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CHANGES IN HISTORICAL ROMANCE, 1890s TO THE 1980s

The development of the genre from Stanley Weyman to Georgette Heyer and her successors.

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NOTE

References are cited in full at the back of the thesis, with the exception of Georgette Heyer's *The Black Moth* and *These Old Shades* which, after their first citation in chapter eight, are referred to as B.M. and T.O.S. Date and place of publication of historical romances referred to are given in the text on their first appearance.

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Chapter One

Introduction

In the early years of this century, my father used to read the books of Stanley Weyman, his sister reading over his shoulder. My brother and I read Raphael Sabatini's cloak-and-dagger romances in much the same way. Much later, college friends gave me books by Georgette Heyer to read, as though this was some kind of female rite of passage. There did not seem to be much in common between the experiences. Yet, upon reflection, the books were more alike than might appear at first sight.

Nothing could be further from the clash of swords, swift horse-rides and secret plots of the earlier romances than the social comedy of Heyer's Regency love-stories. Yet, though the atmosphere was different, the stories themselves had an uncanny similarity. Told without circumstantial detail, the individual situations - even, in some cases, the complete plots - were the same. Their links with each other were closer than with other novels - adventure or love stories - and it was apparent that they formed a species of their own, characterized by distinctive stock situations and stereotyped characters. They could be differentiated from historical fiction as a whole by their formulaic and fantastic character. Although the term "historical romance" is sometimes used
indiscriminately by publishers and booksellers for historical novels of all descriptions, the name is more commonly reserved for books of this type. It is, in fact, a very suitable term for the species, since one characteristic which all these novels have in common is a romantic story.

At the same time, for all that the books share, there is clearly a difference between the novels of Weyman and the novels of Heyer; a difference which is also to be found between the books of their respective followers. Further acquaintance with the species showed that whereas the novels of Weyman, Sabatini and their contemporaries (such as "Henry Seton Merriman", A.E.W. Mason or Conan Doyle) could be read with equal enjoyment by both sexes, Heyer's romances were read by women alone. The adventurous, cloak-and-dagger yarns of the former dominated the market in the early part of the century: Heyer's own early work was in fact of this type. After the early thirties, however, the swashbuckling yarn seems to have lost its appeal; a few writers, like Sabatini, continued to write the same kind of book and find a market until the 1950s, but their work was beginning to seem decidedly oldfashioned. After this decade, historical romance became predominantly a woman's genre, which it had certainly never been before.

This in itself was an interesting development. What was, perhaps, of greatest significance about the change
however, was that in so many ways there was no change; the later stories for women were so similar in plot and characterization to the earlier adventure stories that a continuous line of development could be traced from the beginning of the century to the 1980s. In nearly a hundred years the genre had been remarkably conservative. Yet one audience had been lost, another won. Did this mean that the situations of romance had a different significance for women than for men, one which was still important to them after male readers had ceased to find satisfaction in them?

Such a question was unlikely to find an answer when I first became acquainted with the books. I would not even have tried to ask it: historical stories were dismissed as popular fiction, and not a suitable subject for serious study. Historical fiction was in any case considered a bastard genre, neither accurate history nor good literature. Georg Lucaks had, it is true, produced an entire critical work about it; but even though it began with a discussion of Scott's work, The Historical Novel took as its subject matter serious European novels which used their settings to recreate the past or to show the growth of popular movements. English historical fiction since Scott was briefly dismissed as unimportant. In England, the genre was held in low repute. Whether a historical novel could ever be a "good" book was a favourite subject at one time for school essays. In The
Listener of 30th May, 1963, Helen Cam remarked on the way in which the historical novel was dismissed as a "literary hybrid", an uneasy merger of fact and fiction.

She was however, anticipating a revival of interest in the genre. In her article she defends them as giving an imaginative understanding of the past, and adding concreteness to abstraction. In much the same terms, Anna Davin was later to provide an influential defence of children's historical fiction in History Workshop. Both these defenders of historical fiction were selective, singling out fiction which they considered of high quality and so by implication admitting the worthlessness of much of the genre. For Davin, good present day novelists for children included Barbara Willard and Robert Leeson: Cam cited H.F.M. Prescott and Robert Graves.

Since Helen Cam wrote, the value of quality historical fiction has been accepted. Although Peter Vansittart, writing in The London Magazine, noted the general scorn with which much historical fiction was still regarded, and admitted that in popular swashbuckling novels the effect of the dialogue could be comic, he pointed out that the best of historical writers - for him, Mary Renault and Henry Treece - could be taken seriously. Such writers, he thought, did not merely exploit the past but used it to enter the heart of myth: to create a "Moon-grammar" in Thomas Mann's term, which could give understanding of the mind of primitive man.
Since the beginning of the 1970s, historical fiction has been the subject of a number of critical studies. In 1971 Avrom Fleishman lamented the dearth of critical histories of the historical novel. Like other defenders of the form, he was interested in serious or "quality" examples, explaining that his intention was to provide an evaluation of the works as well as placing them within a history of the genre. The novels he found worthy of consideration in the twentieth century, for instance, were by established serious novelists: Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, and Conrad's *The Rover*. Other writers include novelists catering for the more popular end of the market in their studies, as well as books by well-known "quality" novelists. Andrew Sanders, for example, includes chapters on Harrison Ainsworth and Bulwer Lytton, though this is as a prelude to a study of authors such as Dickens, Thackeray, Gaskell, Eliot or Hardy. His main intention is to refute Lukacs's view that English historical fiction ceased to merit serious study after Scott's death, since it departed from the model he provided of showing a whole society at a time of crucial change through the fortunes of a neutral hero, and isolating those factors which led to progress. Sanders believes that its very variety of form and purpose is one of the strengths of the English historical novel; he is not, however, primarily concerned with showing how the cloak-and-dagger novel evolved, so that Ainsworth, for
example, is seen as more interesting by reason of his evanescent popular reputation than from his place in the evolution of a genre, and the study is of course limited to nineteenth century fiction.

