero to be gentle, weak, incredibly dull, or impractical. Hence, the villain of the Gothic novel became the hero. As Thorslev states, 'Men of Feeling were not only by nature weak and passive, they were also completely eclipsed in their world of the Gothic novel by a relatively new and far more powerful personality – the Gothic Villain.'[41]

The Gothic Villain is the last of the pre-Romantic forerunners of the Byronic hero, and, by modern interpretation, probably the most interesting. Eighteenth-century female readers must have gasped in horror at the conduct of the famous villains Schedoni, Montoni, or Ambrosio with their deeds of incest, rape, imprisonment, and murder, and revelled in these titillating tales of Gothic horror, which in reality foreshadows the popularity of the increasingly salacious romance novel of the twentieth century. Jane Austen famously took a satirical

[38] Heyer, *The Grand Sophy*, pp. 158-159.
[39] Heyer, *The Grand Sophy*, p. 233.
[40] Heyer, *The Grand Sophy*, p. 307.
[41] Thorslev, p. 52.

approach to the Gothic novel with *Northanger Abbey* (1817). The Gothic figure is a forerunner to the Byronic hero. Thorslev describes him 'of about middle age or somewhat younger. He has a tall, manly, stalwart physique, with dark hair and brows frequently set off by a pale and ascetic complexion.'[42] This is a description more reminiscent of Mr Rochester and the Mark I heroes, although Brontë and Heyer's heroes are perhaps not so bitter.

Although the Byronic hero archetypically feels battered by a cruel world, the romantic hero of a Regency romance suffers more from *ennui*, usually as a result of too much wealth and little occupation. However, there is a place for the Byronic hero in some semblance. Catherine Belsey reflects that, 'dark Byronic heroes with a secret are extraordinarily common in romantic fiction'[43] and Charlotte Brontë's Mr Rochester fits perfectly with this description. His guilty secret is his mad wife living in the attics of Thornfield Hall, and his sense of honour compels him to look after her despite the threats to his life and the potential sacrifice of his happiness with Jane. *Black Sheep*, one of Heyer's later Regency romances, plays on this persona of the Byronic hero. The heroine's first meeting with Miles Calverleigh invokes Mr Rochester in the Mark I guise:

> Abby was wholly taken aback…nothing she had been told had led her to expect to be confronted with a tall, loose-limbed man, considerably older than she was herself, with harsh features in a deeply lined face, a deplorably sallow skin, and not the slightest air of fashion. He was wearing a coat which fitted too easily across his very broad shoulders for modishness…there was a suggestion of devil-may-care about him, and those deeply carven lines of his lean countenance might well (she supposed) betray dissipation…she perceived very clearly why Fanny had allowed herself to be fascinated by him.[44]

[42] Thorslev, p. 53.
[43] Belsey, Catherine, 'Prologue: Writing about Desire', *Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 12.
[44] Georgette Heyer, *Black Sheep* (London: The Bodley Head, 1984), pp. 42-43.

This is the 'splendid creature' Heyer was captivated by in *Jane Eyre* and also a hint of Byron's *The Corsair*. Like many romantic heroes, he is older than the heroine and possesses a hint of mystery. He also displays the dual nature of being both cynical and kind:

> …he was neither handsome, nor elegant; his manners were careless; and his morals were non-existent…In repose his face was harsh, but the smile transposed it. His eyes lost their cold, rather cynical expression, warming to laughter, and holding, besides amusement, an indefinable look of understanding. He might mock, but not unkindly; and when he discomfited her his smiling eyes conveyed sympathy as well as amusement, and clearly invited her to share his amusement.[45]

As suggested by the title *Black Sheep*, Calverleigh is a hero with a past and Heyer uses her capacity for humour to minimise the dark 'secret' he carries. This is what separates romance fiction from Romantic fiction and the Romantic period's Byronic hero. Byron and Brontë are influences, but are taken, modified and recontextualised by Heyer as she writes her Regency romances.

From the more sinister situation Jane found herself in with the discovery of Rochester's first wife, and more in keeping with the tone of a romantic comedy, Heyer's Byronic heroic-type figure is not Mr Rochester trapped in his guilty past. Calverleigh's secret is that he ran off with Abby's sister-in-law Celia, for an uneventful night, before Celia was married to Abby's brother. Abby, unaware of this story and knowing that her family had 'a skeleton in the closet,' assumed 'it would prove to be no more than the skeleton of a mouse'. Calverleigh jokingly replies, 'You lied then! The skeleton of a black sheep if you wish, but *not* that of a mouse – even a black mouse!'[46] And here the mystery ends. Heyer's hero has the appearance of a Byronic hero, but not the disposition. Georgette Heyer's

[45] Heyer, *Black Sheep*, p. 77.
[46] Heyer, *Black Sheep*, p. 53.

deconstructing of melodrama and sensation marks her out as an heir of Austen rather than Brontë. There are mysteries and secrets, but particularly in her Regency novels, these often have prosaic explanations.

Opposite to Mark I, with his Byronic and Rochester attributes, is Mark II: 'Suave, well-dressed, rich, and a famous whip.' While Georgette Heyer may attribute her Mark I to Charlotte Brontë's brooding Mr Rochester, Mark II is reminiscent as a version of the heroes between the pages of a Jane Austen novel. Georgette Heyer, according to her critics, owes a 'debt to Jane Austen'[47] and Heyer herself 'once said that her style was a blend of Dr Johnson and Jane Austen'.[48] Austen's heroes and rakes have survived as key figures in literature because of the romantic allure attached to them. This is affirmed by Ashley Tauchert who mentions a 2003 BBC poll in which women voted Mr Darcy 'the most "desirable" fictional figure.'[49] When we imagine the perfect hero from the Regency period, we certainly bring to mind the image of Mr Darcy first as opposed to another literary figure such as Sir Walter Scott's heroic knight in *Ivanhoe*, published during the Regency in 1819, reflecting the more grandiose type of hero popular during that period. Tauchert reflects on the popularity of Jane Austen in the twenty-first century saying, 'We still seem to read Austen for pleasure, while we continue to read her peers and predecessors because they are on the syllabus.'[50]

It is impossible to read Georgette Heyer without thinking of Jane Austen. Austen wrote of the world she knew and Heyer recreated the Regency period in

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[47] Lisa Fletcher, 'Speech Acts and Costumes: Georgette Heyer', in *Historical Fiction: Heterosexuality and Performativity* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2008), p. 69.
[48] Hodge, p. 42.
[49] Ashley Tauchert, *Romancing Jane Austen: Narrative, Realism, and the Possibility of a Happy Ending* (Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 23-24.
[50] Tauchert, p. 21.

precise detail. According to Kay Mussell, 'Both Heyer and Austen use similar conventions and employ social satire to construct their plots'[51]; however, Austen's wit is more cutting and displays the foibles of society in startling clarity. As Mussell says, 'Set against Austen's satire, Heyer's humour has a slapstick quality instead of Austen's finely honed irony'.[52] The word 'slapstick' is probably too harsh. Heyer has aspects of the same humour with Austen in regards to her delightful array of characters and situations, but her wit is at its strongest in the dialogue between hero and heroine.

Heyer's biographer, Jane Aiken Hodge, explored in part Austen's influence on Heyer, both the positive and negative aspects. When discussing *Regency Buck*, she notes that 'this book shows her perhaps, if this is possible, too heavily influenced by Jane Austen, whose neat ironic style sits oddly with a melodramatic plot'.[53] Heyer's wit is similar to Austen and she even has her heroine reading from *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), but Austen's plots are free of abductions, and she would certainly never have one of her female heroines involved in a carriage race from London to Brighton. In *Bath Tangle*, Hodge says there is 'an Austenlike irony in its treatment of the linked problems of snobbery and money' and reflects that 'The toad-eating Lady Laleham turns out to have one of Georgette Heyer's best vulgarians for a mother'.[54] She is like a caricature of Mrs Bennett in her desperation to see her daughter well-married. A nobleman is her goal, and, as her mother Mrs Floore says, 'Mark my words, if a Duke with one foot in the grave, and cross-eyes, and no teeth, was to offer for that child, Sukey

[51] Kay Mussell, 'Fantasy and Reconciliation. Contemporary Formulas of Women's Romance Fiction', in *Georgette Heyer: A Critical Retrospective*, edited by Mary Fahnestock-Thomas (Saraland, AL: PrinnyWorld Press, 2001), p. 415.
[52] Mussell, p. 415.
[53] Hodge, p. 42.
[54] Hodge, p. 108.

would make her accept him!'[55] Lady Laleham's mother, Mrs Floore, is recognisable in Mrs Jennings from *Sense and Sensibility*; both women have an open-hearted personality and a lively interest in those around them. But they also lack elegance in conversation and appearance, which provides a further source of humour.

Another novel which explicitly shows that Heyer had been re-reading Jane Austen is *The Quiet Gentleman* (1951). Hodge notes:

> This book is full of Austen echoes, including the dreadful dowager who says she 'should have ridden very well, had I taken to it, for I should have had the benefit of my father's teaching'. Marianne Bolderwood owes her name to Marianne Dashwood, but some of her behaviour to a less attractive Jane Austen lady. Patiently playing spillikins with the children on a hint from their grandmother, she is Lucy Steele with a difference.[56]

From similarities among the female characters, it is only natural that Austen would also influence Georgette Heyer's heroes.

The Mark II heroes share similarities of appearance and nature with many of Austen's male characters. In each of Austen's novels, the hero is marked by his elegance, both in appearance and bearing, his integrity, and his faithfulness. He is a man of moral character who is truly worthy of the heroine's love. For example, in *Emma* (1815), Mr Knightley is Emma Woodhouse's ideal gentleman – he is the model to whom she compares all other males of her acquaintance. Knightley is suave, perfectly dressed for each situation, and wealthy, precisely like Heyer's description of the Mark II hero. Mr Beaumaris, a typical Mark II hero in Georgette Heyer's *Arabella* (1949) is similar in attributes to Mr Knightley, only much richer, and though the heroine, Arabella, lacks the wealth of Emma, she has the same independent and often headstrong spirit. Mr Beaumaris is certainly very

[55] Georgette Heyer, *Bath Tangle* (London: Pan Books, 1968), p. 87.
[56] Hodge, p. 89.

elegant, and a nonpareil for young men to use as their example of good breeding. But he also has integrity, as shown in the way he helps Arabella when her sense of injustice is invoked, not only because he loves her, but because he feels it too.

Mr Darcy often makes an appearance as the hero whose pride prevents him from recognising his love for the heroine, only to discover (amongst much witty repartee) that she is the perfect match. In this type of plot, it is usually in the Mark I guise that we see this hero. Another aspect of Mr Darcy also seen is in the hero coming to the rescue of the heroine. Just as Darcy discovers Lydia and Wickham and helps them to marry, thus saving Elizabeth and her family much embarrassment, Heyer often has her heroes fulfil the knight errant role; the Marquis of Alverstoke in *Frederica* (1965) becomes resigned to the fact he is called on to rescue Frederica and her family from countless problems due to Frederica's younger brothers' youthful and often mischievous experiments and indiscretions.

While Austen's heroes are men of character, the Austen villain or antagonist, takes on the role of the rake; the key characters being Willoughby, Frank Churchill, and Wickham. Austen does not have any of the sneering rakish type antagonists; her rakish villains lack moral character and, when pitted against the worthy hero, the heroine recognises the true gentleman, and one worthy of her love. For instance, at the end of *Emma*, Emma is musing over a conversation with Frank Churchill (the least villainous of Austen's charming rakes) after she has become engaged to Mr Knightley; Emma 'felt, that pleased as she had been to see Frank Churchill, and really regarding him as she did with friendship, she had never been more sensible of Mr Knightley's high superiority of character'.[57]

[57] Jane Austen, *Emma* (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1995), p. 371.

Frank Churchill bears similarities to the good natured Lord Sheringham (Sherry) from *Friday's Child* (1944). Both are handsome, outgoing young men who lack maturity. But whereas Frank Churchill is oblivious to the distress his duplicity has caused, Sherry learns to have a greater regard for others, particularly towards his wife, and the novel ends with him preparing to take on the responsibilities his birth has entailed him to.

Colonel Brandon from *Sense and Sensibility* is also a worthy suitor; however, in the case of this novel, it is Willoughby who proves to be the more captivating for Heyer. In a Heyer novel, she would not have her heroine end up with the 'worthy' Colonel Brandon. His character appears as the boring prude who would provide a secure and 'comfortable' future, but none of the excitement the heroine is wanting. It is as if Heyer has decided that Marianne Dashwood can have Willoughby because he is not such a bad rake after all. This becomes apparent in Heyer's novels *Venetia* and *Lady of Quality*, where the older, rakish male character plays the leading hero and the staid and steady suitor is relegated to the role of prosy bore. However, Heyer does not disapprove of Austen's Colonel Brandon entirely. Heyer's Colonel Brandons, like Edward Yardley from *Venetia* and Lord Beckenham from *Lady of Quality*, share the similarity of a tidy property with a good income, but inevitably they are characters of little understanding and humorous quirks which makes it easily apparent as to why the heroine is captivated by the 'rake'.

Heyer also presents the adventurer in the guise of Willoughby searching for his Miss Grey and her fifty thousand pounds, or Wickham talking of his injustices and seeking redress. In both *Black Sheep* and *Lady of Quality*, the heroines must help their niece and guest respectively, ward off the advances of

fortune hunters. These fortune hunters, like Willoughby and Wickham, are not looking to marry women they love, but rather to marry a fortune which will fund their lifestyles. The Austen influence is further recognisable, with the obnoxious Mr Thorpe and his sister from *Northanger Abbey* bearing striking similarity to the Broughty cousins from *Cotillion* (1953); living on the fringe of society, they aim to insinuate themselves into more elevated realms, but can never shake off their lack of elegance in both manner and activity.

A famous Austen character, Mr Collins, who would like to be the hero, is most prominent in the character Mr Edward Yardley from *Venetia*. Mr Yardley lives nearby Venetia's estate. Like Colonel Brandon, he is a 'worthy' man of good income with a handsome property, who is attracted to the lovely and vivacious Venetia and seeks to make her his wife. Edward does not have the pretentiousness of Mr Collins, who relies on the merits of Lady Catherine de Burgh, as he is already arrogantly assured in his own intrinsic worth; however, strong connections between Edward Yardley and Mr Collins are evident in the proposal scene between Edward and Venetia, which are almost parallel to the actions of Mr Collins and Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice* (1813):

> 'Edward, if I ever led you to suppose that I should marry you I am earnestly sorry for it, and I tell you now that I shall not!' she said earnestly.
> She saw with dismay that her words had made no impression on him. He was still smiling, in a way that she found peculiarly irritating, and he said, in one of his rather ponderous essays in playfulness: 'I fancy I must be growing a trifle *deaf*!'[58]

As Edward continues to press his case and begins to discuss Lord Dameral's influence over Venetia's brother Aubrey, Mr Collins is invoked once more:

[58] Georgette Heyer, *Venetia* (London: Pan Books, 1979), p. 247.

> His smile was one of conscious superiority. He said: 'I am afraid that it is a subject on which you must allow me to be a better judge than you, Venetia. We won't argue about it, however – indeed, I should be sorry to engage in any sort of discussion with you on a matter that is not only beyond the female comprehension, but which one could not wish to see *within* it!'

Here is a man filled with blind assumptions, whose overconfidence is patronising, but for the reader, very comical.

Alongside the Mark I and II heroes, Heyer's stock characters, such as the ridiculous Edward Yardley, were not only influenced by Austen and Brontë, but also by a wider literary tradition. Heyer was a well-read woman who poked fun at the Byronic Hero, and also at the tradition of courtly love and classical literature. This in turn contributes to a greater understanding of her heroes and secondary male characters.

Heyer's in-depth knowledge of Greek and Roman mythology is easily recognisable in her novels; her characters are often as well-read as the author telling their tale, and parodies of archetypal heroes of the courtly love and classical tradition are evident. The view from Corinne Saunders that 'classical literature tends to present mythic heroes and later writing to focus on heroes closer to reality'[59] certainly manifests itself in the novel. The hero is no longer a demigod enmeshed in tragic circumstances, a knight on his chivalric quest, or an adventurer headed to Hades and back. Love is the driving force in the Heyer novels and it is this difference which separates her novels from the courtly love tradition of the tragic hero and the dashing knight. Heyer's hero does not absent himself from the heroine on a quest to win her love; her hero and heroine

[59] Corinne Saunders, ed., *A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), p. 2.

overcome the various obstacles that archetypically thwart lovers together, as their relationship deepens into love.

Rich with literary and classical allusions, *Venetia* contains a parody of the courtly knight embarking on a quest to win his lady's hand with strong similarities to Austen's ironic tone. The knight comes in the form of Oswald Denny, a young man in the thralls of his first infatuation with the lovely, yet slightly older Venetia. Oswald views Venetia as 'a princess in fairyland whose hand could only be won by the bravest and noblest and most handsome of her many suitors'. He dreams of rescuing her 'from burning houses, runaway steeds, [and] brutal ravishers'.[60] Oswald sees in Lord Damerel (who Venetia loves and eventually marries) the evil 'ravisher' who must be eliminated and waits for the right moment to wield his 'sword' and destroy the obstruction to his love. This knight, however, falls from grace when he takes Venetia in his arms and, finding 'himself in the grip of a novel and exciting sensation'[61], begins inexpertly to cover her face in kisses. Lord Damerel is the one who rescues Venetia and, as Oswald later realises, 'He suddenly perceived that Damerel had played the part he had imagined for himself: it was the villain who had rescued the lady from the hero.'[62]

Classical tragic lovers are parodied in *Frederica*, embodied in the secondary characters Charis and Endymion, the names themselves indicative of early Greek mythology. Charis and Endymion act as foils to the Marquis of Alverstoke and Frederica Merrivale. They fall in love at their first meeting, whereas Alverstoke and Frederica experience the gradual effects of falling in love. At first sight, Endymion is 'the personification of all heroes'[63], yet the description

[60] Heyer, *Venetia*, p. 119.
[61] Heyer, *Venetia*, p. 126.
[62] Heyer, *Venetia*, p. 132.
[63] Georgette Heyer, *Frederica* (London: Pan Books, 1968), p. 122.

of Alverstoke is less complimentary. Frederica observes that 'his countenance, though not handsome' was 'distinguished' and 'his eyes were cold, and unpleasantly cynical. Even his smile had seemed to be contemptuous, curling his lips but leaving his eyes as hard as steel.'[64] This distinction between a hero of the courtly love tradition and the typical romantic hero common to her novels as portrayed in *Venetia* and *Frederica* with its clash between romance and realism draws attention to Heyer's scorn of exaggerated heroic prototypes as main characters; any male exuding these ideals is relegated to a minor character role and serve to add to the comedic value of the novel.

Alongside the ridicule of knights, courtly love, and classical tragic lovers, Shakespeare's influence on Heyer is not only evident in the many Shakespearean allusions she uses but also in her heroes. There is the witty repartee between hero and heroine similar to *Much Ado About Nothing* and a more antagonistic dialogue reminiscent of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Heyer uses the Mark I prototype predominantly for this blending of Benedick and Petruchio, with her heroes often being a mix of Benedick's wit and Petruchio's authoritarian disposition. Heyer's rakes especially fall into this category, though there is never the violence towards women, as is seen with Petruchio's heavy-handed treatment of Kate. Heyer's heroes are, after all, Regency gentlemen.