Nineteenth century historical fiction has by now, in fact, been studied reasonably thoroughly. Nicholas Rance 7 for example, in his study of the presentation of popular movements in English historical fiction, and Raymond Chapman 8 and J.C. Simmonds 9, who have both given accounts of the way in which the past was treated in Victorian fiction, allaying the growth of the genre to a growing interest in historiography, have all provided fascinating insights into its various aspects. Studies of the period in which the particular development which interested me took place are less easy to find. There are brief accounts of Weyman, Sabatini or Farnol in such general studies as Edwardian Fiction by Jefferson Hunter 10 or, much further back in time, the encyclopaedic volumes of E.H. Baker's The History of the English Novel 11 (Baker's A Guide to Historical Fiction 12 remains one of the only comprehensive bibliographies of the genre as far as it goes); but these are little more than passing references to a particular aspect of popular taste.

None of these studies, in any case, consider recent historical fiction, and it appears that the feeling that popular historical fiction, as opposed to more serious examples of the genre, is somehow unrespectable remains
strong. As late as 1985, in *Encounter*, Joan Aiken was distinguishing between two motives for reading historical fiction, one more important than the other: escape, and the need to make contact with the traditions of one's culture. In the same year, Umberto Eco was also writing about historical novels in *Encounter*: he distinguished three kinds of writing about the past, fantasy, swash-buckling romance, and novels which gave a strong feeling of a specific time and place. Naturally, it was the last which interested him, since he counted *The Name of the Rose* as belonging to this category. He did not condemn swashbuckling romance, though he may have been thinking particularly of Dumas and his followers; he stresses the importance in such writing of using real historical personages as central figures, which very few full-blown English romances after Ainsworth do. Weyman, for example, follows Scott in using an imaginary hero and using historical figures only as secondary characters. This is generally true, too, of twentieth century romance.

Certainly when compared with a serious historical novel such as John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* or William Golding's *The Inheritors*, a romance by Barbara Cartland seems very thin. *The Inheritors*, for instance, invites the reader to empathise with a mind and culture very different from our own. Such a novel disturbs our settled view of the world, and provokes us into reassessing both what it is to be human and what the roots of our culture really are. The answers are not likely to leave us
complacent. What can the Cartland teach us? That if a
girl plays her cards right and keeps her virginity she can
marry a Marquis? While the Golding, apparently so remote,
forces the reader to confront his or her own culture, the
Cartland seems quite unconnected with it.

Even if the comparison is between a romantic novelist
and middle-brow author such as Mary Renault, the
difference is still striking. The Last of the Wine, though
giving a vivid picture of life in the time of Socrates, is
at the same time a love-story which has both sentimental
and sensational elements. Yet it is more than that: it
is not only a historical novel, but also a plea for
regarding homosexual love with as much understanding and
respect as heterosexual feeling. In its time, the book was
as disturbing to easy complacencies as the Golding novel,
and, in addition, it provides the kind of insight into the
life of the past which Cam and Aiken claimed was the
achievement of good historical fiction. The reader is
led to experience not only the superficialities of life in
another age, but a wholly different way of thinking and
feeling, while at the same time becoming aware of the
universality of the relationships portrayed. Writers such
as H.F.M. Prescott and Zoe Oldenbourg have something of
the same quality; so, despite their humorously cynical
tone, do Alfred Duggan and Robert Graves. At worst, their
books give a sense of what it might have felt like to be
alive in an alien world; at best, they raise issues as
serious as any explored by more prestigious fiction.

This is not, of course, to say that what can be "learned" from such books is unproblematic. Mary Renault herself pointed out that an "objective" picture of the past is an impossibility; authors take their own attitudes into the past, and these attitudes are formed by their own culture. Nonetheless, the books develop qualities of imaginative empathy and suggest ways of reassessing the present. Barbara Cartland, who at her most prolific in the nineteen-seventies was writing twenty-four novels a year, is evidently a different case altogether. Fresh insights cannot be expected from every novel among so many. More than any other novelist, she reshuffles and reconnects the stock motifs of historical romance to make up her plots. Novels such as hers, whatever their claims, seem to offer little more than entertainment for an hour or so. Why, then be concerned with them or with their readers?

And yet, as Christopher Pawling writes, the attitude which dismisses popular literature of this kind as mere entertainment, not worth serious consideration, is changing. Since the 1960s, popular fiction has begun to attract scholars, linking literature with other fields of study such as sociology. After all, why should a form of fiction which attracts so many be dismissed so easily? Already, in 1964, Stuart Hall and P. Whannel's *The Popular Arts* had provided a model for the study of popular
culture. In 1977, Alan Swingewood's influential polemic, *The Myth of Mass Culture*, condemned the view that culture was something to be guarded by a privileged elite, and that there was something inherently unhealthy about popular genres. Popular literature has suffered neglect in the past because, in the words of Christopher Pawling, it forms a "paraliterature" whose existence is necessary to define the literature canon: popular literature is precisely whatever true literature is not. Such a view was anathema to Swingewood. "Mass culture" as a term has connotations of superficiality and inferiority, and this, thought Swingewood, is a denigration of those who enjoy it. "If culture is the means whereby man affirms his humanity and purposes and his aspirations to freedom and dignity then the concept and the theory of mass culture are their denial and negation", he concluded. In 1976 John Cawelti's articles in *Critical Inquiry* and his book *Adventure, Mystery and Romance* had suggested that "formulaic" fiction has a different function from "elite" fiction. The method and purpose of a study of popular fiction may differ from that of more traditional literary studies, but such writers suggest that it has a value of its own.

What is that value? Pawling suggests that popular fiction "reflects social meanings" and "intervenes in the life of society by organizing and interpreting experiences which have previously been subjected only to partial
reflection" 22. Such organization is not only, or even primarily, brought about by the direct expression of attitudes in the text. Forms of narrative, kinds of discourse, the images of fantasy, all are important vehicles of significance. "Popular-culture texts", writes Graham Martin in Readers, Viewers and Texts, offer "symbolic means of identification with, and symbolic means of dissent from, the society in which we live" 23.

It is, therefore, one of the purposes of this study to consider the ways in which popular historical writers use the past, and the kinds of situation suggested by their setting, as a symbol for such identification and dissent.

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In the first place, popular history is in itself a potent social symbol. Often it has the function of a myth, in helping us to define our national and social identity. When this is combined with a form of narrative - romance - which has itself had a powerful symbolic function for nearly two millennia, the myth gives added power. For if indeed the past is another country, then, as a setting, it gives to historical fiction a remoteness appropriate to that dreamlike fantasy in which our
inarticulate perceptions are best enacted. The situations of romance provide just such a fantasy.

The aim of this study is, therefore, to trace the way in which symbolic fantasies take shape and combine with the myths of history and, especially, the ways in which these fantasies change, if at all, as the readership of the genre changes.

In order to locate such changes, the origin and development of historical romance will be considered, together with its characteristic structures and stock situations. This will be followed by a closer analysis of some representative texts: novels by Conan Doyle, Weyman and Mason have been chosen to give an idea of the range covered by historical romance at the end of the last century. In various ways, Baroness Orczy, Jeffrey Farnol and Raphael Sabatini modified the genre, so their work will be analyzed as a preliminary to the study of Georgette Heyer's novels. Her work will be considered in some detail, as the writer who did most to change the nature of the genre from cloak-and-dagger stories to female romance. Despite this change, as has been noted, many of the plot situations remained the same; the implications of this will be considered. Heyer laid the basis for a popular genre which had much in common with women's romance as it developed. There are a large number of contemporary practitioners, a range of whose work has also been analyzed.
Christopher Pawling has noted that criticism of popular fiction has either been sociological, centring upon the images of social identity reproduced in the narrative "discourse", or has considered the way in which narrative strategy and ideology inter-relate. Both provide interesting but partial views of a genre. One way of overcoming this division is to use an eclectic, even pluralistic, approach, and this is the approach which has been adopted in this study. Thus it is hoped to provide a rounded portrait of the ways in which the texts express the attitudes, acknowledged and unacknowledged, of their readers. Inevitably, as an introductory account of a genre at a time of its development when it has been given almost no previous coverage, it is an extensive one, examining a wide range of texts in order to test out the generalisations put forward. To have followed one cortical approach would have diminished this necessary extension. To examine one aspect of the genre in closer focus would be a considerable study in itself; one of the functions of this thesis is to provide growing points for such studies.

Most accounts of historical fiction published in the seventies have taken a literary-historical approach for their framework at least, and in the descriptive account of the genre which forms a basis for further analysis it seemed useful to gather some of this material to show how, throughout its history, historical fiction has been
attracted to one or other of two poles: the realist-historical and the romantic. In the period at the end of the century when adventurous romantic stories were generally popular, historical fiction was predominantly of this type, blending history and adventure with a stock of conventional romantic motifs inherited from very ancient times. As the taste both for a partially realistic historical setting and for adventure declined, some of these elements gave place to more fantastic settings, and a greater stress on the conventional situations. Finally, these cloak-and-dagger novels gave place to a female-centred fiction in which the love-story, always important, began to predominate.

Since the genre is particularly notable for the way in which it blends historical detail with stock romantic situations, the description of the genre focusses on these elements and the way in which they are assimilated and integrated with the history. Here the approach of Formalist narratologists such as Vladimir Propp 25, with his work on the structure of folk-tale, and of structuralists such as Roland Barthes 26, Gerard Genette 27 and Umberto Eco 28 have been helpful. Propp's work on the morphology of the folk-tale has suggested that such "primitive" narrative follows a regular structural pattern which comprises a limited stock of plot elements. This insight was given more general application by Boris Tomashevski 29, who gave the term "motif" to the
smallest element of plot. This is a convenient term for the conventional situations of romance, and will be generally adopted during this study, unless a more detailed analysis requires a different terminology.