Heyer's similar use of disguise as a plot element also suggests she borrowed from Shakespeare; however, her heroes appear more au fait than Shakespeare's ones. Unlike Shakespearean cross-dressing plays, such as *Twelfth Night* or *As You Like It*, where the heroine keeps her gender secret from the hero until the end, Heyer's heroes are more adept at seeing through disguise. Just as the

[64] Heyer, *Frederica*, p. 50.

Duke of Avon recognises the disguised Léonie in *These Old Shades* (1926), Sir Richard Wyndham, a Mark II hero from *The Corinthian* (1940), recognises Penelope beneath her masculine guise at their first meeting and continues to aid her in this deception. With the help of his clothes and masterful knowledge of tying cravats, Wyndham helps Penelope escape from her cousins by posing as a travelling tutor with his student, all without the sexual innuendoes in true Heyer fashion. In the early-Georgian romance, *The Masqueraders*, Prudence cannot keep her femininity a secret from the sleepy-eyed Sir Anthony Fanshawe, unlike the rest of London society, though she believes in the success of her masquerade. In another theme and variation, which can be linked to *The Comedy of Errors*, the plot of deception and disguise is used in *False Colours* (1963) where identical twins pretend to be each other and one brother falls in love with the other's intended wife.

Another Shakespearean feature sees money-lending Jews become the 'bogeyman' for young gentlemen needing extra funds, complete with a threatening Shylockian character refusing to relinquish the bond, even after payment, to the redoubtable Sophy in *The Grand Sophy*. Heyer also has her share of comedic characters playing the rustic fool to their more noble counterparts. Her yokels are slow to action, appearing awe-struck in the company of the hero and heroine; Will Scaling in *Sylvester* is one such character. This indebtedness to Shakespeare also lends itself to the outlaw nobleman as a heroic figure, with Lord Ludovic from *The Talisman Ring* (1936) bearing some resemblance to Shakespeare's Orlando from *As You Like It*. In both stories, the heroes live by their wits in the forest, surrounded by loyal supporters (in Ludovic's case, a band of smugglers) until they are restored to their rightful positions, aided by the

woman they love. From reading Heyer's novels, it is obvious that just as Heyer's love of Austen is reciprocated in her characters and plot lines, so too is Shakespeare's.

Georgette Heyer's heroes embody the archetypal romantic hero with her own distinctive 'mark'. From William Shakespeare to Jane Austen, Homer to Charlotte Brontë, the influence of her literary predecessors is obvious to the well-read, but what Heyer, herself, brings to her heroes has established her as a defining romantic novelist of the twentieth century. As Barbara Bywaters says, 'Georgette Heyer merges the forces of high art and the appeal of popular fiction in her mastery of the elements of the romance formula'.[65] The heroes Heyer has inherited have been remoulded into iconic Regency heroes who have set the standard for the writers who have followed her. Mark I and Mark II are romantic heroes to sigh over, and are a good reason people return to her books again and again.

[65] Barbara Bywaters, 'Decentering the Romance: Jane Austen, Georgette Heyer, and Popular Romance Fiction', in *Georgette Heyer: A Critical Retrospective*, edited by Mary Fahnestock-Thomas (Saraland, AL: PrinnyWorld Press, 2001), p. 508.

Chapter Two:
The Regency Hero Transformed:
The Evolution of Mark I and II

As with the heroic models who inspired her, Heyer's heroes are not static, and her Mark I and II prototypes evolved throughout her writing career. As a teenager, Georgette Heyer began her writing career with an eye for detail and a strong sense of the dramatic. Displaying an obvious liking for the novels of Baroness Orczy, Heyer wrote daring tales of intrepid heroines, courageous heroes, and sinister villains. Her stories, set predominantly in eighteenth century England, also encompassed the upper-class environment of France. With regards to her heroes, Heyer had yet to form the intention that she would base the majority of her works around her two heroic prototypes: 'Mark I: The brusque, savage sort with a foul temper' and 'Mark II: Suave, well-dressed, rich, and a famous whip'[66]; and it was not until *Regency Buck*, written fourteen years into her career, that Heyer began writing in her most famous timeframe, focusing on the end of the Georgian period, circa 1812-1818, and revolutionising the world of romantic fiction with the subset genre: the Regency romance.

The amount of research Heyer put into her writing in recreating the Regency period is astonishing. Jane Aiken Hodge was allowed access to Georgette Heyer's private papers and library during her research for Heyer's biography and she describes the meticulous manner in which Heyer recorded her research. Heyer's library included journals especially created for quick reference which contained:

> Illustrations from magazines…lovingly clipped and filed, so that she could turn up pages of six different neckcloths or six different

[66] Hodge, p. 49.

> bonnets as required. Useful material from books was carefully traced or copied to provide pages of carriages, or furniture or uniforms. She had pictures of prominent people, from George IV in his coronation robes to unattributed Gainsborough's.[67]

Although Heyer did not cite where the clips came from, Hodge does note that Heyer regularly used the London Library and also began to collect books about the 'late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries' such as Pierce Egan's *Life in London* (1821), which focused on popular culture and the sporting world of early nineteenth-century England.[68] This intense level of research helped Heyer create heroes who are both memorable and true to their settings.

Her first novel, *The Black Moth* (1921), suggests that Heyer was writing after the style of Baroness Orczy, including characters who bear some similarity to both the foppish Sir Percy Blakeney and the manipulative, blackmailing Citizen Chauvelin from *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (1913). As A.S. Byatt says, 'The earliest [Heyer novels] seem to be written out of a simple desire to create more of Baroness Orczy's world of bright colour and danger'[69], and any read of Heyer's earliest historical romantic fiction will find the same extended character descriptions which Orczy adopts, the overuse of Georgian and French slang with excessive 'Lud's', 'La's', and 'Bah's', and heroic figures with foppish facades that conceal intelligent, courageous men after the manner of the Scarlet Pimpernel, a device Heyer uses in both *The Black Moth* and *Powder and Patch* (1929).

Set during the eighteenth century, *The Black Moth*, like many of her other early novels, contains an early prototype for both Mark I and Mark II, though Mark I is evoked in the early novels with more clarity than Mark II. Heyer's

[67] Hodge, pp. 37-38.
[68] Hodge, p. 38.
[69] Byatt, p. 271-272.

creation of the Duke of Andover, also known as 'Devil', sets up an early version of the rake, who is later to become a leading hero for Heyer in his Mark I guise. When first introduced to Devil Andover, we are given the following description: 'He wore no rouge on his face, the almost unnatural pallor of which seemed designedly enhanced by a patch set beneath his right eye.'[70] During the eighteenth century, when 'painting' your face was considered *de rigueur* by the upper classes of both England and France, Andover becomes intriguing for his non-conformance to societal customs. In this case, there is not the symbolic covering of the face as Andover does not attempt to hide his dissolute personality. As shown in the nickname 'Devil', Andover prides himself on his wickedness.

The description continues, 'Brows and lashes were black, the former slanting up at the corners, but his narrow, heavy-lidded eyes were green and strangely piercing.'[71] These distinctively slanted eyebrows, not seen again until the creation of Sylvester, who is more Mark II in personality than Mark I, in *Sylvester: or the Wicked Uncle* (1957), become part of the attributes of an early Mark I. In *Sylvester*, the heroine Phoebe remarks that Sylvester's eyebrows make 'him look just like a villain'[72] and on Andover, who has gained the nickname of 'Devil' because of his infamy, the eyebrows are part of the overall picture of villainy. For twentieth century writers, such as Marion Chesney and Catherine Coulter, who followed after Heyer, the 'heavy-lidded eyes' have become a recurring fixture of the Regency hero. These world-weary eyes suggest both cynicism and boredom at an over-excessive lifestyle, a point writers like to emphasise as a way of explaining why their hero is suddenly captivated by the heroine who provides a refreshing change to his indolent life.

[70] Georgette Heyer, *The Black Moth* (London, Pan Books, 1965), p. 9.
[71] Heyer, *Black Moth*, p. 9.
[72] Georgette Heyer, *Sylvester: or The Wicked Uncle* (London, Pan Books, 1970), p. 53.

Heyer's physical description of Andover concludes: 'The thin lips curled a little, sneering, as one dead-white hand travelled to and fro across the paper.'[73] The 'dead-white hand' links to the equally deathly face and the 'thin lips', archetypically associated with cruelty, complete the picture of a villain. In fact, the corpse-like portrayal of Andover seems more in keeping with a gothic villain, and suggests that Heyer, in her description, is purposefully creating a strong antithesis of her swashbuckling hero, Jack Carstares, who is a forerunner of Mark II, and whose very name inspires confidence, being typically English.

Like his outward appearance, Andover's personality also evokes apparent wickedness and inferred Mark I rakish propensities. As Andover tells his sister Lady Lavinia of his wish to marry Diana Beauleigh, the following conversation reveals the dishonourable intentions traditionally associated with a rake:

> 'She needs breaking in. It should be amusing to tame her.'
> 'Should it?' She looked curiously at him.
> 'Vastly. And I am persuaded it can be done. I will have her.'
> 'But what if she'll have none of you?'
> Suddenly the heavy lids were raised.
> 'She will have no choice.'
> Lady Lavinia shivered and sat up.
> 'La, Tracy! Will you have no sense of decency?' She cried. 'I suppose,' she sneered, 'you think to kidnap the girl?'
> 'Exactly,' he nodded.[74]

The idea that Andover wishes to 'break in' Diana and is adamant he 'will have her' carries the loaded message that he is motivated sexually in his actions. This would not be Heyer's intention; her novels do not directly include the seduction of virgins; in fact, Marghanita Laski remarked that if ever Heyer's 'heroic dandies

[73] Heyer, *Black Moth*, p. 9.
[74] Heyer, *Black Moth*, p. 70.

unbuttoned their daytime pantaloons, underneath would only be sewn-up rag dolls.'[75] Although Andover is clearly motivated by physical passion, he does not let this passion overrule his behaviour. When Andover has abducted Diana and taken her to his house, even though he is captivated by her lips and gives her one swift kiss (without the 'tightening of the groin' prominent in stereotypical romances), he plans to coerce Diana to his will by forcing her to stay the night alone in a locked bedroom. The public knowledge that she has spent a night in Andover's house will compel her to marry him. However, Heyer does hint at a not-so-impeccable past, and there is even the implication of rape embedded in the lines, as Andover spars with the brave heroine: 'He was enjoying her as he had rarely enjoyed a woman before. Others had sobbed and implored, railed and raved; he had never till now met one who returned him word for word, using his own weapons against him.'[76] Heyer draws attention to the idea that Diana is not the first woman he has seduced against her will through her use of the verbs 'sobbed', 'implored', 'railed' and 'raved', which clearly imply women have tried to escape from Andover's unwanted advances.

Although Andover is not the hero of *The Black Moth*, he is a forerunner of Mark I, and the total disregard of Diana's feelings can be seen as part of the Mark I savagery, where the male hero plays the leading figure in the relationship until he is tamed by the heroine. Heyer focuses on the idea that her heroes are not ruled by sexual desire, insisting that it takes a spirited heroine, using her wit as opposed to her looks, to captivate the spirited Mark I.

Five years after *The Black Moth* was published, Heyer chose to repackage

[75] Marghanita Laski, 'The Appeal of Georgette Heyer', in *Georgette Heyer: A Critical Retrospective*, edited by Mary Fahnestock-Thomas (Saraland, Al: PrinnyWorld Press, 2001), p. 285.
[76] Heyer, *Black Moth*, p. 249.

her characters from her first novel with the aptly named *These Old Shades*. Filled with characters her readers would recognise as being different in name only, 'Devil Andover' has fittingly, in a similar motif, become 'Satanas', the Duke of Avon, whose disposition is just as villainous as ever. Heyer's captivation with Andover, seen in her reworking of the characters from *The Black Moth*, is evident in his subsequent transformation from villain to hero. Charlotte Brontë's influence is also present as Heyer's newest hero is a man like Mr Rochester, complete with the brooding and scornful exterior, but who is also capable of redemption. As Hodge reflects, 'Avon is the first of her Rochester-type heroes' for his 'saturnine' propensities.[77] From being the villain of *The Black Moth*, the Rochester-inspired Mark I, is now the hero.

Both Andover and Avon have the same imperturbability, the same keen wit, but, as the villain of *The Black Moth*, Andover is relentlessly cruel in his actions. In *These Old Shades*, Avon tells Léonie 'I am no hero'[78], which is obvious in the way he has used her to take revenge on an old enemy, but he has fallen in love with this beautiful young girl and begins to regret his past. In explaining to Leonie why they should not be together, there are also allusions hearkening back to the character of Andover in *The Black Moth* in the way Andover and Avon both have the same history:

> 'My reputation is damaged beyond repair…I come of vicious stock, and I have brought no honour to the name I bear. Do you know what men call me? I earned that nickname, Child. I have even been proud of it. To no woman have I been faithful; behind me lies scandal upon sordid scandal…Infant, you are worthy of a better husband. I would give you a boy who might come to you with a clean heart, not one who was bred up in vice from his cradle.'[79]

[77] Hodge, p. 19.
[78] Georgette Heyer, *These Old Shades* (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1947), p. 371.
[79] Heyer, *These Old Shades*, pp. 371-372.

The use of 'child' which then changes to 'infant' suggests that Avon is distancing himself further away from Léonie with each revelation. There is no separating himself from Léonie based on age, but a highlighting of the difference between innocence and experience.

Even though this frank confession of Avon shows he is sorry for his past, it is also typical of romantic literature where the hero has acknowledged his wrongdoings and has now become worthy of the heroine's love. She is his reward for the recognition of his past from which he will now turn away. In *These Old Shades*, in true romantic fashion, Léonie is unfazed by Avon's revelations and only says, "I know – I have always known, and I still love you.'[80] Avon is redeemed by her love and is the first of Heyer's Mark I type characters to follow the rake reformed formula. Charlotte Brontë paved the way for Mr Rochester's redemption after his attempt at bigamy. In the case of *The Black Moth*, Andover does not go through the 'trial by fire' Rochester faces at the hands of his mad wife, yet Heyer provides his redemption in *These Old Shades* with the view that maybe 'Satanas' is not so very bad after all:

> His Grace looked deep into her eyes, and then went down on one knee and raised her hand to his lips.
> 'Little One,' he said, very low, 'since you will stoop to wed me, I pledge you my word that you shall not in the future have cause to regret it.'[81]

Here is a man willing to reform for the love of a woman. The gentleness Avon shows in this passage paves the way for future Mark I characters who may betray savageness and brusqueness in their manner, but are also tender with the heroine, becoming thereby more heroic in the eyes of the reader. As the reader is put in the

[80] Heyer, *These Old Shades*, p. 372.
[81] Heyer, *These Old Shades*, p. 372.

position of the heroine, they are left to ponder – if only a 'good man' would say this to them.

Jack Carstares, the hero of *The Black Moth*, and the rightful Earl of Wyncham, is opposite to Andover and an early version of Mark II. Carstares is a disgraced nobleman, living in England under the pseudonym Sir Anthony Ferndale, who masquerades as a highwayman. Like the Scarlet Pimpernel, he hides his true personality behind dandified clothes and foppish manners. When a lawyer comes to inform Carstares that his father has died, Heyer's description of the 'veritable apparition' that is Carstares reflects the often dandified figure of both Mark I and II:

> The lawyer found himself gazing at a slight, rather tall gentleman who swept him a profound bow, gracefully flourishing his smart three-cornered hat with one hand and delicately clasping cane and perfumed handkerchief with the other. [82]

The theatricality of Carstares in his disguised persona is reminiscent of Phillip Jettan in *The Transformation of Phillip Jettan*, (later renamed and republished as *Powder and Patch*), who learns to conceal his manliness behind a mincing French-influenced exterior to win the woman he loves. For Carstares, there is nothing 'manly' in holding a perfumed handkerchief, yet he must stay true to his character to maintain his deception. His clothing, however, bespeaks the fashion of the period:

> He was dressed in the height of Versailles fashion, with full-skirted coat of palest lilac laced with silver, small-clothes and stockings of white, and waistcoat of flowered satin. On his feet he wore shoes with high red heels and silver buckles, while a wig of the latest mode, marvellously powdered and curled and smacking greatly of Paris, adorned his shapely head. In the foaming lace of his cravat reposed a diamond pin, and on the slim hand, half covered by drooping laces, glowed and flashed a huge emerald.[83]

[82] Heyer, *Black Moth*, p. 14.
[83] Heyer, *Black Moth*, p. 14.

Heyer's Mark I and II heroes are usually dressed in the fashionable mode, so even if Carstares were not playing a part, he would still most likely adopt this clothing, although it would not be so ostentatious in its flashiness. There would still be heels and jewels, though they would be of more modest proportions.

The lavish descriptions of Carstares's clothing are part of Heyer's attempt to recreate the historical atmosphere of the period in which her novels are set, in this case, the Georgian era. During the eighteenth century, Paris was the capital of fashion with Versailles setting the trends, and it was usual for the English to look across the channel for their fashion mandates on everything from shoes to elaborate hats. What Heyer is also doing is allowing the reader to realise that the outward appearance is only a costume and conceals the intelligent man her hero is. Like Sir Percy's indolent persona, who draws the criticism of his wife and makes her incredulous to find out he is the Scarlet Pimpernel[84], it is hard to believe that 'Ferndale' is the same man who will draw a sword to rescue Diana. Yet Carstares, for all his theatricality in playing a part, always has an underlying masculine firmness about him, and this is something Heyer often brings to her heroes. Her Regency heroes may be leaders of fashion, acting the part of a dandy, with occasional foppish tendencies, but always there is something about their appearance which foreshadows that appearance can be deceiving, be it firmness about the mouth, decisive behaviour, or a physique which shows they are anything but weak.

In *The Black Moth,* Andover adopted a clothing trademark by only wearing black, often with silver embellishments, very similar to Baroness Orczy's *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, whose antagonist, M. Chauvelin, was always 'dressed in

[84] Baroness Orczy, *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (New York: Albert A. Knopf, 1999), p. 178.

immaculate black, with dark hair free from any powder.'[85] However, when Andover becomes Avon in *These Old Shades* the black has disappeared and a similar picture to Carstares's appearance is drawn:

> A long purple cloak, rose-lined, hung from his shoulders and was allowed to fall carelessly back from his dress, revealing a full-skirted coat of purple satin, heavily laced with gold; a waistcoat of flowered silk; faultless small clothes; and a lavish sprinkling of jewels on his cravat and breast. A three-cornered hat, point-edged, was set upon his powdered wig, and in his hand he carried a long beribboned cane.[86]

There is still a sense of the ostentatious surrounding this new 'Andover', with his appearance which would not look out of place in a royal court; however, it seems as if Heyer is stripping away Andover's sinister façade by adding colour to aid his transformation into a hero. Carstares and Avon both dressed in the Versailles tradition typifies Heyer's sense that her heroes must be fashionable men. It was seldom that she dressed either Mark I or Mark II in less than refined clothes; hence both Mark I and Mark II could equally be viewed as dandified figures.

What separates protagonist and antagonist in *The Black Moth* is that Carstares's manner is as equally refined as his clothing and it is this difference which places him more in the category of Mark II. When Andover first tries to abduct Diana, Carstares arrives on the scene in his highwayman guise. His politeness in battle irritates the duke and, though wounded, he manages to defeat Andover before fainting. With his mask removed, the handsome features of Carstares are expounded:

> Diana…studied the pale face lying against the dark cushions. She noted the firm, beautifully curved mouth, the aristocratic nose and delicately pencilled eyebrows with a little thrill. The duel had set her every nerve tingling; she was filled with admiration for her

[85] Orczy, p. 86.
[86] Heyer, *These Old Shades*, p. 7.