Romance has much in common with folk-tale as far as the narrative structure and content is concerned; in fact the genre has always contained an element of folk-tale and myth, subordinated in later romance to covelistic verisimilitude and historical particularity. Structuralist approaches therefore are particularly appropriate when analyzing the form of the genre. To borrow terminology from Saussurian linguistics, an approach which provided a basis for structuralism, the general framework of the situations as told in summary (The abduction of the heroine, for instance, or the disguised hero) forms the langue or "grammar" of historical romance, while the individual instance, with its specific detail linking it with the rest of the text (for example, Orelia being abducted by the Earl of Rotherton to Epsom after she has refused to marry him, in Cartland's The Wicked Marquis) is the parole. In differentiating the different kinds of motive and showing how they accommodate the historical material, however, Umberto Eco's concept of "common" and "inter-textual" frames provided an analytical framework which gave more useful information. More general frameworks, such as those of Genette and Barthes, showed the ways in which the
novels were structured in order to draw the reader in to the imagined world, to make it seem more like direct experience: a structure in which, as Janice Radway has suggested in *Reading the Romance* 31, much of the power of contemporary romance lies.

As both Claud Cockburn 32 and Adrian Mellor have suggested, the reactions of a genre's readership are difficult to determine, "beyond", as Mellor says, "the crudely quantitative measures of sales figures and bestseller lists," 33. In a diachronic study such as this, the task is complicated by the fact that, whereas the audience for contemporary romance is available for investigation through questionnaires and interviews, that for the older romances is, on the whole, not, so a recourse to best-seller lists, numbers of editions, or records of publication in particular periodicals whose readership is known, or whose advertising is aimed at a clear target is necessary to establish the kind of reader for whom the book was intended.

None the less, Claud Cockburn's comment that the study of bestsellers can throw light upon "moods, attitudes and needs which were, at one time and another, common to large sections of the class" which read it seems valid. This is particularly true in the case of a genre whose history shows a marked change of readership, with corresponding changes in attitude.
For the modern period, a good deal of research has been done on the readers of romances and their attitudes, most notably by Peter Mann. His study of a survey of "Mills & Boon" readers and of the Euromonitor survey have provided a useful picture of contemporary romance readers which includes the readership of historical romance. Further information about romance reading in the specific district of South Yorkshire was provided by a librarian working in this area, which gave important confirmatory material. In the case of Georgette Heyer's novels, the nature of their readership was already known to some extent through information she herself received, which has been used in Joan Aiken Hodge's biographical study of Heyer, The Private World of Georgette Heyer. Fan letters and surveys can give a good idea not only of the composition of the readership but also of their needs and attitudes.

The texts themselves also contain evidence of their reader's attitudes. Wolfgang Iser's theories, which suggest an active role for the reader, form a useful basis for determining these. Iser points out that the reader brings to the text a storehouse of experience and attitudes which enable him or her to fill in the "blanks" necessarily left in the text. It is the interplay of attitude and experience with the information given by the text which creates meaning. Although according to this theory interpretation must vary from reader to reader, as
their individual experience varies, Iser believed that the author had a reader with particular attitudes in mind when he wrote: an "implied reader" whose presence and nature can be determined by attention to the cues provided by the text.

Iser leaves the question of the meaning's exact location, and how far it is determined by the reader or by the text, in some confusion, a weakness of his theory which has been criticised by Stanley Fish. This does not, however, invalidate the notion that texts do appeal to a range of attitudes in the reader and evidence about these can be found in the textual cues which are available to trigger them. Attitudes thus inferred can be checked against the known concerns of the class to which the readers predominantly belonged. This method of analysis has therefore been applied to the texts in the first instance, to discover what message was being given to the readers and whether this corresponded with what was known of current attitudes.

The limitations of this approach, however, are that though it provides useful material on consciously held attitudes and the way in which images of social identity are built up, it does not take into account the messages which come from the forms of narrative themselves - the narrative structures, motifs and so on. Christopher Pawling's distinction between the reflection of "social meanings/mores" by popular fiction, and the creation of
meaning, a process by which such fiction intervenes in the life of society, has already been noted. For him, it is this aspect of popular fiction which is the more important.

Such a view of the reading process allows the reader an active role and so answers the objections of Janice Radway against the "cultural studies" approach to romance. She complains that often the meaning of the text is taken as being a fixed entity produced by the text itself: and, insofar as the meaning has an ideological content, the text exerts an "ideological control" which is "all-pervasive and complete". Such an objection must be taken seriously, occurring as it does in a study which sheds so much light on romance reading in America and provides valuable complementary evidence to that available about romance reading in this country.

However, it is surely true that a narrative does contain elements which are likely to cue certain effects in the readers, either through their form or their associations. When the range of possible significances is taken into account, an image of a genre's ideological nature can be built up. When inconsistencies, omissions and contradictions in the various elements of the text are noted, the narrative as a whole can be seen to appeal to certain kinds of need in the reader. These needs arise from the nature of the society in which he or she lives, and from the necessity of coming to terms with it.
Each of the methodological frames mentioned will be introduced in more detail when it is used in the analysis which follows. It is, however, worth mentioning at this point that the pluralism of method was a conscious choice. If a rounded picture of the genre is to emerge, its formal characteristics and its historical roots need to be taken into consideration. For such aspects, formalist and structuralist approaches offer a useful descriptive tool, to allow a portrait of the genre as it has developed since the end of the last century to emerge.

Other methods of analysis are, however, necessary if the picture of the genre is to be more than a superficial description. One of the assumptions on which the study is based is that the reader's construction of meaning is an active one. Reception theory, which approaches the text as a script, comprising cues to act as a base for the reader's concretization, gives an opening, though ultimately the probable significance of the text must be surmized by examining the symbolic connotations which the characters and situations together offer to the reader.

This consideration of the genre, therefore, rests on the basic assumption that fictional texts, including those belonging to popular genres, are semiotic in nature. One of the reasons often given for reading historical romances is "escape". Popular fiction of all kinds has been thought of as essentially "escapist", as "taking you out of yourself" and, by implication, as taking one away from the
problems of the "real" world. Our idea of what this "real" world comprises may include social and sexual relationships, or the difficulties of making ends meet, but also those problems over which we have no control, but which form an often frightening context to our lives. In Graham Martin's words, these make up "the public sphere in which there is overt discussion of such events as nuclear bombs, presidential elections and the plight of the Iranian hostages" 39.

Even at its most apparently frivolous, popular fiction presents us with stories in which themes such as these are touched upon, even if indirectly. Problems may be solved through the medium of an invented utopian situation, but, this in itself, as Cockburn says, is a guide to the moods and aspirations of the readers 40. Thus, the examination of a number of popular texts can show how such problems are addressed in "fantasy", and the kind of imagined solutions implicitly proposed can be matched against what is known of the situation and attitudes of the readers. As Christopher Pawling has pointed out, however, the danger of such an analysis is that it can become mere "content analysis", suggesting a naive view of the ways in which texts help to produce ideology 41. Pierre Macherey, in his analysis of the work of Jules Verne 42, has shown that a fictional text produces an imagined world which embodies features of the ideology current in its social context. Because this
ideology does not match reality, however, the text is flawed by contradictions or the need for "magical resolutions" which undermine the apparent consistency of the world-view it presents.

The historical novel is in any case a genre which necessarily presents an invented world - the world of the past, which must be fictional because of the limitations of our knowledge of the reality. Historical romance in particular links this imaginary world to fictional situations which, through their long history, have acquired a potent "mythic" quality in reflecting the fears and aspirations of their readers. It is hoped, therefore, to show in succeeding chapters how the features of this imagined world, embodied in romantic situations, do help to fulfil these changing needs.
Chapter two

What is historical romance?

The remarks about what Eco termed the "swashbuckling novel" by Fleishman, Aiken, Eco himself and Hewison show that for these commentators at least historical romance formed a distinct sub-genre of historical fiction as a whole. Eco's placing of this subgenre in a central position, distinguished on the one hand from pure fantasy by verisimilitude and from historical novels on the other by the comparative lack of importance given to the creation of a specific sense of place and time, is particularly suggestive. It is a reminder that historical romance is a mixed genre.

"Historical Romance" is a term used loosely at times by booksellers to denote a historical novel of any kind. None the less, since the end of the nineteenth century one group of novels has displayed a degree of homogeneity in its use of romantic plots and characters. Typical books of this kind can be differentiated from earlier fiction because of their unified structure, and from other historical fiction by their plots (which are almost entirely invented) and the comparative lack of importance given to the actual presentation of history.

In this more precise sense, historical romances are linked by a common stock of motifs, the use of which
connects them to other literary forms such as women's romance: a connection which has been strong since the nineteen twenties. In forming and maintaining this link, historical romance has become steadily more formulaic, and, as was noted in chapter one, both genres are seen as popular, examples of mass art in a derogatory sense. None the less, they have a provenance in ancient romance, a genre which has not always been regarded as popular literature for the unthinking masses. Moreover, "serious" novels - both mainstream and historical - contained a number of romantic elements in the early years of the form's development. Since the end of the last century, however, the use of stock romantic motifs has been a particular characteristic of historical romance and with their increased use there has been a gradual development towards a less complex structure, a style which aids reader identification with the characters and a downplaying of the historical context. Critics have tended to see swashbuckling novels only in their historical aspect; in view of the way in which the genre has changed, it may be more fruitful to approach the genre first as a variant of romance.

Gillian Beer, writing of romance in the "Critical Idiom" series, lists some eight or nine features by which this genre is characterized, "Romance", she says, "invokes the past or the socially remote", and tends to be set in "an aristocratic and idealized world". This distant
setting is, however, realized in great detail, and emotional reactions and relationships are presented with a directness which gives an impression of verisimilitude, despite the unlikelihood of much of the action. The major themes of romance are adventure and sexual love, with a narrow range of behaviour and experience being portrayed. Well-known stories, reassuring in their familiarity, are used and re-used. For essentially the romance is written to entertain: it frees the reader from "inhibitions and preoccupations" by drawing him or her into its own world.