> preserver, and the sight of his sensitive, handsome countenance did nothing to dispel that admiration.[87]

In this description there is no hint of the sneering, deathly-white visage of Andover, or the 'sardonic'[88] grimness of Rochester; Carstares has become a predecessor of the Regency Mark II with his 'handsome face' and 'suave' manner. With his principled and steadfast character, he also steps away from the Byronic influence, for though Jack externally fits the role of Byronic exile and wanderer in his escape from his painful past, inwardly he is a gentleman of chivalric propensities. Carstares remains a man of honour in spite of everything because, although in the eyes of the world he is a cheat, in reality he sacrifices everything for his brother.

For her second Georgian romance, *Powder and Patch*, Heyer continues with the typical heroic figure she created in Carstares. As a Heyer hero, Jettan follows the vein of Mark II being both 'tall and handsome.'[89] Carstares may have had some slightness to his build, but Jettan is on the way to becoming the more masculine figure prominent in her Mark II characters. In the novel, Phillip Jettan loves Cleone who describes him as a 'raw country bumpkin'[90] and will not marry him because she wants a man with 'polish and frills and furbelows.'[91] In a fit of pique, Jettan, under the aegis of his uncle, moves to Paris with one year to become the 'mincing, powdered beau'[92] he has always despised; thus he is transformed. As in *These Old Shades*, Paris becomes the central focus as a place to gain refinement, knowledge of fashion, and gentlemanly conduct; in other words, dandified and foppish behaviour.

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[87] Heyer, *Black Moth*, p. 115.
[88] Brontë, p. 163.
[89] Georgette Heyer, *Powder and Patch* (London: Pan Books, 1950), p. 15.
[90] Heyer, *Powder and Patch*, p. 40.
[91] Heyer, *Powder and Patch*, p. 42.
[92] Heyer, *Powder and Patch*, p. 40.

With his transformation into a Versailles gentleman, Jettan also shows that Heyer is placing value on the dandified aspects of being a gentleman as opposed to the rugged, earthier male, who could be seen as being more appealing to a female readership. Heyer wants her heroes to be refined men dressed in the height of fashion who can still be masculine. This is particularly interesting when considering the different ending she gave to the 1929 Heinemann re-publication of *Powder and Patch*. Hodge comments, 'In the first version, he wins her and takes her to Paris, to become exquisites together. In the second, they will retire to Sussex and become a country gentleman and his wife.'[93] In her rewrite, Heyer removes the stigma of foppishness, but still has the view that Jettan is a better man for his acquired 'town polish'. The last line of the second version reads, '"Oh Cleone – I shall write a sonnet to your wonderful eyes!" he breathed.'[94] This is not the same man from the start of the novel who would rather eat dinner in 'buckskins and riding boots' than 'stiff satins and velvets'.[95] However, even though Jettan has become a mincing fop in practice, he still has the aura of masculinity about him and thus remains appealing. As Susanne Hagemann notes, 'A man's preoccupation with clothes…proves acceptable only if offset by physical prowess.'[96] Jettan transforms into a fop out of spite. It does not follow then, in a true romantic formula, that he would continue in this guise.

With the conclusion in Sussex as opposed to Paris, Heyer is asserting the superiority of England over France; France may lead the fashionable world, with Heyer's heroes adapting to Paris with ease, but England represents strength and

[93] Hodge, p. 18.
[94] Heyer, *Powder and Patch*, p. 160.
[95] Heyer, *Powder and Patch*, pp. 21-22.
[96] Susanne Hagemann, 'Gendering Places: Georgette Heyer's Cultural Topography' in *Georgette Heyer: A Critical Retrospective*, edited by Mary Fahnestock-Thomas (Saraland, Al: PrinnyWorld Press, 2001), pp. 487-488.

honour where chivalry reigns, and it is here that her heroes are their most masculine. Heyer is also following the formula that her heroes, who manipulate their appearance or personality to present a certain face to the world, have no need of their created persona once they have won the heroine's love.

After the popularity of *These Old Shades,* Heyer's next novel, *The Masqueraders* moves from the reformed Mark I character of Avon and introduces another Mark II type hero in Sir Anthony Fanshawe. Drawing on the lines of Phillip Jettan, Fanshawe, who is nicknamed 'the mountain', has a more typically 'heroic' build in his stature and physique 'with magnificent shoulders and a fine leg'[97]; he is still impeccably dressed in Heyer form, but without the 'exquisiteness' of Jettan. The creation of Fanshawe as the hero shows Heyer borrowing heavily from Baroness Orczy's Scarlet Pimpernel. In *The Scarlet Pimpernel,* Sir Percy Blakeney is described as:

> Tall above the average height, even for an Englishman, broad-shouldered and massively built, he would have been called unusually good-looking, but for a certain lazy expression in his deep-set blue eyes, and that perpetual inane laugh which seemed to disfigure his strong, clearly-cut mouth.[98]

This description is almost identical to Fanshawe who, with his 'lazy speech and sleepy eyes'[99], is the forerunner of Heyer's indolent Regency heroes who are more alert than they appear. Like Carstares, who hid his masculinity behind his foppish exterior, Fanshawe hides his astuteness and strength behind an indolent air, though with fewer theatrics than Sir Percy does in *The Scarlet Pimpernel.* Fanshawe's lethargic veneer gives the heroine, Prudence, the confidence that he does not see through her cross-dressing disguise. There are moments of panic for her, however, when she realises how much his appearance is contrived:

[97] Georgette Heyer, *The Masqueraders* (London: Pan Books, 1985), p. 21.
[98] Orczy, p. 47.
[99] Heyer, *Masqueraders,* p. 35.

'Fanshawe looked sleepily through his eyeglass: it was wonderful what an air of lazy hauteur the large gentleman could assume.'[100] Her over-confidence is her undoing, and, even though Prudence has fallen in love with Fanshawe, when she needs rescuing, she cannot quite believe who her rescuer is. This is very similar to Marguerite from *The Scarlet Pimpernel* who is astounded when she realises her husband is the Scarlet Pimpernel. [101]

What *The Masqueraders* does show is that Heyer is thinking about her heroes in terms of there being more than one type, and with *Devil's Cub* (1932), the division is evident. Vidal is the son of Avon from *These Old Shades* and, with his equally rakish propensities very similar to his father, he follows the Mark I trend. Putting aside her non-Georgian historical novels, the romantic historical novels now have three Mark I and II characters apiece. However, Mark I is seen more as a rake than a Mr Rochester-type.

For her next romantic novel, Heyer once again brings variation to her heroes by creating a mature Mark II hero of a similar age to Avon from *These Old Shades*. With his thirty-five years to Horatia's seventeen, Lord Rule in *The Convenient Marriage* (1934) spends the majority of the novel patiently waiting for his bride to fall in love with him. This age gap and the patience Rule displays with his new bride, place him in the category which E. R. Glass and A. Mineo describe as the 'paternal'[102] lover, using Mr Knightley from Jane Austen's *Emma* to describe this type of hero. Rule is similar to Knightley in the way he waits for Horatia to mature, as he stands aside, offering advice when needed with a gentle guiding hand. Their relationship differs from Avon and Léonie, and even Mr Rochester and Jane Eyre, as both Jane and Léonie are passionately in love with

[100] Heyer, *Masqueraders*, pp. 55-56.
[101] Orczy, p. 178.
[102] E. R. Glass and A. Mineo, p. 428.

their heroes from very early in the novel; in the case of *The Convenient Marriage*, Horatia learns her love by degrees.

Another difference between the Mark I and II hero is that, although Rule and Horatia are married for most of the book, Rule waits for his wife to be ready for the physical side of marriage, unlike a Mark I who would show passion from the start. It is not until the last lines of the novel that Heyer shows her Mark II hero staking his physical claim on his wife as Horatia asks if there is a place for her in Rule's heart:

> 'You are there,' he answered, and caught her up in his arms and kissed her, not gently at all, but ruthlessly, crushing all the breath out of her body.
> 'Oh!' gasped Horatia. 'Oh. I n-never knew you could k-kiss like that!'
> 'But I can, you see,' said his lordship. 'And – I am sorry if you do not like it, Horry – I am going to do it again.'
> 'But I do like it!' said Horatia. 'I l-like it very m-much!'[103]

This very sexualised text has Heyer showing that her Mark II hero can also display passion, despite his often gentle exterior.

Rule working as the patient lover most certainly becomes part of Mark II's attributes. In *Devil's Cub*, for instance, Vidal would never be as gentle. After Mary Challoner takes the place of her foolish sister and before Vidal realises that Mary is 'quality', he has the view that 'one wench is much like another'.[104] Mary has tricked Vidal into believing she is Sophia to save her sister from becoming Vidal's mistress. When her deception is discovered, after initial anger, 'The murderous look had left his face, but in his half-closed eyes was a gleam that alarmed her more. The man meant mischief. His glance stripped her naked. Her cheeks grew hotter, and she saw that an ugly smile had curled his thin lips.'[105]

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[103] Georgette Heyer, *The Convenient Marriage* (London: Pan Books, 1973), p. 236.
[104] Georgette Heyer, *Devil's Cub* (London: Pan Books, 1969), p. 93.
[105] Heyer, *Devil's Cub*, p. 91.

However, there is a sense of nobility in this Mark I man who says, 'You've no need to cry, my dear. I told you I don't ruin ladies of your quality.' [106] Vidal would not have hesitated to seduce Mary's sister, Sophia, who he saw as a woman of loose morals, and one very willing to become his mistress; but, despite his rakish attitude, he also has an embedded sense of chivalry which stops him from taking Mary's virtue when he realises she is nothing like her sister. This sense of chivalry is common to both Mark I and Mark II.

At this stage in Heyer's writing, the focus of her heroes is clearly separated into two distinct types. Mark I is a rake; Mark II is handsome, becoming progressively bigger in build and less of the swashbuckling hero so popular in her early novels. Her heroines similarly conform to two types, as Hodge writes:

> If Georgette Heyer had two kinds of heroes, Mark I and Mark II, this is equally true of her heroines. The Mark I heroine is a tall young woman with a great deal of character and somewhat mannish habits who tends to dominate the plots of the books she appears in; the Mark II one is a quiet girl, bullied by her family, partly because she cannot bear scenes.[107]

Further to Hodge's view, the Mark I heroine is usually older and independent, both in wealth and experience with men – she has an aura of confidence which lets her relate with equality in the Regency man's world; in contrast, the Mark II heroine is young, still of aristocratic birth, but not necessarily wealthy, and often naive as to the behaviour of men – thus she often needs Mark II to rescue her.

In a further evolution of Mark I and II, *Regency Buck* introduces a hero with the build of Mark II, but the demeanour of Mark I. This novel is Heyer's first step into the Regency world and the genre of romance that would give her the most fame. She leaves behind her the world of Paris, and now focuses on England

[106] Heyer, *Devil's Cub*, p. 107.
[107] Hodge, p. 79.

during the reign of the Prince Regent. Lord Worth, the hero of *Regency Buck*, is also a closer step to the traditional romantic Regency hero associated with Heyer. He is not a rake in the sense that Andover, Avon, and Vidal are, and, dressed in Regency clothes, exudes more masculinity than the Versailles men of her earlier Georgian novels dressed in their often effeminate garb:

> He was the epitome of a man of fashion. His beaver was set over black locks carefully brushed into a semblance of disorder; his cravat of starched muslin supported his chin in a series of beautiful folds; his driving-coat of drab cloth bore no less than fifteen capes, and a double row of silver buttons. Miss Taverner had to own him a very handsome creature, but found no difficulty in detesting the whole cast of his countenance. He had a look of self-consequence; his eyes, ironically surveying her from under weary lids, were the hardest she had ever seen, and betrayed no emotion but boredom. His nose was too straight for her taste. His mouth was very well-formed, firm but thin-lipped. She thought it sneered. [108]

In his appearance, Worth comes across as arrogant and proud, and indeed this is true of his personality. He is very much used to having his own way, and, for a man who is a leader of fashion, extremely wealthy, and used to moving amongst the highest circles of society, it is not hard to understand where his sense of superiority comes from. Worth's personality is one reason why Judith and he clash, as she is not used to a man domineering her. This is part of the atmosphere of Mark I and Worth certainly presents a 'brusque' manner towards Judith when she purposefully disobeys his 'orders' simply to antagonise him. Worth also displays the rakish inclinations of his Mark I predecessors when he kisses Judith to provoke her, thinking she is a country damsel, much like Lord Dameral does to Venetia when he kisses her in *Venetia*.

Lord Worth sets the standard for future Mark I Regency men. In terms of the traditional Mark I, Worth has the attributes and physical features which are

[108] Georgette Heyer, *Regency Buck* (Melbourne: Heinemann, 1952), p. 16.

seen in her later heroes. He has the dark hair, the heavy lidded eyes, the boredom, and even the sneer, very much in the manner of a Byronic hero; but as Deborah Lutz says, 'The regency romance manages to mock the false Byronic pose at the same time it affirms the attraction of "real" Byronic heroes'[109], and subverting the Byronic hero is what Heyer does. Worth, and subsequent Mark I heroes from Regency novels such as *Frederica*, *Black Sheep*, and *Venetia*, always have the look of the Byronic hero, but their behaviour is something more refined. Worth may be overbearing to Judith but he does it to keep her away from criticism and to teach her how to behave in 'polite society'. A comparison can be made with Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, with the way Rochester, who is 'brusque' and 'savage' in his temperament, can make himself agreeable when he wants to. When he holds his house party, part of the reason is to force Jane to interact with members of society. His behaviour to his guests is impeccable and he entertains them with his smiles, conversation, and entertainment. He is not always brooding and bullying.

After a throwback to the early Georgian period with *The Talisman Ring*, and her novels based around real events and people: *An Infamous Army* (1937), *Royal Escape* (1938), and *The Spanish Bride* (1940), Heyer returned to the Regency period with *The Corinthian* and created a Regency model for Mark II, with many similarities to her Regency Mark I that were seen in the appearance of Lord Worth. Here she has the balance between Mark I and II. They both share the same physicality, but their behaviour and attitude is different. In the world of the upper-class, a Mark I is accepted because he is rich, Mark II is accepted for his wealth and for his personality.

[109] Lutz, p. 19.

In *The Corinthian* (a term which 'described the well-dressed athlete'[110]), Sir Richard Wyndham is a handsome, rich young man and the first full character description of him demonstrates the continuation of Regency features both similar to Mark I and Mark II:

> He was a very notable Corinthian. From his Wind-swept hair (most difficult of all styles to achieve), to the toes of his gleaming Hessians, he might have posed as an advertisement for the Man of Fashion. His fine shoulders set off a coat of superfine cloth to perfection; his cravat, which had excited George's admiration, had been arranged by the hands of a master; his waistcoat was chosen with a nice eye; his biscuit-coloured pantaloons showed not one crease; and his Hessians with their jaunty gold tassels, had not only been made for him by Hoby, but were polished, George suspected, with a blacking mixed with champagne. A quizzing-glass on a black ribbon hung round his neck; a fob at his waist; and in one hand he carried a Sèvres snuff-box.[111]

This sketch, which one could imagine Heyer copying directly from a work of art, for its fine detail, or in her words, 'an advertisement for a Man of Fashion', becomes the model for both the well-dressed Mark I and II. Sir Richard Wyndham is a template; everything about his dress is perfect because Heyer wants her hero to stand out amongst his contemporaries. She replicates this throughout her writing career because the majority of her heroes are leaders of fashion, not followers. This is also part of their heroic charm in romantic fiction through their being superior to the average man. Heyer's insistence that her hero should never look ridiculous in his appearance can be compared to the 1676 Restoration comedy *The Man of Mode* by George Etherege in which the hero Doriment is contrasted against the comical Sir Fopling Flutter. A parallel comparison is found in *Sylvester,* where the hero Sylvester shows goods taste and restraint in his appearance. Sir Nugent Fotherby, in contrast, is a foolish fop whose ridiculous

[110] Kloester, p. 61.
[111] Georgette Heyer, *The Corinthian* (London: Arrow, 2000), p. 9.

sense of fashion, in wanting his dress and accessories to be bolder and brighter than any of his contemporaries, makes him the laughing stock.

Although, Sir Richard may look like a fashion-plate, Heyer also places emphasis on his temperament and strength:

> His air proclaimed his unutterable boredom, but no tailoring, no amount of studied nonchalance, could conceal the muscle in his thighs, or the strength of his shoulders. Above the starched points of his short collar, a weary, handsome face showed its owner's disillusionment. Heavy lids drooped over grey eyes which were intelligent enough, but only to observe the vanities of the world; the smile which just touched that resolute mouth seemed to mock the follies of Sir Richard's fellow men.[112]

This description, both in clothing and manner, bears striking resemblance to Lord Worth from *Regency Buck* with the 'world-weary eyes' and bored demeanour; although, in this case, instead of a sneer, there is a smile touching the lips, albeit mocking. This comparison between Worth and Wyndham shows that Heyer interchanges the physical features between her heroes. Sir Richard Wyndham, however, is not a Mark I hero.

Mark I is not the only hero who can show disdain at the world around him. Sir Richard may appear as a jaded man of the town in Mark I fashion, but he is much too good-natured in his manner. He is also matched with a young heroine who is only seventeen. Penelope is a runaway who, as Heyer put it, had 'plunged into terms of intimacy with him in the shortest possible time; and had, indeed, felt as though she had known him all her life.'[113] Penelope is escaping the planned marriage between her cousin and herself and is running away to her birthplace where she left her childhood sweetheart with the naïve view that he will still love her and they can be married. Wyndham, hopelessly drunk, agrees to help her and

[112] Heyer, *Corinthian*, p. 9.
[113] Heyer, *Corinthian*, p. 212.

ends up falling in love with her. It takes most of the novel for Penelope to realise she also loves Wyndham. As a Mark II hero caught amidst murder, thievery, and overturned stage coaches, Wyndham aids Penelope in escaping one scrape after another with urbanity. He is ever-courteous, thoughtful, and most certainly 'suave'. He is also the type of chivalric romantic hero on whom the heroine can be wholly dependent for all her needs.

Once again, Heyer is letting her heroes evolve and in this case, she has given Mark II a facelift – what Jane Aiken Hodge calls the 'deceptively elegant young man with iron beneath the silk'.[114] Even though this device had been used before with previous Mark II characters, such as Jack Carstares from *The Black Moth* and Lord Rule from *A Convenient Marriage*, Sir Richard Wyndham sets a new standard for the Regency hero as he exemplifies a leading heroic figure of the Regency period for his masculinity and the way he would stand out amongst his contemporaries as a 'top of the trees' Corinthian. There is nothing foppish about his appearance, as happened with Phillip Jettan, or even Carstares, with his slim build and effeminate hands; nor is there the bulkiness which surrounded the massive build of Sir Anthony Fanshawe. Sir Richard Wyndham is the iconic Regency hero of romantic literature: a blend of wealth, strength, good looks, and sophistication. He also shows that Heyer has interchangeable characteristics for both Mark I and Mark II; however, even though Mark I and II may sometimes look the same, there is still the difference in personality.

The attraction of a Mark I Rochester-type character was still strong for Heyer, and with *Faro's Daughter*, published in 1941, she reverted to the pre-nineteenth century Georgian era using a gaming hell (a gambling establishment

[114] Hodge, p. 49.

set up in a house 'notorious for drawing in young, inexperienced players and letting them win before turning the luck in favour of the bank')[115] as the backdrop for her hero and heroine. Her hero, Max Ravanscar is most certainly a Mark I after the manner of Lord Worth, but with even stronger hints of unbending sternness in his features:

> He was very tall, with a good pair of legs, encased in buckskins and topboots, fine broad shoulders under a coat of superfine cloth, and a lean, harsh-featured countenance with an uncompromising mouth and extremely hard grey eyes. His hair, which was black, and slightly curling, was cut into something perilously near a Bedford crop.[116]

Once again Heyer's hero is dressed in his distinctively fashionable clothing (in this case pre-nineteenth century) which highlights his masculinity and strength. The strong adjectives 'harsh' and 'hard' denote Mark I's underlying savagery regarding his temperament, and Ravanscar is unquestionably brusque in his behaviour towards Deb Grantham, being more uncivil than Worth ever was. He sees her as a manipulating 'harpy' who has seduced his young cousin and does not hesitate to demean her publicly for the role she performs in her impoverished aunt's less than illustrious occupation as the mistress of a gaming establishment. Part of Heyer's humour with the Mark I character is in seeing the spirited heroine taming the arrogance out of Mark I. Ravanscar 'was held to be a proud, disagreeable man; his manners were not conciliating [and] the ladies were much inclined to think him a rakish fellow.'[117] Ravanscar's aunt 'hoped that somebody one day would teach him a much-needed lesson'[118] and Deb is exactly the kind of woman to do this. She will not be bullied by Ravanscar and even has him

[115] Kloester, pp. 131-132.
[116] Georgette Heyer, *Faro's Daughter* (London, Pan Books, 1974), p. 5.
[117] Heyer, *Faro's Daughter*, p. 15.
[118] Heyer, *Faro's Daughter*, p. 15.

kidnapped so he will be unable to fulfil his part of a very expensive bet. As Hodge says, the 'sparks' do 'fly'[119] when a Mark I hero meets a Mark I heroine.

After characterising her most rude Mark I hero thus far in Ravanscar, Heyer then went on to publish a number of books with Mark II as the hero: *Friday's Child*, *The Reluctant Widow* (1946), *The Foundling* (1948) and *Arabella*. Heyer wrote of *Friday's Child*:

> It is a Regency society-comedy quite in my lightest vein. There is a certain young man who has appeared in several of my books – he was Cedric Brandon in *The Corinthian*, Viscount Winwood in *The Convenient Marriage* – and some others! And once I said idly that I would one day write a frivolous story about that young man. This is it. This time he is Viscount Sheringham (Sherry), the story begins with his runaway marriage to a very young lady whom he's known since childhood, and with whom he isn't the least in love. And the story is about all the circumstance which lead (a) to his partial reform and (b) to his falling in love with his wife (of course!).[120]

This very popular novel of Heyer's shows Mark II at his good-natured best, without the personality characteristics of Mark I.

Outwardly, when Sherry is first described, Heyer maintains her usual depiction of the well-dressed hero:

> He was taller than Wrotham, rather loose-limbed…He had dressed himself with obvious care. Nothing could be neater than the cravat he wore, nothing more rigorously starched than the high points of his shirt-collar. The long-tailed coat of blue cloth, made for him by no less than a personage than the great Stultz, sat without a crease across his shoulders; his breeches were of the fashionable pale yellow; and his top-boots were exquisitely polished.[121]

This description is typically accorded to both Mark I and II; however, when Isabella Milborne (the woman Sherry initially wants to marry) is comparing the

[119] Hodge, p. 79.
[120] Hodge, p. 58.
[121] Georgette Heyer, *Friday's Child* (London: Arrow Books, 1998), p. 4.

'handsome young blade'[122] Sherry to the man she loves, it becomes clear how Heyer is moving away from Mark I in appearance and manner:

> She stole a look at him under her eyelashes. No he was not as handsome as poor Wrotham, whose dark stormy beauty troubled her dreams a little. Wrotham was a romantic figure, particularly when his black locks were dishevelled through his clutching them in despair. The Viscount's fair curls were dishevelled too, but there was nothing romantic about this, since the disorder was the result of careful combing. [123]

Here, already, Heyer is making the distinction between the often Byronic-influenced Mark I and the persona of Mark II. Sherry's 'romantic' appearance is flawed due to the fact he has little to feel distressed about. His Byronic look is contrived. This is further enhanced by the hint at a brooding appearance which undermines itself on the youthful Sherry (he is one of Heyer's most youthful heroes) through looking more like a sulk:

> At the moment, he paced about the room, his countenance was marred by something rather like a scowl, but his features were good, and if he lacked Wrotham's romantic expression it was an undeniable fact that he could, when he liked, smile in a way that lent a good deal of sweetness to his wilful, obstinate mouth. He had deceptively angelic blue eyes, at odd variance with the indefinable air of rakishness that sat upon his person.[124]

It is interesting in his overall description that Heyer is purposely contrasting Sherry's blue-eyed fairness against the stereotypical Byronic hero, showing that her Mark II hero has again evolved. The personification of Rochester is becoming less apparent and Heyer is moving more onto the Austen heroic types. In fact, Sherry possesses the youthfulness and even some of the impetuous qualities which characterises Frank Churchill (Mr Knightley's rival) from Jane Austen's *Emma* in the way they both selfishly pursue their own agendas to the injury of the women they love (Jane Fairfax is belittled by Frank's flirtation with Emma, and

[122] Heyer, *Friday's Child*, p. 3.
[123] Heyer, *Friday's Child*, p. 4.
[124] Heyer, *Friday's Child*, p. 4.

Kitty must endure her husband focusing on his friends more than her), and while Sherry would like to be thought of as a Mark I, his boyish charm is unable to be suppressed. Sherry is also something of a departure in that he is not of startling wit and intelligence. Most of the previous heroes are clever in a way he is not – partly due to his youth. In this sense, Sherry becomes a forerunner to the mild Freddy in *Cotillion* (1953).

If Sherry is one of Heyer's most good-natured Mark II heroes, then the Marquis of Rotherham, who is the hero of *Bath Tangle*, is the polar opposite. In this novel, Mark I emerges onto the Regency scene in his most startling and truest form to Heyer's model, and, as Hodge notes, 'Rotherham is even more of a Rochester figure than Ravanscar.'[125] On first examining Rotherham, he is dressed for the reading of a will but there is an incongruity in his appearance: 'His black coat, which he wore buttoned high across his chest, was at odd variance with a neckcloth tied in a sporting fashion peculiarly his own.'[126] The fact that Rotherham has his own style of tying a neckcloth suggests that, like many of Heyer's heroes, he sets his own trends. His sporting attire also shows that 'his demeanour lacked the solemnity which characterised the elder members of the party'[127] thus making him interesting for his lack of conformance to societal customs of mourning dress. This is not surprising considering his personality:

> He had few graces, his manners being blunt to a fault, made as many enemies as friends, and, had he not been endowed with birth, rank, and fortune, would possibly have been ostracized from polite circles. But these magical attributes were his, and they acted like a talisman upon his world. His Belcher neckties and his unconventional manners might be deplored but must be accepted: he was Rotherham. [128]

[125] Hodge, pp. 107-108.
[126] Heyer, *Bath Tangle*, pp. 14-15.
[127] Heyer, *Bath Tangle*, p. 15.
[128] Heyer, *Bath Tangle*, p. 15.

Wealth makes many men acceptable, and even in *Jane Eyre* is the reason why Rochester become acceptable to Blanche Ingram's family, although Blanche and her mother are quick to show 'coldness' when they are told Rochester's fortune is 'not a third of what was supposed'.[129]

Rotherham's physicality can also be compared to Rochester. Rochester had 'a good figure in the athletic sense of the term' but was 'broad chested' and was neither tall nor graceful'.[130] Rotherham in his comparison has the same traits:

> From his appearance, he might have been almost any age, and was, in fact, in the late thirties. Of medium height only, he was very powerfully built, with big shoulders, a deep chest, and thighs by far too muscular to appear to advantage in the prevailing fashion of skin-tight pantaloons. He was seldom seen in such attire, but generally wore top-boots and breeches. His coats were well-cut, but made so that he could shrug himself into them without assistance; and he wore no other jewellery than his heavy gold signet-ring.[131]

The comparison is further related to Rotherham's physical features:

> He was not a handsome man, but his countenance was a striking one, his eyes, which were of a curiously light grey, having a great deal of hard brilliance, and being set under straight brows which almost met. His hair was as black as a crow's wing, his complexion swarthy; and the lines of his face were harsh, the brow a little craggy, the chin deeply cleft, and the masterful nose jutting between lean cheeks.[132]

Comparing Heyer's description of Rotherham against hers of Rochester (quoted in Chapter One), it is clear that with Rotherham, Heyer has built upon the romantic figure that Rochester embodies by taking Rochester's sexual energy, his build, and his disposition to create an iconic Mark I Regency hero.

As a Mark I hero, Rotherham sets the ultimate standard in aligning with Heyer's description – 'the brusque, savage sort with a foul temper'. As Serena's

[129] Brontë, p. 224.
[130] Brontë, p. 104.
[131] Heyer, *Bath Tangle*, p. 15.
[132] Heyer, *Bath Tangle*, p. 15.

young mother-in-law remarks, he is 'one so arrogant, his temper harsh, his disposition tyrannical, his manners abrupt to the point of incivility.'[133] Rotherham and Serena are also the most argumentative of Heyer's couples. Having been previously engaged, several years later they are each repressing their love for each other by becoming engaged to other parties. But in true romantic fashion the right man ends up with the right woman.

From a wish to entertain her sick brother, Heyer introduced her readers to male characters who evolved from both villain and hero into recognisable heroic types, and it is hard to read a modern Regency romance without recognising, in some part, Heyer's Mark I and II prototypes. The key characteristics of this transformation show that as Mark I makes the transition from villain to hero, Mark II becomes notable for his increasing civility. Mark II also becomes more conventionally handsome and less Byronic. The key similarity, and perhaps one of the most important attributes of a Regency hero, is that they are all wealthy. Ultimately, the transformation of Mark I and II shows Heyer refining her craft and creating male leads that have become influential in the genre of the Regency romance.

[133] Heyer, *Bath Tangle*, p. 118.

Chapter Three:
Mark II Redefined:
The Unrealistic Hero Takes a Back Seat

The evolution of Mark I and II shows Georgette Heyer adapting romantic archetypes and crafting them into her own prototypes. Once established, these prototypes then signify a turning point for Heyer as she begins to redevelop her heroes, in particular Mark II, into ones who replicate realism rather than romantic ideals.

The premise for Mark II: 'Suave, well-dressed, rich, and a famous whip'[134] is a promising heroic description for the romantically-minded reader contemplating a Georgette Heyer Regency romance. Heyer's own defined attributes of her hero carry with them the allure of a man who only needs to find love to be complete; by living out this part of the recipe for a good romantic novel, this wealthy hero becomes irresistible.

In Heyer's early Georgian novels and her Regency texts, such as *The Corinthian* and *Friday's Child*, Mark II is portrayed as a daring, trustworthy, and entirely dependable man – his handsome face and figure familiar in popular romance as the leaning post for the weaker heroine. A further look at Heyer's novels featuring Mark II illustrates that as her career progresses, she also begins to subvert the popular heroic model. Her new breed of heroes still falls under the Mark II umbrella, but are recognisably distinctive for the way they become a type of antithesis for the romantic model.

The late forties saw Heyer beginning to find ways of expressing romance in a less mainstream way. She began experimenting with what she called 'the

[134] Hodge, p. 49.

Pseudo-Heyer Hero'[135], a hero who is popular for his lack of heroic qualities. Heyer's previous novels certainly have characters as foils to the main hero to highlight the impressiveness of the hero, but in the late forties Heyer changes the hero to create a realistic version that is more closely aligned with men of real life; thus, the foil became the leading man. Instead of physically large, confident men at ease in their high-society world, the unheroic hero may be slightly built, short, timid, and even, in a deliberate break from the typical romance narrative, face his life with a pragmatic outlook on love and women. As Hodge says of this change in direction of writing style, 'Georgette Heyer is beginning to enjoy turning upside down the romantic clichés she herself had helped to make popular.'[136] As Heyer challenges these romantic conventions, she creates a Mark II hero who becomes endearing for his lack of heroism. *The Foundling* (1948), *Cotillion* (1953), and *A Civil Contract* (1961) stand out amongst Heyer's novels as featuring Mark II heroes with memorable male leads who subvert romantic norms.

The Foundling

Heyer's first major variation of Mark II presents itself in *The Foundling*. In this light-hearted novel, Gilly, the Duke of Sale, may be second only to royalty in rank, but in reality he is a young man bullied by his own staff and uncle, and is 'cosseted and protected against every wind that blew.'[137] 'His manner', Heyer writes, 'without being precisely shy, was quiet to the point of self-effacement.'[138] This description points to the way in which Heyer is moving her hero from the typically suave and confident Mark II into one who has yet to prove his mettle.

[135] Hodge, 91.
[136] Hodge, p. 76.
[137] Georgette Heyer, *The Foundling* (London: Pan Books, 1963), p. 7.
[138] Heyer, *Foundling*, p. 6.

Gilly as a hero has nothing of the 'Corinthian' Sir Richard Wyndham portrayed in *The Corinthian* and also lacks Sherry's carefree attitude from *Friday's Child*. In fact, when Heyer gives the physical description of Gilly strolling through his extensive grounds, the difference between Gilly and his Mark II predecessors is visually apparent in its startling digression from the normally elaborate heroic description Heyer's readers are used to. She begins, 'In his person as much as his dress, which besides being of great simplicity included a shot-belt (an article of attire not at all in favour with gentlemen aspiring to elegance) he scarcely accorded with his stately setting.' [139] Immediately Heyer is setting a scene where her ducal hero is at variance with his surroundings. The nondescript clothing is then matched by the non-heroic physicality of his appearance: 'He was slightly built, and of rather less than medium height. He had light brown hair, which waved naturally above a countenance which was pleasing without being in any way remarkable.'[140] This is an ordinary man's appearance more in keeping with the everyday male than the hero of a romance novel. As Heyer finishes her description, the non-heroic tableau is complete:

> The features were delicate, the colouring rather pale, and the eyes, although expressive, and of a fine grey, not sufficiently arresting to catch the attention. He carried himself well, but without any air of consequence, so that in a crowd it would have been easier to have passed him over than to have distinguished him.[141]

Never had a Heyer hero appeared so nondescript as Gilly has in this extended description. Heyer's readership would be familiar with her technique of giving a detailed description of the hero's appearance early in the novel, and until this novel, the Mark II hero was one who turned heads in a crowd for his popularity, not one who was easily forgettable. In some ways a description like this has

[139] Heyer, *Foundling*, p. 6.
[140] Heyer, *Foundling*, p. 6.
[141] Heyer, *Foundling*, p. 6.

something in common with the opening of Austen's *Northanger Abbey* where the opening line, 'No one who had ever seen Catherine Morland in her infancy, would have supposed her born to be an heroine'[142] is followed by a descriptive account of how unheroic Catherine is. Just as Catherine is depicted in non-heroic terms and yet is still very clearly the heroine, so too Heyer is subverting convention with Gilly.

Heyer has not altogether strayed from the stock elements associated with her heroes; with Gilly's description, there are of course, the 'expressive grey eyes' so popular with both Heyer's heroes and heroines in many of her novels, and this is not the first time Heyer has used a slightly built hero (Jack Carstares in *The Black Moth* also had a slim build with delicate features); but what is missing in Gilly is the style, confidence, and flair of Mark II. This new type of Mark II is not handsome, only 'pleasing'. His face is pale, he is short, and his clothes lack modishness, which is a far cry from previous Mark II heroes who could be considered nonpareils and leaders of fashion. Gilly even lacks the air of being able to wear the more dandified clothes often associated with Mark II. The question then becomes, why has Heyer taken this turn away from her traditional Mark II heroic figure and created one who is unremarkable?

Georgette Heyer knew the formula for selling books and, by the 1940s, her writing career was undeniable in its success. With over thirty books published, Heyer was leading the way as an expert in the realm of the Regency romance. Yet, with *The Foundling*, it seems Hodge is right in saying that Heyer was 'turning upside down the romantic clichés.' Gilly is not some country bumpkin or a city clerk, he is a duke; and yet he does not seem like a duke in any facet of his

[142] Jane Austen, *Northanger Abbey* (Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 1995), p. 3.

bearing. In fact, as Heyer writes in *The Foundling*, 'tourists to whom he had occasionally been pointed out generally found it impossible to believe that such an unassuming figure could really be the owner of so much wealth and magnificence.'[143] And this ordinary man is to be the hero.

Georgette Heyer can be seen as being rather daring in introducing a hero to her readers who is so far removed from the clichéd romantic hero one has come to expect from a romance novel. Traditional romances have strong male leads who clearly surpass the average male and who can most certainly be classified as 'suave, handsome, and rich'. As a character, Gilly himself is aware of his limitations as a figure in society as he struggles with his position. He would gladly relinquish his role if he could. He believes, 'It was undoubtedly better to be the seventh Duke of Sale than a sweep's apprentice, but he was much inclined to think that to have been plain Mr Dash, of Nowhere in Particular, would have been preferable to either of these callings.'[144] In 'turning upside down the romantic clichés', Heyer has taken 'plain Mr Dash' as her new Mark II hero and elevated him to the position of a duke. Yes he is 'rich', but one cannot call him 'suave…handsome, and a famous whip.' Kindness has replaced suaveness, a 'pleasing countenance' a handsome face, and it is unimaginable to picture Gilly wearing the Four Horseman Club insignia whilst tooling a coach and four. What Heyer gives us with Gilly is a hero who is a realistic male figure, rather than a stereotypical one. Not every duke born is witty, handsome, and strong, and Heyer is testing the view that a plain man can be endearing and satisfy a romantic readership as much as a handsome one.

[143] Heyer, *Foundling*, pp. 6-7.
[144] Heyer, *Foundling*, p. 38.

The Foundling also sets itself apart from other Heyer novels and Mark II heroes as the hero has the definite lead, as opposed to the heroine. In the majority of her other novels, the heroine plays a predominant part, yet in this book, the focus is on the hero as he goes on an internal journey of self-discovery. As Gilly finds himself embroiled with a young, naïve girl, who is not the type of woman suited to marry him, he learns that he does have hidden resources of courage, ingenuity, and, indeed, that he is worthy of being a duke. This plot element is very similar to *Sprig Muslin* (1956) where the hero of that novel also finds himself in a similar predicament with a young girl. As in *Sprig Muslin*, the hero of *The Foundling* marries the constant and dependable woman (who has always loved him) and who helps him out of his predicament.

One of the interesting aspects about *The Foundling* is that this novel can be seen as a type of *Bildungsroman*, a quest narrative of self-discovery and education[145], where Gilly attempts to see more of the world without the restraints of his dukedom and the restrictions of his family and servants. Gilly's story is comparable to Henry Fielding's *Tom Jones* (1749) with both novels centred on characters who find themselves caught up in adventure and intrigue. In fact, during one of the duke's adventures he even becomes involved with a young scallywag named Tom, who remains with him for most of the novel. There is also the hint of innocence surrounding Gilly in his experience with the world, as in Fielding's *Joseph Andrews* (1742). Perhaps Heyer was showing she had been reading Fielding and knowingly acknowledging his influence in what Hodge calls a '"boys" adventure story.'[146] In keeping with this theme, all three novels can be

[145] Suzanne Hader, "The Bildungsroman Genre: Great Expectations, Aurora Leigh, and Waterland" <http://www.victorianweb.org/genre/hader1.html> [accessed 17th October 2009].
[146] Hodge, p. 62.

seen as variations of the picaresque novel of wandering and discovering. This in turn can parallel with Jeffrey Farnol, another popular historical writer Heyer read and was influenced by[147], who also echoes the picaresque in his writing and whose bestsellers, such as *The Broad Highway* (1910), likewise revolve around the progression of the male protagonist from naive adolescent to self-aware man.