With these elements in mind, it may be seen that the historical novel must necessarily include some element of romance. The use of the past as a setting has an inevitable distancing effect on the action, and the prototype of the historical novel in England, Scott's Waverley, used themes of love and adventure which remained the staple of plots in this genre throughout the century and beyond.

Scott himself, however, felt that he was not writing romance when he produced a historical novel. He wrote in the preface to Waverley that he wanted to find a ground between the "remote picturesqueness" of romance, and the ephemerality of a modern fashionable setting. He hoped that this would provide a foundation for a study of permanent human characteristics ("those passions common to
men in all stages of society"), as opposed to the temporary impulses of human nature.

Gillian Beer thought the "accuracy of Scott's historicism, his sense of precise periods and their relationship to the time at which he writes, separates most of his work from the romance tradition." His characters, for instance, may have differed from those of contemporary realistic fiction but were freshly observed and well rounded, "drawn on an equivalent scale". So "accuracy" and "realism" divided Scott from the romance, but in the hands of later, less accurate, historical novelists, "the historical novel does become a "lax sort of romance" which is the focus of attention here.

All romantic historical fiction contains a good many common features. As Eco suggests, setting is subordinate to plot. The social world portrayed is primarily anaristocratic one. In fact, the characteristics of the books conform well enough to Gillian Beer's list of the characteristics of romance, described above, to justify
their grouping under the general title of "historical romance". If she is right in her claim that this is a "lax sort of romance", it is presumably because the world described is so far from our own that we are never encouraged to relate it to our own lives. Beer points out that both Sidney's Arcadia and Spenser's The Faerie Queene have an educative function, idealizing and confirming desirable social traits and moral attitudes. Romance in the past was generally characterized by this function, whereas twentieth century romantic novels, contemporary or historical in setting, are not.

Perhaps the most striking way in which historical romance reveals its connection with the romantic genre is in the use and re-use of certain stock themes, many of which are familiar from earlier romantic literature. Most authors are content to rearrange a relatively small selection of these without attempting much originality. In book after book, from the end of the nineteenth century onwards, one finds the same episodes, the same attributes,
the same sequences: sometimes it seems that only the names have been changed. It is this feature as much as any other which gives historical romance its appearance of homogeneity. Obviously, much the same is true of all popular genres: historical romance has its own characteristic stock.

It is the nature of these stock situations which link historical "cloak-and-dagger" fiction most clearly to romance. Abductions, escapes, rescues, disguises and unknown identities have been the mainstay of romantic plots since the days of the first Greek romances by Longinus, Achilles Tatius and their fellows. Indeed, in an analysis of these, Margaret Williamson suggests that the situations are older: though formally the romances claim to be based on "epic and drama" [by implication, tragedy], "with rhetoric as a later addition", there is another unacknowledged influence: Greek New Comedy. The content of both of these Williamson suggests, originated in "widespread traditional story material". The "pairs of
lovers" characteristic of these genres may be found in early historical writing such as that by Xenophon, but other stereotyped motifs can be found in a variety of traditional sources, oriental as well as Greek. The basic material of romance was thus "already ancient" when the first ones were written. It may be added that this mating of traditional folk-tale material with contemporary rhetorical traditions can be found also in medieval chivalric romances, as has been shown by Claude Luttrell 10 Evidently the form is one which naturally tends to combine with dominant contemporary literary traditions.

Although some Renaissance romance, such as The Arcadia, and Lyly's Euphues, may have been educative in intention, as Beer claims, nonetheless the essential story material of romance remains the same. The traditional situations of romance seem little affected by the intention of the writer, or by the nature of the audience, the plots of seventeenth century French romances like Mdlle. de Scudery's The Grand Cyrus, written for sophisticated and fashionable readers, drawing upon the same stock as popular medieval romances such as Bevis of Hamptoun.

However, in thus noting a continuity of plot content between ancient and modern romances, it must not be forgotten that there is a considerable formal difference. Ancient romance represented an amalgam of traditional matter with a manner derived from epic and drama "with a
high proportion of direct speech", and "internal conflict .... expressed in the form of debate", overlaid with the conventional devices of rhetoric 11. Modern romance however is a variety of novel. Novels are like romances in focussing on individual experience, but unlike them in their verisimilitude. Detail is naturalistic, the setting is in a real time and place, carefully specified, and the characters' actions are seen as springing at least in part from their choices, rather than being under the control of some such power as Love or Chance. This element of verisimilitude is characteristic of what Ian Watt has termed "formal realism" 12, a form which gives the imaginative experience of reading a novel a very different flavour from that of reading a romance, with its implications of fantasy and magic.