The romantic relationship in *The Foundling* differs from previous Mark II novels. In *The Corinthian*, Sir Richard Wyndham, feeling his hand is being forced into marriage, runs away with the incorrigible Penelope without much hesitation. Gilly in a similar situation behaves in a different manner. After being told he must prepare for marriage, Gilly tells his uncle he would much rather marry a woman he loved. His uncle is quick to remind him, 'Romantic notions do very well in a trashy novel, and I daresay they may not come amiss among the lesser ranks of society, but they are not for persons of our order, and that you may depend on.'[148] When Gilly discovers the proposed arranged marriage is with Harriet, a woman he has known all his life, his uncle removes any traces of the thought that it will be a love match by telling Gilly that Harriet is expecting a proposal and that she has been trained over the previous five years to be ready 'for the position she is destined to occupy.'[149] Several days later, Gilly, knowing that Harriet is 'not the bride of his independent choice'[150], visits Lord and Lady Ampleforth's and proposes. Harriet, who feels the same way about marriage as Gilly, is left with the mortifying view, 'He does not love me…It is his uncle's doing, and Mama's.'[151] Luckily for Gilly, he and Harriet eventually discover their mutual regard and acknowledge their love for each other.

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[147] Hodge, p. xiv.
[148] Heyer, *Foundling*, p. 27.
[149] Heyer, *Foundling*, p. 28.
[150] Heyer, *Foundling*, p. 38.
[151] Heyer, *Foundling*, p. 50.

The journey of self-discovery Gilly goes on is to rid himself for a while of the weight of his birthright and to determine his character for himself. He has been told all his life he is sickly and weak, and cannot manage on his own, so he tests himself to see if he can survive on his own without being dependent on his uncle or servants. In Heyer's previous novels, a Mark II hero did not need to prove himself as he already had the self-assurance and presence of command that the stereotypical nobleman was expected to possess. When Gilly offers to help free his cousin Matthew from the clutches of a blackmailer, he calls it 'A very small adventure…I have found something to do for myself, and perhaps I can do it, and perhaps I cannot, but at all events I mean to try.'[152] His other cousin, Gideon, who understands the restrictions Gilly has had in his life – 'you have been kept well-wrapped in lamb's-wool for too long' – says, 'I hope you will have very exciting adventures and slay a great many giants and dragons.'[153] Although Gideon is on his cousin's side, these quixotic words, however loving, have a hint of mockery to them. Gideon is surprised to discover that Gilly is in fact a capable and independent man who shows reserves of ingenuity and courage.

Gideon's qualified self-belief in Gilly's ability to succeed does not extend to the other members of his family. When Gilly's uncle, Gideon's father, hears of his disappearance he is furious with Gideon for letting him go:

> This is beyond the line of what is amusing! You have let that boy go without one soul to wait on him, or see that he does not fall into some accident, and however well that may do for another young man, it will not do for him! He has never been obliged to fend for himself; he will not know how to go on; he may become ill, through some folly or neglect.[154]

[152] Heyer, *Foundling*, p. 86.
[153] Heyer, *Foundling*, p. 87.
[154] Heyer, *Foundling*, p. 190.

Gideon lets his father know that he thinks Gilly 'will learn to manage very tolerably' and makes the point that Gilly 'does not yet know his own value. He is unsure because untried.'[155] With Gideon's thoughts, Heyer is demonstrating that all people have potential heroic qualities, and with her break from conventions by creating the character of Gilly, Gilly is being allowed to rise above the mediocrity of everyday life by seeing if he embodies some of these. Gideon's character is also a good example of Heyer subverting the heroic norms as Gideon has all the typical heroic Heyer attributes but he is cast in a supporting role, further enhancing the non heroic attributes of Gilly.

Going on his adventure incognito, Gilly discovers he can survive blackmailing thieves, kidnapping, and imprisonment, and he gains a confidence which allows him to settle disputes and come to the conclusion that he will never let his family or servants overrule him again. At the end of the novel, Captain Gideon Ware tells his cousin:

> From my heart I felicitate you! The days of your bondage are clearly at an end! I drink to your future career, wherein you will doubtless assert yourself, tyrannizing over your family, bullying your servants, and filling your house with foundlings, Newgate-scoundrels, hobbledehoy schoolboys, and whatever scaff and raff of society your fancy prompts you to befriend! Adolphus, my little one, I salute you![156]

Again, with Gideon there is a hint of mockery underlying his words, particularly in the way he calls Gilly 'my little one'; however, the humorous tone suggests that he has some pride in his cousin. Gilly's journey has made him more heroic, and thus, he ends the novel as a less original heroic type than he begins. He may still be short, kind, and sensitive, but he has been transformed into a far more authoritative and actively heroic figure. Heyer's creation of Gilly, therefore, may

[155] Heyer, *Foundling*, p. 190.
[156] Heyer, *Foundling*, p. 351.

not be an entirely new heroic type as he ends the book capable of heroic status, but she has certainly shown that a plain man can play the heroic lead.

Cotillion

In the years following *The Foundling* came two of Heyer's most endearing Regency novels, *Arabella* and *The Grand Sophy* featuring typical Mark II and I heroes respectively, yet with *Cotillion*, published in 1953, Heyer showed she was trying her hand at a further variation of Mark II. The premise for *Cotillion* is that Kitty Charing must marry one of her adopted cousins or forfeit her inheritance. She is in love with Jack. He refuses to be constrained by the whims of his great uncle and delays making a proposal so he can meet Kitty on his own terms. Meanwhile Kitty is anxious to have a season in London and convinces her cousin Freddy to propose with the idea that they would stay engaged for the season only. Naturally, following the vein of all good Heyer novels, they fall in love and eventually marry.

What makes Freddy another departure from the conventions of the traditional hero goes deeper than the clothes he wears. Freddy is not unlike many of Heyer's other dandified characters in his fashion sense. He is an acknowledged 'Pink of the *Ton*' or 'Bond Street Beau' which means he is a leading figure of fashion. The first major description of him highlights that everything about his person is impeccable, from 'his brown locks, carefully anointed with Russian oil, and cropped à la Titus' (a popular hairstyle of the period inspired by the Roman emperor, Titus)[157] topped with a hat 'set at an exact angle between the rakish and precise' to his 'effulgent riding boots' where the 'white tops of these, which

[157] Kloester, p. 215.

incontrovertibly proclaimed his dandyism, were hidden by the folds of a very long and voluminous driving-coat.'[158] With this description, Heyer has not dramatically changed this Mark II man, but the reader is given a hint that Freddy is obsessed with his appearance, more so than the previous Mark II heroes. No real sporting man would wear white tops on his riding boots. This fashion, influenced by Beau Brummell, was introduced to be worn by men who were setting a fashion statement and had no intention of hunting or going anywhere near mud.[159]

With his first appearance in the novel, Freddy arrives at an inn and Heyer humorously describes Freddy's inability to focus on anything else before ensuring his outward appearance is perfect:

> When he relinquished his coat, his hat, his can, and his gloves into the landlord's hands, a slight look of anxiety was in his face, but as soon as a penetrating glance at the mirror had satisfied him that the high points of his shirt-collar were uncrumpled, and the intricacies of a virgin cravat no more disarranged than a touch would set to rights, the anxious look disappeared and he was able to turn his attention to other matters.[160]

The 'virgin cravat' typifies Freddy as an expert in tying them; lesser-able men might waste a number of starched cravats before achieving a look which was acceptable. With Freddy, Heyer presents us with a man who has self-proclaimed town knowledge but not much else beyond his appearance and manners. He is not a foolish dandy in the way Sir Nugent Fotherby is in *Sylvester*, nor is he acting a part like the Mark II heroes of *The Black Moth* and *Powder and Patch*. Heyer has previously written about other heroes who have been overly concerned about their looks, such as Sir Richard Wyndham from *The Corinthian* who always looked

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[158] Georgette Heyer, *Cotillion* (London: Pan Books, 1966), p. 36.
[159] Grace and Philip Wharton, "Wits and Beaux of Society", <http://www.dandyism.net/?page_id=215> [accessed 27th January, 2010].
[160] Heyer, *Cotillion*, pp. 36-37

impeccable and was famous for the tying of his cravat, dubbed 'the Wyndham Fall'. He suffers momentary angst over his dress during his adventure with Penelope due to a limited wardrobe. Heyer has also used appearances as a way of mocking the followers of fashion who copied the dress of men like Freddy and Sir Richard Wyndham. Mr Beaumaris, the Mark II hero from *Arabella*, who is also an acknowledged leader of fashion, has men running around London asking flower sellers for dandelions after he has worn one three days consecutively. What differentiates Freddy from the more traditional Mark II male leads is that under Freddy's clothing, there is no sportsman, there is no strength. Freddy's clothes are what give him power; without them, he is a slightly built man who would not hesitate to back down from a fight as he knows he would not win. With the exception of Gilly from *The Foundling*, all of Heyer's previous Mark II heroes are men of action and power.

Part of Freddy's fearfulness stems from his self-confessed lack of intellect. He is scared of intellect and does not believe he has any. Both of these are highlighted through his relationship with his father. Lord Legerwood is described as 'a sportsman and a gentleman'[161] with 'an occasionally satirical tongue'[162], who fails to recognise the practical merits of his son. In Freddy's endeavour to keep his father guessing the truth about he and Kitty's relationship, he must conceal the truth, but when in the presence of his father, he does so with stuttering, stilted speech. Freddy's parents do not believe his lies, and when his mother asks his father to 'demand to know the whole' of Freddy, Lord Legerwood's answer summarises his view of his son:

[161] Heyer, *Cotillion*, p. 101.
[162] Heyer, *Cotillion*, p. 97.

> ‘Oh do you? And for my part I think I should be foolish beyond permission to do anything of the kind. Freddy’s efforts to concoct suitable lies for my delectation might, I daresay, be amusing, but I think I won’t put him to so much mental fatigue.’[163]

Through the course of the novel, Freddy begins to gain the respect of his father who learns to listen ‘to him with much more interest than he was wont to accord him’[164] and has no qualms about leaving his family ‘safely…in Freddy’s care’, much to Freddy’s embarrassment as he struggles to deal with his father’s compliments.[165] As with Gilly in *The Foundling*, Freddy discovers hidden reserves of courage and, indeed, of practical intelligence.

In *Cotillion*, Hodge says Heyer ‘was teasing her fans again by making ineffective Freddy the hero rather than handsome Jack Westruther.’[166] Jack plays the foil to Freddy’s antihero and is a Corinthian after the manner of Sir Richard Wyndham. As a storybook hero, Jack embodies the outward appearance of many of Heyer’s preceding Mark II heroes. Jack is:

> …a tall man whose air and bearing proclaimed the Corinthian. Coat, neckcloth, fobs, seals, and quizzing-glass, all belonged to the Dandy; but the shoulders setting off the coat so admirably, and the powerful thighs, hidden by satin knee-breeches, betrayed the Blood, the out-and-outer not to be beaten on any sporting suit. The face above the starched shirt-points was a handsome one, with a mouth as mocking as its owner’s voice, and a pair of intensely blue eyes which laughed into Freddy’s.[167]

When Kitty first meets up with Jack in London, it is his blue eyes which cause ‘her heart to flutter.’[168] Contrasted with Jack, Freddy sinks into dandified insignificance. Freddy is not a threat. He has the respect of all who knew him – ‘The most sought-after beauty was pleased to stand up with so graceful a dancer;

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[163] Heyer, *Cotillion*, p. 106.
[164] Heyer, *Cotillion*, p. 177.
[165] Heyer, *Cotillion*, p. 256.
[166] Hodge, p. 91.
[167] Heyer, *Cotillion*, p. 110.
[168] Heyer, *Cotillion*, p. 110.

any lady desirous of redecorating her drawing-room was anxious for his advice', yet Freddy 'was neither witty nor handsome; his disposition was retiring; and although he might be seen at any social gathering, he never (except by the excellence of his tailoring) drew attention to himself.'[169] Heyer spends a full page and a half describing Freddy's non-heroic Mark II relationship with his peers summarised with the delightful – 'Nor was the most jealous husband suspicious of him. '"Oh, Freddy Standen!" said these green-eyed gentlemen. "In *that* case, ma'am, very well!"'[170] In contrast, Jack is the type of 'dangerous' man, mothers with impressionable daughters would avoid. When Freddy's married sister tells Kitty that Jack visits at her house she is quick to exclaim, 'Only pray don't say so to Mama! She would not like it above half, because he has *such* a shocking reputation!'[171]

Heyer's deliberate pairing of Freddy and Jack confronts the reader with devilish rake versus the dandified London gentleman. In a typical romance, Jack would be seen as the more exciting character to engage the affections of a high-spirited woman like Kitty Charing, very similar to the way in which Marianne Dashwood in *Sense and Sensibility* initially favours the dashing Willoughby over the staid Colonel Brandon. However, Freddy is no Colonel Brandon and Kitty is never his reward. Like Gilly from *The Foundling*, Heyer is showing that men like Freddy can also 'win the girl'.

When one reads a typically clichéd Regency romance, the heroes can easily meld into one, as do the plots. Heyer is mixing up her recipe for success by bringing fresh ideas into the genre and poking fun at the clichéd ones. When Jack confronts Kitty about her sham engagement and says it is time Kitty came to her

[169] Heyer, *Cotillion*, p. 109.
[170] Heyer, *Cotillion*, p. 109.
[171] Heyer, *Cotillion*, p. 125.

senses and become engaged to him, Kitty refuses. Jack's response invokes an unlikely reaction from Freddy:

> 'So that's it, is it?' he said, quite softly. '…you had indeed set your heart on a title and a great position, and so you laid the cleverest trap for Freddy that I have ever been privileged to see! You cunning little jade!'
> It was at this point that Mr Standen, the most exquisite of Pinks, astounded the assembled company, himself included, by knocking him down.…
> 'Good God!' said the Rector, forgetting his cloth. 'Well done, Freddy!'[172]

The surprise of Freddy punching Jack, even though there was provocation (which could be borrowed from Shakespeare's *As You Like It* in which Orlando defeats the wrestler with a lucky hit) shows Freddy stepping momentarily into the world of the traditional Mark II. However, the reversal of Freddy and Jack in this situation is quickly returned to its usual state as Kitty rushes to Freddy saying, '"Oh, Freddy, it was splendid of you, and I am so very much obliged to you, but *pray* do not do it again!" "No, no!" said Freddy, conscience-stricken.' Jack is quick to tell him, 'At least admit you could not!'[173] Freddy agrees.

The attraction of a man like Jack over Freddy is explained by Kitty as she and Freddy return home, which in turn sheds light on why the persona of Jack is so prevalent in romantic novels. Kitty tells Freddy, 'I was never in love with Jack in my life…I thought I was, but I know now it was no such thing. He seemed just like all the heroes in books, but I soon found that he is not like them at all.'[174] Part of Kitty's journey is in discovering that the man she thought she had loved from childhood turned out to have feet of clay. He looked heroic, but beneath his outward appearance Jack was selfish, only thinking of his own advancement

[172] Heyer, *Cotillion*, p. 328.
[173] Heyer, *Cotillion*, p. 328.
[174] Heyer, *Cotillion*, p. 333.

towards wealth and who would be his latest mistress. This enlightenment compels Freddy to say:

> 'You don't think you could marry me instead? Got no brains, of course, and I ain't a handsome fellow, like Jack, but I love you. Don't think I could love anyone else'…
> 'Freddy, I love you with all my heart!' Kitty said, turning within his arm, and casting both her own round his neck.[175]

The qualities Kitty finds attractive in Freddy outweigh any attraction she ever felt for Jack. When Freddy tells Kitty she has 'too kind a heart', Kitty is quick to tell him, '…how absurd you are! When you have a much kinder one than I have!'[176] Along with the quality of kindness, Freddy also possesses social acumen and 'address' which Kitty values more than 'book-learning.'[177] Ultimately these prove to be useful attributes, enabling Freddy to save the day by producing a marriage license, purchasing a toothbrush for the elopement of Kitty's friend with her French cousin, and rescuing his brother at university. Contrasted with Freddy, Jack sinks into insignificance compared to this new hero who has shortcomings but more realistically expresses what men are like and what women need in real life as apposed to romantic dreams.

A Civil Contract

In *A Civil Contract* (1961), money is the catalyst of conflict in this unusual Georgette Heyer love story. *The Foundling* and *Cotillion* may have Mark II heroes who stand apart from other Mark II leads for their appearance and personalities, but in *A Civil Contract,* Viscount Adam Deveril is a typical Mark II behaving in an untypical way. This very different type of romantic novel looks at

[175] Heyer, *Cotillion*, p. 334.
[176] Heyer, *Cotillion*, p. 212.
[177] Heyer, *Cotillion*, p. 212.

a young man trying to restore his family fortune after inheriting an estate wasted by his reckless father, who even gambled with the Prince Regent who was renowned for extravagance. The only alternative for Adam, aside from financial ruin, is contracting a prosperous marriage. The big issue is that he loves a woman who cannot fulfil his financial needs. Heyer writes this book with a mature and practical outlook on love and marriage. She explores the idea that love does not need to be present for a marriage to work, as the practical, commonsense-filled world overrules a romantic one. Parallels can be drawn with the relationship between Marianne Dashwood and Colonel Brandon in *Sense and Sensibility*, although the genders are reversed with Adam the more romantic partner and Jenny the more practical. Eventually it is 'sense', the practical virtues, which are found to be enduring in the novel.

Heyer's strong interest in the Napoleonic wars is demonstrated in the fact that her hero is a returned soldier from Portugal and the Peninsular Wars (the focus of *The Spanish Bride*). Adam is in love with Julia Oversley, a very beautiful, gregarious young woman, but when he discovers from his late father's secretary that his finances are severely depleted he is recommended to restore his fortune through marriage. 'Good God, are you suggesting that I should marry an heiress!'[178] Adam demands. The thought of marrying for money revolts his sensibilities, particularly because he cannot imagine another woman for him, except Julia. Unfortunately, though Julia is the daughter of a wealthy peer, she does not have the dowry Adam requires. *A Civil Contract* is remarkable for the way the hero sacrifices love for the sake of his family, both the well being of his mother and sisters and for the family land, renouncing passion for complacency.

[178] Georgette Heyer, *A Civil Contract* (London: Pan Books, 1982), p. 12.

Throughout the novel, the narrative focalisation switches between Adam and his wife, Jenny Chawleigh, but remains predominantly focused from Adam's point of view, giving this novel a very honest and reflective outlook on the issues associated with an arranged marriage from a Mark II perspective.

The challenges faced by Adam have not been explored by Heyer in any previous novels; any less affluent characters have always been the heroines – the Cinderella motif being part of the charm of romantic fiction where a beautiful young woman in straitened circumstance finds happiness and wealth with an equally handsome man. *A Civil Contract* shows a hero who does not win the girl he loves. When Adam visits Julia's father, Lord Oversley, he unburdens his worries, explaining to him that there is no hope he will be able to marry Julia, and telling Oversley the predicament he is facing of selling his family estate, whilst, in the process, becoming the head of a noble household who is left with nothing except his title. Oversley's reaction is, 'Sell Fontley! And what then? Oh, yes, yes! You'll rid yourself of debt, provide for your sisters, but what of yourself? Have you considered that, boy?'[179] In an ideal Heyer world, Adam would be able to find the means to restore his fortune and still marry Julia, but Heyer is modifying her storyline and Adam is left with the sobering thought, 'One ought to be ready to make sacrifices for one's family.'[180]

The idea that Adam could not be happy with any other woman except Julia is tested. Even Lord Oversley tells Adam, 'Julia's not the wife for you, you know. You don't think it now, but you'll live to be glad of this day's work.'[181] Heyer makes the point in her novels that 'one's first love' is often very different from

[179] Heyer, *Civil Contract*, p. 38.
[180] Heyer, *Civil Contract*, p. 53.
[181] Heyer, *Civil Contract*, p. 38.