The two modes are able to co-exist in one genre because the devices of realism themselves allow the reader to accept with a suspension of disbelief the most fantastic situations, unlikely causality and stereotyped, rather than original, situations. Even contemporary historical romances, written for readers who, as Janice Radway has shown in Reading the Romance take the novel to be a mirror of everyday reality 13, often contain episodes which in a fairy story could be presented as magical. Barbara Cartland's The Magnificent Marriage (1974) contains an example. Of the two sisters at the centre of the novel, one is ugly, rejected and hidden away, the
other preferred and indulged. Yet in true fairy story fashion it is the harshly treated one who is good, the other who, though not bad (she is a rather pathetic figure), is spoiled. The good sister accompanies the other as a sort of servant on a voyage to marry the hero—who, though not a conventional prince is virtually the ruler of his own state in Singapore—and as she deals uncomplainingly with the sister's tantrums is transformed, literally overnight, into a beauty. This kind of transformation can be accepted in a romance like The Marriage of Sir Gawaine, but is startling in a contemporary novel. Verisimilitude is given by rationalizing the event: Dorinda, the good sister, was suffering from a severe form of exzema, which was cured by the warm, moist air of the tropics. There is even a note at the beginning of the novel to say that such cures are well-documented. As this is not presented as magic but as scientific fact, it can be accepted in its context.

Such a dressing up of a magical motif to seem part of everyday reality is not unique, of course. Much traditional romantic material was to be found in the eighteenth century novel, not changed so much as adapted to the new form. Thus, in Richardson's Pamela, it is a servant girl, not a noblewoman, who is the distressed maiden, the object of abduction and imprisonment by a villain inflamed by her beauty in the conventionally romantic manner; and, again in romantic style, Joseph and
Fanny are a pair of lovers, whose true identity is only revealed at the end of *Joseph Andrews*. Joseph's adventures are not different in kind from those of romantic heroes, but they have a more commonplace setting.

Nor do romances and realistic novels form two entirely distinct genres after the eighteenth century. The difference between them is the result of a differing proportion of naturalism and unreality. The two kinds of writing are given the same name in French, and in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the terms "novel" and "romance" were used almost indiscriminately. Nonetheless, "romance" could be used to characterize a particular kind of novel - one less naturalistic and with an interest which derives, like that of older romance, from "a potentially endless ... sequence of thrills" and "a good deal of wish-fulfilment." ¹⁴ When Harrison Ainsworth, in the preface to *Rookwood* in 1834, claimed to be reviving the charms of "old Romance" ¹⁵ he was clearly not referring to the novel as a whole, which had been flourishing in undiminished vigour, but neither was he looking back to Malory or Sidney: his "Romance" was a Gothic novel, as exemplified by the work of Mrs. Radcliffe. Northrop Frye, too, points to the differences between the romantic and realistic tradition in *The Secular Scripture* ¹⁶, when he remarks upon the difficulty with which readers used to more realistic novelists

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approach Scott. Clearly there is a difference of expectation which suggests a different genre.

Scott's use of the past was not, of course, simple in its effects, but one aspect of its function was the validation of fantastic incidents from the romantic tradition. On the one hand the past provided a setting whose difference from the everyday made fantastic events seem possible; on the other, the use of a precise date and inclusion of well-known historical events seemed to guarantee the narrative's truth. In using history in this way he was still conforming to the romantic tradition; "love-interest" episodes in historical writing are cited by Margaret Williamson 17 as a possible origin for romance, in one of its aspect of least. She also notes that the earliest of the romancers, Chariton, was "precise and accurate about the historical setting for his story": 18 a historical novelist, in fact. Scott was thus writing something which could certainly be called history, and as certainly romance; a mixture which his followers also used, though in different proportions. To understand more exactly what kind of genre Scott had created, and how historical romance in the sense defined above came to evolve from it, a brief explanation of the development of the form in the nineteenth century is necessary.

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Although authors had used settings in the past before Sir Walter Scott did, and he himself acknowledged the influence of Maria Edgeworth, he is generally credited with originating the true historical novel. Writers of Gothic romances such as Horace Walpole and Ann Radcliff used medieval settings to enhance the element of terror in their work; it was the assumed lawlessness and superstition of the period which made it attractive for such a purpose. Though Clara Reeve's novel *The Old English Baron* has been called a "historical romance" 19, the function of the setting is still to enhance the adventure rather than to provide serious interest for its own sake.

Scott's novels gave a sense of the essential difference of the past from the present, while at the same time historical accuracy made the setting seem real and credible. The books appealed to a growing interest in historicity, and a nostalgia for the past which was understandable in an age which saw itself as an age of transition. The past in Scott's novels did not, therefore, merely serve to validate the fantasy. He wrote at a period when the past, already valued by Romantics for its mystery and as a time when mankind was in a more primitive and therefore more "natural" stage of its development, was increasingly attracting interest for its own sake, as a model for the present or as containing the seeds of contemporary society.
To express this was a task for which pure romance was unsuited. It was the development of the novel which made a specifically historical fiction possible. In The Rise of the Novel, Ian Watt has pointed out that medieval writers were both "a-historical" in outlook and strikingly uninterested in "the minute-by-minute and day-to-day temporal setting". The "temporal dimension" of fiction as late as the seventeenth century was "vague and unparticularized", and history was seen mainly as a source of "eternally applicable exempla". Even a superficial comparison between the way history is used by Shakespeare, for instance, and by Scott underlines the truth of this. By the Victorian period, however, this attitude towards history had changed. Raymond Chapman has remarked on the Victorian sense of "modernity", an awareness of their own age as different from the past, and Avrom Fleishman has noted an interest in historicity which derived in part from the Romantic movement and in part from a feeling that industrialization had cut contemporary society cleanly from the older world. Chapman also notes that history was seen by many as providing valuable lessons for the present, though for authors such as Dickens the lessons may have been in the mistakes of the past rather than in the origination of healthy lines of social and constitutional development. Novels could provide a vehicle for such lessons, as well as showing how the present arose from the past.
For this purpose, accurate historicity was important. In Scott's novels, therefore, the past is presented with verisimilitude even when it provides a source of romantic atmosphere. He may thus be seen as occupying a central point in historical fiction, between the romantic historical novels and those written to illuminate the past or the present through the past. Even in his own work there is a difference between novels like Waverley itself or The Antiquary, which combine a romantic plot interest with a portrait of a society at a moment of change, and some of the later novels such as Ivanhoe and The Talisman in which the past is presented as more exotic - an exciting background for adventure.