'one's last and most enduring love'.[182] Adam and Julia find this viewpoint difficult to believe, and for the reader it also seems a harsh awakening to reality because the love Adam and Julia genuinely feel towards each other is similar to any other Heyer novel where heroine meets hero and fall in love. However, Julia is certainly not in the Heyer heroine mould. She is selfish, materialistic and rather vapid – all of which are increasingly exposed during the narrative. Like Jack in *Cotillion* being the romantic dream who does not quite live up to the ideal, Julia is ultimately unworthy of Adam's love. She is the idealised beloved, set on a pedestal, but a dream that is eventually shown to be less worthy than reality. Her character is later reprised in the spoilt Tiffany Wield in *The Nonesuch* (1962) who is very similar in appearance and qualities.

Adam does make the necessary sacrifice for his family. It is Lord Oversley who introduces him to the very wealthy Jonathan Chawleigh, a city merchant, who wants his only daughter to have a title, and it is Oversley who finally convinces Adam to choose marriage. Initially Adam is repulsed by Chawleigh's manners and proposition, but Oversley reminds him, 'I say in all sincerity that you owe it to your name to seize any honourable chance that offers of bringing yourself about.' Adam is not convinced. 'Honourable?…selling myself to a wealthy Cit's daughter? Oh no! Not myself: my title!' Oversley bluntly tells him to 'Come out of the clouds…Once Fontley has passed out of your hands you will never win it back again…remember that you're the head of your house and have the power to prevent its falling down – if you choose to exert yourself.'[183] It seems a harsh reality in a romantic novel for Adam to make the decision to marry

[182] Heyer, *Black Sheep*, p. 25.
[183] Heyer, *Civil Contract*, pp. 55-56.

Jenny, but in the context of Regency England, a person in his position would have made the same practical choice.

The back of Pan Book's 1982 11th edition of *A Civil Contract*, has a quote from *American Publishers Weekly* that Heyer's 'heroines are all young, beautiful, spirited…', yet Jenny does not fit this mould. She is unlike any other Heyer heroine, not only for her birth, but also for her appearance. In Jenny's extended description, it is important to understand, as Adam surmises, that she is 'as unlike Miss Oversley as she could be. There was no brilliance in her eyes, no allure in her smile, no music in her flat-toned voice, and not the smallest suggestion of the ethereal either in her person or in her bearing.'[184] Heyer's description of Jenny begins with an outline of her dress, of pearls strung around a short neck, and the entire 'ensemble' being something 'which only so fond a critic as her father could have thought becoming.'[185] Miss Chawleigh is short:

> Adam was not a tall man, but her head only just topped his shoulder. There was a suggestion of squareness about her; she was already plump, and would probably become stout in later life…Her eyes were not large, but they were of a clear grey, well-opened (except when she was amused, when they narrowed to twinkling slits)…she had a small, determined mouth, a button of a nose, and a complexion which would have been good could she have overcome an unhappy tendency to blush fierily whenever she was embarrassed.[186]

Jenny's appearance causes Adam to feel aversion on more than one occasion. On his wedding day, as the couple are travelling in the carriage:

> His vision of ethereal loveliness vanished. Beside him, plump, and a little homely, sat reality, in a stylish pelisse, and a hat whose poke-front and curled ostrich feathers made an incongruous frame for a round, rosy face remarkable only for its determination. Revulsion held him speechless for a moment.[187]

[184] Heyer, *Civil Contract*, p. 59.
[185] Heyer, *Civil Contract*, pp. 58-59.
[186] Heyer, *Civil Contract*, p. 59.
[187] Heyer, *Civil Contract*, p. 95.

As Adam stares at Jenny their eyes meet and he sees 'the anxiety in hers'. He realises she looks unhappy and 'his mood' changes 'to one of compassion.'[188] Adam is a kind-hearted man, and although he is in love with another woman, he has enough regard for Jenny to realise that his home is now with her and he will be faithful. This does not mean that he does not often make comparisons between Julia and Jenny, but what Heyer has done is to draw out our sympathies not only for Adam and Julia's situation, but also for Jenny, who faces her own unhappiness because she is also in love with Adam. Adam eventually discovers that he is very different from the romantic soldier who wooed Julia – he is a farmer at heart, happiest in the country.

Much of the novel is taken up with Adam learning to love Jenny, not in a passionate way, but a comfortable one. Unfortunately for Adam, Julia suffers because of Adam's choice of marriage partner and when they meet, constantly reminds him of their thwarted love. On one such occasion at a very public ball, not long after Adam and Jenny's marriage, Julia sees Adam and faints in his arms. Jenny is the one who rescues the situation and people (even her husband) are led to believe that Jenny is not aware of the history between Adam and Julia. This is not the case and on the same page, Heyer outlines both of their feelings as they silently contemplate the evening. As Jenny dwells on her behaviour she recalls how 'her immediate intervention had sprung from no innate address but from a fierce resolve to protect him from the curiosity of those others who were witness of the episode.' [189] Jenny may have saved Adam from immediate embarrassment, but she had seen where his heart still lay:

[188] Heyer, *Civil Contract*, p. 95.
[189] Heyer, *Civil Contract*, p. 133.

> Not by so much as a flicker of an eyelid did she betray to Adam how fully alive she was to the implications of Julia's dramatic swoon; nor did she glance for more than an instant at his face, as it was bent over Julia lying like a broken flower in his arms. In that one instant she had seen all that his chivalry would have wished to conceal from her. [190]

Jenny's perceptive view on what Adam has sacrificed through marrying her makes Jenny more resolved to give Adam a happy life, and as she sits in the carriage, she begins to talk of other topics to distract Adam. Even though Adam is aware of what Jenny is doing, he finds it 'vaguely soothing'[191], although he cannot forget the night's events. Adam is suffering from 'emotional exhaustion' further enhanced, as he sits in the carriage, by remembering the 'heartrending look' in Julia's eyes when she met him right before she fainted:

> He had caught her, and had held her in his arms, and the sweet, nostalgic scent she always used agonizingly recalled the past. He hoped he had not uttered the words that had leapt to his tongue: *Julia, my love, my darling!* He thought he had not. Jenny's flat voice had jerked him back to his senses.[192]

The use of the adjective 'flat' is a jarring reminder of the difference between Jenny and Julia and signifies that Adam is still unable to separate his past from his present.

Heyer's portrayal of the situation draws attention to the anguish in this marriage. Neither person is unhappy in this marriage and both Adam and Jenny do work towards making each other comfortable, but what Heyer does is to once again allude to the fact that in real life, romance is not a series of perfect moments. It is a challenge which must be endured together.

The more Adam is with Julia the more he realises that she needs to let go of the past also. The day he finds out Jenny is pregnant, Julia has also reminded

[190] Heyer, *Civil Contract*, p. 133.
[191] Heyer, *Civil Contract*, p. 133.
[192] Heyer, *Civil Contract*, pp. 133-134.

him of the pain she has to bear by being parted from him. For Adam, the conversation 'was no more forgotten than a bruise which gave pain whenever it was touched, but Jenny's pregnancy was a matter of greater importance, because she was his wife, and he was responsible for her well-being.'[193] Heyer has her Mark II hero growing into his responsibilities and learning to accept what life has offered him, especially when he realises that with his wife, '*I take everything, and give nothing.*'[194]

The change Adam encounters is gradual. As he takes her back to Fontley in preparation for the birth, Jenny bustles about getting the house back in order. Several months later, one touching moment occurs when Adam arrives home after a day spent on the estate farm and 'His plump, commonplace little wife came down the stairs to meet him, treading across the hall with her firm step. She was neither beautiful nor graceful; she was even a little incongruous in so gracious a setting; but she was infinitely comfortable.'[195] However much out of place Jenny may seem in Adam's world, he is making her a part of his. When their son is born he visits her room and sees 'how white she [is]…Pity stirred in him, and with it tenderness.'[196] Adam is learning to love Jenny in his own way, though it does take time. At the end of the novel, Adam is talking to Jenny about Lord Oversley and Julia:

> 'He told me once he didn't think we were will-suited. In fact, we should have been very ill-suited. She would have discovered me to be a dead bore, poor girl, and I am much better off with my Jenny…I do love you, Jenny,' he said gently. 'Very much indeed – and I couldn't do without you. You are a part of my life, Julia was never that – only a boy's impractical dream!'[197]

[193] Heyer, *Civil Contract*, p. 189.
[194] Heyer, *Civil Contract*, p. 191.
[195] Heyer, *Civil Contract*, p. 211.
[196] Heyer, *Civil Contract*, p. 285.
[197] Heyer, *Civil Contract*, pp. 346-347.

This self-realisation of Adam's, spoken aloud to his wife, cements the journey he has undertaken. Jenny, herself, also comes to her own realisation:

> Searching his eyes, she saw warmth in them, and tenderness, but not the ardent flame that had once kindled them when he had looked at Julia. She hid her face in his shoulder, thinking that she too had had an impractical dream. But she was too commonplace and matter-of-fact to inspire him with the passionate adoration he had felt for Julia…She thought, and was comforted, that though she was not the wife of his dreams it was with her, not with Julia, that he shared life's little, foolish jokes…After all, life was not made up of moments of exaltation, but of quite ordinary, everyday things.[198]

Heyer's departure from the traditional romantic storyline effectively summarises what love and marriage is sometimes about. Realistically, marriage is about respect, compassion, and tolerance. The romantic might want the handsome man paired with the beautiful woman, but sometimes the 'right' person is a little commonplace, and as Heyer shows, the combination of beauty and plainness does not detract from a romantic storyline, it merely gives the reader more food for thought into what makes up a relationship. The outward appearance only atones for so much; compatibility of minds does the rest. Adam might periodically dwell on the beauty of Julia, but he will be infinitely happier with Jenny who understands him more than Julia ever did.

As Adam discovers, he is very different from the romantic soldier who wooed Julia. This is where Heyer's subversion of her Mark II hero is most pronounced. Adam begins the novel as a typical Mark II hero, but by the end has willingly left the world of the ton, fashion, and the season behind him for the virtues and practical joys of his estate where he is actively involved on the farm and relishes talk of manure and crops. To have a hero who has the physical attributes to be a whip, a beau, a society darling, and who essentially rejects this

[198] Heyer, *Civil Contract*, pp. 347-348.

for a life of practical endeavour and domestic life away from the ton is quite unique. Julia's negative reaction to this side of Adam's character is also a signal that Heyer is departing from the heroic norm. Adam is a farmer at heart, happiest in the country with his comfortable Jenny, and even though Jenny and Adam do still exist in a world of privilege and wealth, their relationship and their tastes have a much more practical, realistic edge.

Georgette Heyer's redefinition of her Mark II hero shows her expanding as a writer, learning to take risks, as Gilly, Freddy, and Adam are all a departure from the romantic prototype of heroic hero. Adam still retains the Mark II charm of being 'suave, handsome, and a famous whip', but he needs Jenny for the 'rich' part and she grows to complement his life. He can be seen as heroic for the way he sacrifices his happiness, and discovers a new way to love, with the greatest subversion occurring in his embracing his new role as a farmer. Gilly may be the most nondescript Mark II of all Heyer's novels, but he displays his heroism by realising that he will never be his own master without making the change himself. His journey illustrates the road to this independence. Freddy marks his heroism by showing that a dandified 'Pink of the Ton', surrounded by Corinthians and more experienced men, can rescue the damsel in distress, winning the girl from under the knight's nose. The popularity of *The Foundling*, *Cotillion*, and *A Civil Contract* demonstrate that Heyer achieved success with her variation into a new world of the Mark II hero.

Chapter Four:
From Villain to Hero: The Rake Reformed

Just as Heyer subverts Mark II by creating a hero more aligned with realism, so too does she adapt the rakish hero into one less scandalous. The rake reformed formula is a common theme in historical romantic fiction; the bad boy meets good girl who reforms his life to earn her love. A rake is a man who is not necessarily handsome, but has practised address and charm which proves captivating for the susceptible woman. Rakes are notorious for making women fall in love with them and then casting them aside for the next one. They also have a reputation for not always following the law or moral codes of conduct and their dishonourable behaviour can include anything from abduction and seduction to blatant affairs. Samuel Richardson's character, Lovelace, in the novel *Clarissa* (1748) is a prototype of this type of fictional rake. In Heyer's novels, the Mark I heroes who play the reformed rake role in the Regency novels are Lord Damerel from *Venetia*, Miles Calverleigh from *Black Sheep*, and Oliver Carleton from *Lady of Quality*.

Embedded in Heyer's writing is the observation that a woman is a success if she captures the heart of a rake, with the greatest triumph being to have him propose marriage. Many Heyer novels have the mothers of eligible daughters crowing over potential success that their daughter may have captured the attention of a rake. However, there is a difference between the type of rake who is accepted for his wealth, and the poorer rake whom society scorns for the same dishonourable behaviour. Money earns forgiveness more quickly than a change of lifestyle and a rich rake would be pardoned many sins. A poor rake, although still appealing to women, would be considered an adventurer if he tried to court a

young woman of wealth. This is what happens to Stacey Calverleigh, Miles Calverleigh's nephew in *Black Sheep*. Although Stacey has the appearance of a rake, he differs from Heyer's heroic rakes because of his lack of moral character. Heyer's heroic rakes may not always follow the rules of society, but they do have their own moral code of conduct which includes kindness, protection, and even self-sacrifice.

One of the main reasons why the rake is popular as a hero in romantic fiction is highlighted in *Venetia* in a conversation between Venetia and her mother, when her mother discovers the reclusive life Venetia has lived:

> 'Oh, you were the Sleeping Beauty! What a touching thing! But there should have been a Prince to kiss you awake! It is too bad!'
> 'There was,' said Venetia. She flushed faintly. 'Only, he has it fixed in his head that he isn't a Prince, but a usurper, dressed in the Prince's clothes.'
> Lady Steeple was rather amused. 'Oh, but that spoils the story!' she protested. 'Besides, why should he think himself a usurper? It is not at all likely!'
> 'No, but you know what that Prince in the fairy-tale is like ma'am! Young, handsome, and virtuous! And probably a dead bore,' she added thoughtfully. 'Well, my usurper is not very young, and not handsome, and certainly not virtuous: quite the reverse, in fact. On the other hand, he is not a bore.'
> 'You have clearly fallen in love with a rake!'[199]

The key word in this passage is that a rake is not a 'bore'. For a gently-bred woman, a rake promises excitement for his entertaining manners and a sense of adventure with a break from decorum. He introduces the heroine into a different mode of conduct by enabling her to experience the more passionate side of life, although, in a Heyer novel, always within the bounds of moral standards. The difference in his lifestyle and manner from other heroes is what makes the 'rake reformed' formula appealing in fiction because, instead of leaving the woman of his attentions, the rake falls in love and proposes marriage. The heroine then gets

[199] Heyer, *Venetia*, p. 284.

the best of two worlds – a reformed man who loves her and will stay faithful, and a man who is not only her equal in intellect and wit, but is also capable of satisfying her previously unknown sexual desires that were awakened at the hands of an experienced man.

With the Mark I hero there is a heavy Brontë influence; however, as Heyer's newly reformed rakish heroes emerge, there is a shift away from the Gothic/Melodramatic/Romantic type hero towards a comedy of manners, which Heyer herself uses as a source of humour in redefining her hero. Her Regency rakes are not overly serious, and though they have a history of dalliances with women, they are not ruthless and merciless men. With the change in male character, there is also a shift towards a feisty, intelligent heroine to match this new type of rakish hero. Strong parallels can be drawn between the model of Beatrice and Benedick in their 'merry war'[200] in *Much Ado About Nothing* and Heyer's couples, whose repartee is increasingly witty. Like Beatrice and Benedick, the dialogue is quick and punchy between Heyer's hero and heroine as they exchange insults, each trying to prove there is no attraction between them. It is an exchange of wit, meant to be cutting, but only succeeding in making each like the other more. The Shakespearean influence can further be traced to the Restoration comedies Heyer read, such as *The Man of Mode* and *The Way of the World* (1700), [201] which also employ a strong focus on witty repartee.

Despite the shift away from the typically Byronic hero, Heyer's rakes still bear a resemblance to the make-up of a Byronic hero and the Mark I hero, showing that Heyer was still very much under the influence of Byron and

[200] William Shakespeare, *Much Ado About Nothing*, 1. 1. 40. in *William Shakespeare: Complete Works*, edited by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Hampshire: Macmillan, 2007), p. 259.
[201] Hodge, p. 127.

Charlotte Brontë. Sarah Wootton writes of the connection between Brontë and the Byronic Hero providing insight into Heyer's use of these heroic traits: 'Charlotte Brontë's success with the Byronic type replicates that of her Romantic predecessor. Just as Byron capitalised in the popularity of several pre-existing literary figures, so Brontë selected traits from his most notable heroes.'[202] As described in Chapter One, Heyer also borrowed heavily from the Byronic school of hero, particularly Brontë's Mr Rochester, and has certainly gained her share of success with the Byronic character traits. Her rakish heroes may have the suaveness of Mark II in their interaction with women, but Mr Rochester's appearance still influences the outward physicality of her characters and their manner towards the heroine can still be just as 'brusque' and 'savage', particularly in their initial exchanges.

Heyer's writing displays a counter-movement of the hero; just as her Mark II heroes begin to embody a variety of new characteristics by moving away from the 'suave, handsome, rich' formula into one more akin to reality, with Mark I there is a clear progression of the villain to the hero. In the early Georgian novels, the rakish type of Mark I character initially plays the villain with Andover/Avon, and Vidal fulfilling these roles, though Vidal is eventually reformed through his growing love for Mary. When Heyer begins writing her Regency novels, the villainous Mark I types are no longer abducting females with the aim of seducing them, but instead are rakes ready to reform with the help of the heroine. This archetypal Regency figure is reinforced in Deborah Lutz's observation of the Regency romance:

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[202] Sarah Wootton, 'Picturing in me a hero of romance: The Legacy of Jane Eyre's Byronic Hero', in *A Breath of Fresh Eyre: Intertextual and Intermedial Reworkings of Jane Eyre*, edited by Margaret Rubik and Elke Mettinger-Schartmann (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 230-231.

> The regency romance (set during the English Regency – 1811-1820) follows a strict formula: the wealthy aristocratic dandy's debauched lifestyle – his late-night drinking: his affairs with elegant but cruel women; his sophisticated dalliance with fine horses, clothes, balls, and gaming "hells" – points to the desolation of his life in the midst of the world of the cynical, empty *ton* and to his ultimate need of either transformation or dissolution.[203]

Of course, in a typical Regency romance the hero's transformation occurs at the hands of an intrepid and very beautiful heroine, whose individuality, when set against the insipidness of her contemporaries, captures the attention of this jaded man.

Even though Heyer follows, in part, this formula, her Regency heroes are never so deeply 'debauched' as to require much taming. In fact, in *Friday's Child*, the antagonist, Sir Montagu Revesby, is the only character in all her Regency romances who most closely resembles the type of rake females would have been warned to avoid. Revesby never reforms his way of life, plotting and planning until the end of the novel. His behaviour is most similar to Willoughby's from *Sense and Sensibility*, in the way he seduces a virgin with promises of marriage, and then abandons her with child.

Sir Montagu Revesby is a friend of Lord Sheringham, although Sherry's wife and close friends do not like him, blaming him for Sherry's gambling problems. Revesby's rakish character is unveiled to Sherry when the woman he has seduced confronts him in the street outside the prestigious Almack's Assembly Rooms. His former mistress, Ruth, holding her child in her arms, begs, 'For God's sake, do not cast me off!…I am desperate, Montagu, desperate!'[204] It is obvious that Revesby recognises this woman, but he chooses to ignore her saying, 'My good young woman, you are making a mistake…I fancy I have not

[203] Lutz, p. 18.
[204] Heyer, *Friday's Child*, p. 186.

the pleasure of your acquaintance.' He then proceeds to tell her she must be 'mad' and have escaped from 'Bedlam'. Ruth is quick to tell the surrounding company, 'Ask him if he dare deny his own child! Ask him if he did not promise me marriage! Ask him if I was not an honest maid when he saw me first!'[205] Revesby ignores the girl and walks away before a further scene is enacted. The following conversation between Sherry and his friends after the incident displays the double standards surrounding a rake. Sherry calls it 'deuced unfortunate' that Ruth 'should have run Monty to earth outside Almack's, but no one ever supposed he was a saint.' Ferdy agrees, 'Fellow has a perfect right to be a rake…No harm in that. No right to leave the baby in the gutter. Bad *ton*!'[206] It is interesting that the men do not consider Revesby bad for seducing an innocent woman, but condemn him for not taking care of the child. Eventually it is Sherry and his wife who provide for Ruth and her child, and this is also the start of Sherry's eventual disassociation from Revesby.

Revesby's crowning actions as a rake occur at the end of the novel where he has tried to make love to Isabella Milborne, a friend of Sherry and Hero's. Isabella, who had accepted Revesby's advances as a way of making George Wrotham, the man she really loves, jealous, is awakened to his character: '…no doubt you did not dream of trying to force your most unwelcome caresses upon me, and *mauling* me in your arms as though I had been the sort of vulgar wretch you are plainly accustomed to dealing with.'[207] Revesby blames his behaviour on 'the intoxication of finding' himself 'alone in the presence' of Miss Milborne. Her reply is blunt:

[205] Heyer, *Friday's Child*, pp. 187-188.
[206] Heyer, *Friday's Child*, p. 190.
[207] Heyer, *Friday's Child*, pp. 334-335.

> ‘If passionate devotion led you to suggest to me that since we were stranded in so remote a hamlet there was no help for it but for me to become betrothed to you, I can only trust that I may never encounter such devotion again!…You sought, sir, to entrap me into marriage with you, since you were aware that you had no hope of winning my hand by more gentlemanly methods.’[208]

With his villainous designs, Revesby appears past redemption; however, Heyer has shown that this type of man can play the hero, eventually.

The rakish behaviour of Revesby can be likened to Andover’s in *The Black Moth*. In *The Black Moth,* Andover is the first of Heyer’s rakish characters to emerge under the Mark I umbrella, playing the villain instead of the lead. As described in Chapter Two, Andover wants to marry Diana Beauleigh and pretends to be Mr Everard so he can woo her. Like Revesby, he is unable to win her by honourable means and seeks to compromise her into marriage by abducting her, forcing her to spend a night alone with him in his house. At the moment of abduction, Andover’s rakish qualities are realised by Diana:

> ‘Sir – Mr Everard – whoever you are – if you have any spark of manliness in you, of chivalry, if you care for me at all, you will this instant set me down!’
> Never had she seemed more beautiful, more desirable. Her eyes shone with unshed tears, soft and luminous, and the tragic mouth pleaded, even trying to smile.
> ‘It would appear that none of these attributes belongs to me,’ murmured his Grace, and wondered if she would weep. He had never a taste for weeping woman.[209]

As the villain of the novel, Andover has little chivalry and is thinking of his desired outcome as opposed to how the outcome is achieved, and tears will merely get in the way, ruining the picture he has imagined of one strong will dominating another. This passage is interesting for the way it reveals Andover’s view of women. Diana is captivating to Andover for her strength of character and, as such,

[208] Heyer, *Friday’s Child*, p. 335.
[209] Heyer, *Black Moth*, p. 248.

has become a hard conquest for him. When Diana is most scared, that is when she becomes most desirable because she is in his power.

The transformation of rakish villain to rakish hero begins its journey in *These Old Shades* when Andover is renamed Avon and is made the hero of his own story, finding love with Léonie. In *The Devil's Cub*, Avon's son, Vidal, who also tries his hand at abduction, is reformed at the hands of Mary Challoner. This counter-movement from villain to hero shows Georgette Heyer reforming her rake into one less sinister. Andover with his 'dead white' hands may have been moulded after the villains of eighteenth century Gothic novels, but Vidal, who is young and handsome, becomes closer to the dissolute Regency figures in romantic novels.

Venetia

After a series of novels containing 'brusque' Mark I and 'suave' Mark II heroes, Georgette Heyer's introduction of the Regency rake Lord Damerel in *Venetia* is far removed from the over-dramatic, slightly Gothic rakes of her earlier Georgian novels. Damerel's estates border Venetia's and, as children, Venetia and her brothers would speculate on the crimes of this man for whom it 'was almost a social solecism to mention his name in polite company…It was years before Venetia discovered that Damerel's villainy included nothing as startling as murder, treason, piracy, or highroad robbery, and was more sordid than romantic.'[210] Damerel's crime was to run away in his early twenties with another man's wife. When he returned to England, they were separated and Damerel appeared:

[210] Heyer, *Venetia*, p. 29.

> …to have devoted himself to the pursuit of all the more extravagant forms of diversion, going a considerable way to dissipating what had once been a handsome fortune, and neglecting no opportunity that offered to convince his critics that he was every bit as black as he had been painted.[211]

This included holding a week long orgy at his house that 'provided the neighbouring countryside with food for gossip that lasted for months.'[212] As Venetia becomes closer to Damerel she recognises that this rake ran away with his first love in a fit of youthful idealism, and that as a young man he was in turn hurt and betrayed by women, making him into the more cynical rake of the present. Venetia is thus crucial in reawakening him to a belief in love, honesty, trust, fidelity and honour. However, Heyer's initial representation of Damerel is of a rake to be wary of and avoid.

When Venetia first sees Damerel, his appearance supports Deborah Lutz's observation of what the Regency man was like:

> She was unacquainted with any men of mode, but although he was dressed like any country gentleman a subtle difference hung about his buckskins and his coat of dandy grey russet. No provincial tailor had fashioned them, and no country beau could have worn them with such careless elegance. He was taller than Venetia had at first supposed, rather loose-limbed, and he bore himself with a faint suggestion of swashbuckling arrogance. As he advanced upon her, Venetia perceived that he was dark, his countenance lean and rather swarthy, marked with lines of dissipation. A smile was curling his lips, but Venetia thought she had never seen eyes so cynically bored.[213]

This picture is not too far removed from Heyer's other rakish leads and equally bored Mark I heroes. There is also the hint that Heyer is using a throwback to Charles II (a subject she explored in *The Great Roxhythe* (1923) and *Royal Escape* (1938)) as Charles II, with his half Spanish heritage, also had a lean countenance, swarthy complexion, and curling lips. However, despite Damerel's

[211] Heyer, *Venetia*, p. 30.
[212] Heyer, *Venetia*, p. 31.
[213] Heyer, *Venetia*, p. 32.

outward appearance, it is his actions, which determine his character. Damerel, with all the behaviour of a rake who has happened upon a pretty woman picking blackberries alone on his property, proceeds to kiss Venetia. After initial anger and a verbal battle, the conversation between Venetia and Damerel subsides into one of jest and amusement towards each other. The allusion to Byronism is not far distant as Venetia recognises in Damerel a Byronic hero. As Venetia stares into Damerel's eyes, 'she saw them smiling yet fierce, and a line of Byron's flashed into her head: *There was a laughing devil in his sneer*'[214], a quote taken from Byron's *Corsair.*[215] Heyer's humour underlies this episode as Venetia recognises that with Damerel in their midst, her young and obnoxious would-be suitor, Oswald Denny, would be mortified to see him. Venetia tells Damerel of her thoughts:

> '…the top of his desire is to be mistaken for the *Corsair*. He combs his hair into wild curls, knots silken handkerchiefs round his neck, and broods over the dark passions in his soul.'
> 'Does he, indeed? And what has this puppy to say to anything?' She picked up her basket. 'Only that if he ever meets you he will be quite *green* with jealousy, for you are precisely what he thinks *he* would like to be – even though you don't study the picturesque in your attire.'
> He looked thunderstruck for a moment, and ejaculated: 'A Byronic hero! – Oh, my God! Why, you abominable –'

Of course when Oswald Denny does meet Damerel and sees the blossoming love between Damerel and Venetia, he 'knew himself to be at a disadvantage, playing the *Corsair's* role in front of the *Corsair* himself.'[216] The Corsair, who is thought to be modelled on Byron himself, is a daring and heroic pirate captain who is willing to sacrifice the woman he loves to save a slave. His honourable exploits lead to his death.

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[214] Heyer, *Venetia*, p. 35.
[215] *Venetia* is quoting Lord Byron, *The Corsair*, Canto 1, Stanza 9, Line 223.
[216] Heyer, *Venetia*, p. 118.

Venetia is attracted to Damerel, yet realises that he is 'dangerous' and 'his conduct' in kissing her is 'inexcusable', yet, she 'found herself imagining a second encounter.'[217] Heyer focuses briefly on the sexual awakening Venetia has experienced with Damerel; this is a topic she seldom addresses directly in her novels and only under the barest allusion when she does. At their first meeting, Damerel appears in the light of a villain in the unpardonable way he exploits Venetia's predicament in finding herself alone with a man. That she enjoyed his mistreatment of her does not make him less villainous. It reinforces how a rake has the ability to attract women and, in the world of romance fiction, adds the titillating factor to the novel.

Venetia is captivated by Damerel, and, after he has promised to find out more about her, is annoyed that he has not come to visit her at her home and thinks that 'he had not been as strongly attracted to her as she had supposed.' Heyer makes the point that Venetia who has 'led so cloistered a life' in Yorkshire is too 'innocent' to realise why Damerel has not visited. She writes, 'Damerel, an expert in the art of dalliance, was employing tactics which none knew better than he to be tantalizing.'[218] At this point in the novel, there is mutual attraction between hero and heroine, and when they next meet, after Venetia's brother has a riding accident near Damerel's home and is taken there to recuperate, the reader is given a clear impression of what initially attracts the rakish Damerel to Venetia:

> In a faded old gown, with her hair untidy under a sunbonnet, and her countenance flushed with indignation he had thought her an uncommonly pretty girl; she was dressed now simply but charmingly in jonquil muslin, with a hat of unbleached straw whose high-poke front made a frame for a lovely face that was neither flushed nor indignant, but was smiling up at him with unshadowed friendliness, and she took his breath away.[219]

[217] Heyer, *Venetia*, p. 43.
[218] Heyer, *Venetia*, p. 43.
[219] Heyer, *Venetia*, pp. 51-52.

What Damerel and Venetia discover is that beyond physical attraction there is also a mutual meeting of their minds. As their friendship develops, so does their love for each other, but always there is the reminder that Damerel is a rake.

Venetia's neighbours hasten to warn her of the danger she is in with the rake Damerel being present in the neighbourhood. Oswald Denny tells her, 'The fellow's a rake! No female is safe with him!'[220], which is slightly ironic considering it is Damerel who must rescue Venetia from the unwanted mauling by Oswald. Her nurse and housekeeper, with dire warnings, tell her that on 'no account must she step beyond the garden without an escort' as there 'was no telling what might happen to her if she didn't do as she was bid.'[221] Venetia's other would-be suitor, the very boring and staid Edward Yardley, uses his patronising manner to also direct her:

> 'I daresay he won't remain at the Priory above a day or two, but while he is here it will be best for you to discontinue your solitary walks,' Edward said, with a calm assumption of authority which she found so irritating that she was obliged to choke down a hasty retort.[222]

When Lady Denny, Oswald's mother, and one of Venetia's close friends, finds out how much time Venetia is spending with Damerel, she also feels obligated to warn her. Lady Denny 'perfectly understands' why Venetia likes Damerel and says 'Indeed, I should have been astonished if he had failed to make you do so, for men of his – his *stamp* know how to make themselves charming to women.' She then tells Venetia, '*You*, I am persuaded, have too much good sense and elegance

[220] Heyer, *Venetia*, p. 123.
[221] Heyer, *Venetia*, p. 39.
[222] Heyer, *Venetia*, p. 39.

of mind to be taken-in, but I wish you will be a little on your guard.'[223] All these warnings fail to impress themselves on Venetia.

Although Venetia is innocent in her experience with men, she does recognise a friend and a man she could love. There is only one moment in the novel, after Damerel has helped her rescue abandoned kittens and they almost kiss before being interrupted by Venetia's bother Aubrey, when she doubts his sincerity that he loves her, thinking that he might only view her as a flirtation. However, as Damerel takes his leave, he kisses her hand and their 'eyes met only fleetingly, but she saw in his the answer to the question in her heart, and the tiny doubt that had disturbed her happiness vanished.'[224] As for Damerel, as he rides home, his thoughts reveal the crossroads he has reached as a rake. The reader learns that Damerel did have ulterior motives with Venetia but was checked in his behaviour by falling in love with her. As he talks to his horse he must choose – does he play the villain or reform and become the hero?:

> *Would she could make of me a saint, or I of her a sinner*[225] – Who the devil wrote that? You don't know, and I've forgotten, and in any event it's of no consequence. For the first part it's too late, old friend, too late! And for the second – it was precisely my intention, and a rare moment this is to discover that if I could I would not.[226]

There is a wistful note in the repeated phrase of Damerel saying it is 'too late' for him to reform. He believes his life too steeped in sin to be worthy of sharing it with Venetia who has only ever known a restricted life.

Damerel's recognition that his lifestyle is encroaching on his happiness means that he cannot play the rake's part with Venetia. He does not want to be villainous in his interaction with her. He may have initially toyed with the idea of

[223] Heyer, *Venetia*, p. 150.
[224] Heyer, *Venetia*, pp. 130-131.
[225] Heyer is quoting William Congreve, 'Pious Selinda Goes to Prayers'.
[226] Heyer, *Venetia*, p. 131.

offering her *carte blanche* and making her his mistress, but he has come to the realisation that Venetia is only worthy of marriage. Damerel must make the choice either to reform or leave. When he does declare his love to Venetia, he confesses his motivations:

> There is nothing whatsoever in my life to look back upon with pride, but until I met you, my lovely one, I could at least say that my depravity stopped short of tampering with the young and innocent. I never ruined any reputation but Sophia's – but don't account it a virtue in me! It's a dangerous game, seducing virgins, and, in general, they don't appeal to me. Then I met you, and, to be frank with you, my dear, I stayed in Yorkshire for no other purpose than to win you – on my own terms!…O God, I love you to the edge of madness, Venetia, but I am no so mad yet – not so mad that I don't know how disastrous it might be to you – to us both. You don't realise what an advantage I should be taking of your innocence.[227]

Damerel's attraction to Venetia would have led him to seduce her had he not fallen more deeply in love with her than he planned. This passage also has a sense of the embittered feelings he has over the disparity between them. He has lived a depraved life and Venetia a chaste one, but he cannot ignore his feelings for her.

Part of the fascination Damerel has with Venetia is that, though she is inexperienced, she does not censure herself around Damerel, finding herself at times blushing because she has inadvertently asked him about mistresses, orgies, and bastard children. This is part of her attraction for Damerel as he accepts her open mind and does not tease her for making inappropriate comments, something Venetia had always experienced with her family and friends. Her mother may have called her a 'Sleeping Beauty' in jest, but Damerel does awake her to the type of passion-filled life she craved. After being kissed against her will, Venetia 'had not enjoyed being so ruthlessly handled, but for one crazy instant she had known an impulse to respond, and through the haze of her own wrath she had

[227] Heyer, *Venetia*, p. 205.

caught a glimpse of what life might be.'[228] Wanting to kiss back a man who is attacking her is not the type of behaviour a woman living under a strict moral code should feel, but Venetia is a passionate woman who discovers that conventions can be broken and that there is more to her confined world yet to be explored and enjoyed. When Venetia meets her mother, she observes:

> …that the foam and lace gauze in which she was wrapped was in reality a dressing-gown. It was not at all the sort of garment one would have expected one's mama to wear, for it was improper as it was pretty. Venetia wondered whether Damerel would like the sight of his bride in just such a transparent cloud of gauze, and was strongly of the opinion that he would like it very much.[229]

Heyer may be writing about the reformation of a rake, but she also focuses on the enlightenment Venetia experiences about life, men, and relationships, at the hands of a rake. Heyer is clearly saying, as Venetia experiences, that life is more exciting with a man who approaches life with passion.

When Venetia's uncle interferes in their relationship, Damerel is forced to accept that he is not worthy of her and tells her they cannot be together, having made a promise to her uncle that he would never propose marriage:

> 'No I don't wish to hurt you. I never wished to hurt you. The devil of it was, my dear delight, that you were too sweet, too adorable, and what should have been the lightest and gayest of flirtations turned to something more serious than I intended – or foresaw – or even desired! We allowed ourselves to be too much carried away…'[230]

The fact that Damerel, lying about his feelings in the process, is sacrificing his happiness reveals how much he has changed as a man. The old Damerel would not have scrupled about coercing Venetia to run away with him, but the newly reforming Damerel has learnt to check his emotions and act honourably.

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[228] Heyer, *Venetia*, p. 37.
[229] Heyer, *Venetia*, p. 282.
[230] Heyer, *Venetia*, p. 224.

Venetia is heartbroken and travels to London to stay with her aunt and uncle. She misses Damerel and knows he let her go because he thought, and was made to believe, he was not good enough for her and would be taking advantage of her innocence. When Venetia learns of her uncle's interference, she travels back to Yorkshire and confronts Damerel. Her uncle, who has followed her back to Yorkshire, is adamant she will not find happiness with a rake: 'Damerel may have the intention of reforming his way of life, but habits of long-standing – the trend of a man's character – are not easily altered…it would cause me distress and self-blame if I saw you made unhappy.'[231] Damerel reassures Venetia and shows remorse for his past: 'You may regret this day: I could not! What I regret I can never undo, for the gods don't annihilate space, or time, or transform such a man as I am into one worthy to be your husband.'[232] Venetia only tells him that she 'found' her '*worthy* suitor a dead bore.'[233] As a rake, Venetia was Damerel's test of character. He fell in love and reformed, thus becoming the hero instead of remaining a villain. The jaded and cynical Damerel, betrayed in his youth by women, his family, and life's experiences, no longer has to live up to the perceived image society has painted him, and, in marrying Venetia, will eventually lose his cynicism towards life.

Black Sheep

Unlike Damerel, who undergoes reformation through the influence of Venetia, Miles Calverleigh, having been absent from England for twenty years after a series of disgraces, is already reformed and has returned to his birth

[231] Heyer, *Venetia*, p. 317.
[232] Heyer, *Venetia*, p. 323.
[233] Heyer, *Venetia*, p. 323.

country to establish himself in the family ancestral home. His nephew, who is head of the family, has brought rack and ruin to the estate, and Miles seeks to fix the situation. Having made a fortune in India, he buys his nephew's mortgages, and eventually the ancestral family home. Unfortunately for Miles, the stigma of his youthful follies surrounds him and he must show he is not the 'black sheep' he once was.

Even though Miles Calverleigh is no longer living the lifestyle of a rake, he still has the allure and charm of one, and is quick to capture the attention of Abigail Wendover. Abigail is a twenty-eight-year-old woman residing in Bath with her elder sister, and her young niece who is on the verge of coming out into society. Like Venetia, Abigail is also very independent and struggles with suitors who bore rather than excite her. Meeting Miles, she quickly exalts in the freedom in being able to say what is on her mind without fear of reproach for her comments, just as Venetia experienced with Damerel. In fact, when Abigail is conscious of having spoken out of line, Miles is quick to tell her, 'I like the way you have of saying just what comes into your head'[234] as Abigail does not censure her thoughts according to what is acceptable for women of the period. With this comment, Heyer is showing that the relationships between her rakish heroes and independent heroines are built on openness and honesty, and with the rakish hero, the heroine can act exactly as she would like. Abigail does not experience a sexual awakening in the way Heyer describes Venetia's physical relationship with Damerel, but Abigail recognises what friendship and mutual attraction can bring to a relationship. 'He was amusing, and she enjoyed his company…He was undoubtedly what her brother-in-law succinctly described as a loose screw, and so

[234] Heyer, *Black Sheep*, p. 114.

hopelessly ineligible that it never so much as crossed her mind that in him she had met her fate.'[235]

While Damerel may have been a villain in the way he was very ready to seduce the virginal Venetia, Miles is a hero with a villainous past and a settled present who has no intention with Abigail other than getting her to marry him. Abigail is typically in control of her emotions, but she discovers that when she is around Miles and realises his pursuit of her is honourable, she feels 'suddenly breathless, and embarrassed, for she had hitherto suspected him of pursuing nothing more serious than an idle flirtation.'[236] When he proposes marriage, she tells 'him that she was not sure that she loved him, but she had done so not in doubt of her love for him, but in dismay at the realisation that she did love him, whatever he was, or whatever he had done.'[237] Abigail realises that prudishness has no place in their relationship:

> As for the life he had led during those years, she did not suppose that virtue had played a noticeable part in it, but she felt it to be no concern of hers. Nor did she wish to know how many mistresses he had had, or what excesses he might have committed: the past might keep its secrets, leaving her to the enjoyment of the present.[238]

Part of the rake reforming formula is that the heroine must accept the rake, no matter what his past entails.

In *Venetia*, Damerel thought he was unworthy of Venetia because of his past. In *Black Sheep*, Miles's indiscretions occurred twenty years earlier and, as Abigail discovers, bear very little influence on his current life and interactions with people:

> Out of his own careless mouth he had convicted himself of being a person totally unworthy of respect…She knew that he had been

[235] Heyer, *Black Sheep*, p. 133.
[236] Heyer, *Black Sheep*, p. 139,
[237] Heyer, *Black Sheep*, p. 171.
[238] Heyer, *Black Sheep*, p. 143.

> expelled from Eton; and he told her in the most unconcerned way, that he had been sent down from Oxford; and it now appeared that he had crowned his iniquities by attempting to elope with a girl out of the schoolroom…It was bad of course, but what was worse was his unblushing avowal of his sins. He had not mentioned them in a boastful spirit, but as though they had been commonplaces, which he regarded with amusement – even with ribaldry.[239]

He refers to himself as the prodigal son who has returned to his home a changed man and the deeds of his youth are not a part of his life now, and therefore he has no need to dwell on them. However, there is awkwardness in their relationship as Abigail cannot quite escape his past because the woman he attempted to elope with became her brother's wife. When her brother, James, finds out that Abigail loves Miles he is quick to tell her why a marriage with him could never be permitted. Abigail reassures him that she knows about Celia but this revelation goads him into making a new one: 'He looked fixedly as her, and, lowering his voice, said, in apocalyptic accents: 'You do not know all! They were not overtaken *until the following day*!''[240] Similarly to Damerel, at the time of the thwarted elopement, the young Miles was not a rake but a young, idealistic man. He was in love and saw himself as attempting to save Celia from an unwelcome marriage. Because of his honourable intentions, in some ways he is a victim at that point. Part of the reason he is able to look back on his past with equanimity is that he realises that he had a lucky escape.

Miles had already changed his life but cannot remove the disgrace of being a rake. His past does not matter to Abigail: 'She thought, in touching innocence, that in Miles Calverleigh she had found a friend, and a better one by far than any other, because his mind moved swiftly, because he could make her laugh even

[239] Heyer, *Black Sheep*, pp. 58-59.
[240] Heyer, *Black Sheep*, p. 217.

when she was out of charity with him…' [241] She also discovers that 'she could find excuses for his cynicism, and even for the coldness of heart which made him look upon the problems or the troubles besetting other people with a detachment so profound as to seem inhuman,' and realises that it 'was no wonder that twenty years of exile had made him uncaring: the wonder was that he was not embittered.' [242] The lack of propriety surrounding a rake makes it very hard for the heroine's family to accept him, and by denying his love, there is no chance of redemption for a rake. However, with Miles, he does not care for family and believes Abigail's relatives should not factor in their happiness. Abigail is reluctant to marry Miles because she knows her older sister and niece would find it hard to live without her and struggles with this guilt. For this purpose, Miles's behaviour in the final scene of the novel returns him to his rakish roots as he abducts Abigail with the view of eloping with her:

> 'Good gracious, we are on the London road! Where are we going?'
> 'Reading,' he replied…
> 'And what do we do when we reach Reading?'
> 'We get married, my very dear.'
> 'Have you run mad?' she demanded…
> 'I promise you I was never more in earnest. I can't show it to you at the moment, but I have a special licence in my pocket.'
> 'On, how dare you?' she gasped. 'Stop *at once*! If you think I am going to elope with you – '
> 'No, no!' he said. 'This isn't an elopement! I'm abducting you!'…
> 'You said you wouldn't marry me for a great many reasons which were most of them quite idiotish, but you also said that you couldn't seek you own happiness at the cost of Selina's and Fanny's. Well, you have the right to make a sacrifice of yourself, but I'll be damned if I'll let you sacrifice me!'[243]

Heyer's humorous twist at the end plays on the abduction theme of her earlier rakes, but no villainy is present. Miles is now a respectable man who has found love and fidelity. His wealth has restored the family home to him and he is ready

[241] Heyer, *Black Sheep*, p. 142.
[242] Heyer, *Black Sheep*, p. 143.
[243] Heyer, *Black Sheep*, pp. 252-254.

for his new life to begin. There is also a kind of symmetry to his story, as having acted out of love as a young man and been reviled and banished for it, he now abducts the right woman and saves her from the life of duty to which she might otherwise have sacrificed herself.

Lady of Quality

Lady of Quality is a variation on the theme of *Black Sheep*. This novel, also set in Bath, follows the beautiful and older Annis Wychwood who inadvertently becomes chaperon to Lucilla Carleton who has run away to Bath to escape the pressure of an arranged marriage. Lucilla is the niece and ward of Mr Oliver Carleton, a man with an unsavoury reputation, who has never bothered himself much with his niece, apart from assuring himself that the relations she was sent to live with looked after her. When Carleton travels to Bath to visit the woman who, after apparently 'aiding and abetting' his niece 'to make a byword of herself,'[244] has invited her to stay at her house, he finds himself quickly attracted to this confident woman whose 'beauty was remarkable.'[245] Although Carleton is a very wealthy man, his money does not atone for his reputation. Oliver Carleton is not a rake in the sense of a having a disreputable history with women the way Damerel and Calverleigh do, but he embodies the bachelor-type attributes and lifestyles of both Damerel and Calverleigh, and, with the reputation of never proposing marriage to any of the women he has paid address to and having many mistresses, is also seen as having rakish qualities. When Annis's brother discovers who Lucilla's guardian is, he warns Annis to beware of any interaction with Carleton. Sir Geoffrey tells her:

[244] Georgette Heyer, *Lady of Quality* (London, The Companion Book Club, 1973), p. 64.
[245] Heyer, *Lady of Quality*, p. 9.

> ‘He’s a damned unpleasant fellow! Got no manners, never scruples to give the back to anyone he don’t happen to like, thinks his brith and his wealth gives him the right to ride rough-shod over men quite as well born as himself, and – in short, the sort of ugly customer I should never dream of presenting to my sister!’
> ‘Do you mean he is a libertine?’
> ‘…I should be doing less than my duty if I did not warn you to have nothing to say to him, my dear sister! His reputation is *not* that of a well-conducted man.’[246]

When Annis meets this ‘powerfully built man with dark hair, and a swarthy complexion’ whose ‘brows were straight and rather thick’ with ‘a pair of hard grey eyes’[247] under them, she experiences the same refreshing honesty of conversation which Heyer has made a part of her rakes’ characters, but condemns Carleton for his deplorable manners.

Lord Beckenham, who has his ‘heart set on Annis…who was as lively as he was dull’[248], also ventures to give her ‘a hint’ to avoid unnecessary contact with Carleton. Annis’s reply betrays her feelings towards his impudence in much the same manner in which Venetia deplored the interference of Edward Yardley:

> She bestowed a glittering smile upon him, and said: ‘No need at all sir! In point of fact, there was no need for you to have said as much. But since you seem to be so much concerned with my welfare let me assure you that my acquaintance with Mr Carleton is unattended by any danger either to my reputation or to my virtue! He is quite the rudest man I have ever met, and I am not so ignorant as to be unaware that he is what I believe is termed *a man of the town*, but I have it on the best of authority – his own! – that he never attempts to seduce ladies of quality! So you may be easy – and I beg you will say no more on this subject.’[249]

Annis’s purposeful allusion to the close contact she has already encountered with Carleton belies her outward appearance of good manners. She wants to shock Beckenham by alluding to a more intimate connection. With her typical humour,

[246] Heyer, *Lady of Quality*, pp. 52-53.
[247] Heyer, *Lady of Quality*, p. 62.
[248] Heyer, *Lady of Quality*, p. 40.
[249] Heyer, *Lady of Quality*, pp. 100-101.

Heyer then describes how Carleton, overhearing this conversation, interrupts to say that Annis's comment has made Beckenham 'far from easy.'[250]

Annis is another heroine who experiences a sexual awakening through interaction with a rake. Before meeting Carleton, 'although she enjoyed lighthearted flirtation, she never gave her flirts any cause to think she would welcome more intimate approaches. She had supposed that she must have a cold, celibate disposition.'[251] The ability of a rake to arouse passion in a female could be seen as part of their villainy, but for Heyer, who contrasts her rakes against very boring men, this ability is welcomed by the heroine, as shown when Annis reflects on Carleton's embraces:

> When Mr Carleton had caught Miss Wychwood into his arms, and had so ruthlessly kissed her, she had not found it at all distasteful; and when he did it again it seemed the most natural thing in the world. He felt the responsive quiver that ran through her, and his arms tightened round her.[252]

A rake could selfishly manipulate the situation but Carleton has fallen in love with Annis and, like Damerel with Venetia, cannot take advantage of her. Carleton confesses:

> '…there are two things I am *sure* of! One is that I have never cared for any of the charmers with whom I've had agreeable connections as I care for you; and another is that I never in my life wanted anything more than I want to win you for my *own* – to love, and to cherish, and to guard – Oh, damn it, Annis, how can I make you believe that I love you with my whole heart and body, and mind?'[253]

Carleton is unrepentant about his past, as shown with his mentioning the adjective 'agreeable' in regards to the mistresses he has had. Women would previously

[250] Heyer, *Lady of Quality*, p. 101.
[251] Heyer, *Lady of Quality*, p. 238.
[252] Heyer, *Lady of Quality*, p. 238.
[253] Heyer, *Lady of Quality*, pp. 237-238.

have been objects of sexual gratification to him, but with Annis he has found a woman who will fulfil the role of companion in all facets of his life.

When Heyer's heroines fall in love with a rake, they must struggle in gaining their families' acceptance and Annis is no exception. Her brother is greatly displeased with the engagement:

> 'I must make it plain to you, Carleton, that the thought of my sister's marriage to a man of your reputation is – is wholly repugnant to me!'
> 'You've done so already.'
> 'Well, I have no wish to offend you, but I don't consider you a fit and proper person to be my sister's husband!'
> 'Oh, that doesn't offend me! I have every sympathy with you, and should feel just as you do, if I were in your place.'[254]

From this interchange, the reader learns that Carleton recognises his reputation is not commendable. He has the interesting role of knowing he is a rake, but behaving as though morals and manners were essential – especially when dealing with his niece Lucilla, who must behave with decorum and certainly never have anything to do with a man of Carleton's cast. Once again the double standards of Heyer's Regency men are revealed. Carleton sees through and acknowledges the complexities of the social code; he knows which rules to break and which to enforce. Even though he sometimes displays hypocrisy, he is also capable of great kindness and generosity. Carlton's actions also mark him out as different as he, like Damerel and Miles, also has the rare attribute of treating the heroine as an equal – not as a chattel to lecture and control.

Because Annis loves Carleton, Sir Geoffrey must learn to live with the outcome. However, to his wife he is still hesitant about the proposed marriage

[254] Heyer, *Lady of Quality*, p. 248.

when he says, 'A man don't change his habits…I don't believe in reformed rakes, Amabel.'[255] His wife points out to him:

> '…has it occurred to you dearest, that although we have heard a great deal about his mistresses, and the shameless way he flaunts them abroad, and the money he squanders on them, we have never heard of his attaching himself particularly to any girl of quality? Indeed, I believe Annis is the only woman to whom he has offered marriage, though lures past counting have been thrown out to him, because even the highest sticklers think that his wealth is enough to make him acceptable. So don't you think, Geoffrey, that perhaps he never *truly* loved anyone until he met Annis?'[256]

From this passage it is clear that in the world of the Regency romance, love has the ability to reform a rake and make him acceptable.

By using the rake reformed formula, Georgette Heyer has not created a new type of hero but has revolutionised the typical rake by taking what originally were the villains of her novels and turning them into the heroes. The archetypal rake (in the Richardson/Lovelace and Gothic mould) is a predator, symptomatic of a patriarchal world in which women are objects to be controlled, used, and disposed of. The more sinister early Georgian characters of Heyer's novels who were willing to abduct and seduce have been replaced by cynical, rakish men who also have a quixotic sense of chivalry about them as they rescue the heroine from boring suitors and oppressive family members. Heyer's approach to the rake reformed can be seen as being quite feminist in that this figure becomes in some ways a kind of new man, or anti-patriarchal man, who treats the heroine with respect and essentially frees her to be entirely herself and live more fully. The rake is certainly reformed in these novels, but he is also a liberating, anti-patriarchal, anti-duty, and anti-self-sacrificial force – 'saving' the heroine in many ways, just as she 'saves' or 'reforms' him.

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[255] Heyer, *Lady of Quality*, p. 249.
[256] Heyer, *Lady of Quality*, p. 249.

Heyer's rake reformed formula, which centres strongly around the witty repartee of a comedy of manners, also allows Heyer to empower her heroines to match the temperament of this rakish hero. Venetia, Abigail, and Annis are not wishy-washy females desperately looking for a masculine shoulder to lean upon. These women are independent, both financially and in manner, and have survived quite happily without men in their lives. What each woman discovers through her meeting with a rake is that independence is easily exchanged for love, mutual understanding, and, especially, physical passion. The Heyer Regency rake is a man who can charm and provoke, bully and tempt. He is a man who captivates the heroine's heart, taking her away from a life of strict decorum and family duty to one of pleasure without the restrictions of family obligations. In turn, the heroine shows him that villainous intentions can be the forerunner of heroic qualities. Lord Damerel, Miles Calverleigh and Oliver Carleton are all men with shady pasts who have their faith in life, happiness, and women restored. Through interaction with the heroines they discover a world where dissolute lifestyles can be transformed; thus, the Regency rake finds redemption in the heroine and is reformed.

Conclusion

Out of a desire to divert her sick brother, Georgette Heyer inadvertently began a career which has helped transform the face of romantic fiction. Not only were her historical novels influential in establishing the Regency romance as a leading genre in women's romantic fiction, she was also responsible for creating heroic prototypes that have become the norm for Regency heroes in popular fiction.

The Heyer hero is a fusion of the literary models that influenced Heyer and her own creative inventions and variations. 'Mark I: The brusque, savage sort with a foul temper' and 'Mark II: Suave, well-dressed, rich, and a famous whip' reflect the traditional heroic conventions of Lord Byron's Byronic heroes, Charlotte Brontë's Mr Rochester, Jane Austen's heroes, and Baroness Orczy's Scarlet Pimpernel, and, certainly, Heyer's earlier novels saw her borrowing heavily from these heroic types. However, as Heyer developed her career, so too did her heroes evolve. Characters, such as Lord Damerel and Miles Calverleigh, may look like a Byronic hero complete with a questionable past, but their behaviour and 'Byronic secret' is far less threatening, becoming, in part, a type of parody of the Byronic hero. Similarly, Heyer is pivotal in redefining the romantic hero by introducing the rake as a type of anti-hero – a feminist 'Mr Willoughby' winning the heroine over a prosy 'Colonel Brandon' – and by subverting the heroic norm with dandified and plain men also playing the heroic role.

The impact of Heyer's heroes is evident in today's popular romantic fiction. Georgette Heyer has been cited as a source of inspiration for current popular romance writers such as Catherine Coulter, Judith McNaught, Katie

Fforde, and Mary Jo Putney.[257] On a 2005 reprinting of *False Colours*, from the publishing company Arrow Books, Katie Fforde has written a blurb which reads, 'Wonderful characters, elegant, witty writing, perfect period detail, and rapturously romantic. Georgette Heyer achieves what the rest of us only aspire to'.[258] This blurb, written to help introduce Heyer to a new generation of readers, is indicative of her impact on the world of romantic fiction.

Similarly, Marion Chesney is a prolific Regency romance writer of the latter twentieth century whose writing adheres strongly to the Regency romance formula often found in Heyer's novels. This is the pattern of the dissolute hero, tired of his avaricious mistresses and drinking cronies, who is 'transformed' by the heroine and finds renewed invigoration for life. A recurring feature of Heyer's, found on almost all of Chesney's heroes, is the 'heavy-lidded eyes'. Heyer's influence on the genre is profound. As inventor and model she is deserving of the often-proclaimed title of the grandmother of the Regency romance.

While many of Heyer's heirs are imitators, happy to replicate the heroic prototypes that she established and gave her name to, Heyer was an innovator. Influenced by her wide reading, Heyer created heroes who were indebted to Byron, Austen, Orczy, and, in particular, Charlotte Brontë. Yet, she also added her own unique stamp to her fictional creations through her increasing willingness to experiment with her heroic prototypes as a direct reversal of the clichéd romantic stereotypes that had become common in romantic literature. Conscious of, and at times frustrated by, the limitations of the genre for which she was most famous, it is Heyer's ability to make subtle variations to character and narrative,

[257] Robin Nixon, 'All About Romance', *At the Back Fence 94*, (May 1, 2000) <http://www.likesbooks.com/94.html> [accessed 20 May, 2009].
[258] Georgette Heyer, *False Colours*, (London: Arrow Books, 2005).

while still maintaining her trademarks of accurate historical detail, wit, and romantic satisfaction, that makes Heyer a master of the Regency romance. Georgette Heyer has indeed left her enduring ‘Mark’ on the genre and on the Regency hero.

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