In his work one may see the genesis of two differing tendencies: towards presenting the past either as containing real periods of time which had characteristics linking them with the present but which gained their interest from their difference, or as the exotic context for adventures too fantastic to imagine in a contemporary, everyday setting. How this relates to the development of historical romance as a genre may be seen from a brief account of how these two tendencies developed in historical novels from the days of Scott to the present century. Scott's followers, in a genre which was to prove so dominant in the early nineteenth century that most well known novelists tried their hand at it, tended to follow one path or the other. Nonetheless, during the first two
thirds of the century there was no clear division. "Romancers" were fascinated by the historical "realists" contained marked romantic elements.

In this they were not unlike nineteenth century novels of the mainstream. The very fulness of the multi-plotted Victorian novel meant that it could contain without incongruity both realistic and romantic situations. Mainstream novelists used the past as a setting, though not always to the same effect as Scott. Lukacs's comment about "the sharpening of social trends in an historical crisis" 24, which he saw as being revealed in Scott's work, might be applied with as much justification to Dickens as to Scott; but for Dickens the present as well as the past was a source of symbolic action which revealed the essential nature of society. *A Tale of two Cities* and *Barnaby Rudge* are not different in kind from his novels with a contemporary setting, and do not make the readers particularly conscious of the "otherness" of the period in which they are set. Consequently, he cannot be regarded as a purely historical novelist.

There were, however, many novelists who specialized in historical fiction, following Scott, though sometimes at a distance. Both G.P.R. James and William Harrison Ainsworth, the most notorious of these, sent work to Scott for his comment; his encouragement was instrumental in leading James to publish *Richelieu*, his first and best-
known work. Though James thus clearly saw himself as following in Scott's footsteps, the reader is not nearly so conscious of the portrait of a historical society as he or she is in Scott's fiction. Instead, the focus is upon the complicated intrigue and intermingled plot lines. In his books one can see the formulaic nature of historical romance at the very beginning of the genre's development. His triple plots, and the figure of a lone horseman which so often marked the opening became well enough known to be parodied.

Ainsworth saw himself as essentially a romantic writer, reviving the "old Romance" of the eighteenth century Gothic revival. He, too, was fond of a multiplicity of plot-lines, mingling low comedy, adventure, sensation and tragedy. His stories are full of secret corridors, trap-doors and disguises. Scott referred to him in a general complaint about authors who researched too much without ever digesting what they had learned so that it fitted into the plot naturally 25. Ainsworth, in fact, was apt to intersperse his narrative with dry gobbets of information about the historical buildings at the centre of his novels - old St. Paul's, for example, the Tower, or Windsor Castle. Nonetheless he was not averse to twisting the facts if it suited the romantic effect he wanted. Both of these writers, therefore, tended to play up the more sensational aspects of history (torture and executions, for example), at the
expense of presenting a realistic portrait of an age. The glamour of the past was stressed, too, in the lavish descriptions of magnificent clothes and rich surroundings: Louis James 26 quotes a passage from Ainsworth's *The Tower of London* which makes much of his heroine's gown of cloth of gold and pearls, her stomacher "blazing with diamonds and other precious stones", and ruby necklace.

What can be seen in the work of these writers is a shifting of the historical novels towards the sensational and romantic end of the realism/romance continuum, and the stressing of some of those qualities which were to lead the historical romance towards popular success and critical disrepute. The success was very considerable; James's sales were such that when W.H. Smith, who opened their railway bookstalls in 1848, gave a list of their most popular authors James ranked among the three most successful. He was an indefatigable contributor to popular series such as the Parlour and Railway Libraries. Ainsworth's success has been called "phenomenal", though it was short-lived 27.

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These writers were, therefore, bestsellers, widely read for a short period and then forgotten. Their readers, even of the cheap editions, represent the "respectable" end of the mass market - comprising those readers who could afford to pay for light reading on a train journey but begrudged paying more than 3/- or 5/- (and even less as new technology lowered the price of cheap reprints). The lower end of the mass market was catered for by "Salisbury Square" publications - those tales of sentiment and sensation which were produced in penny numbers by publishers such as Thomas Prest and Edward Lloyd. These readers were eager for romance on the Ainsworth/James model as well: a preference which is clearly manifested in the plagiarized imitations of these authors' works.

Scott himself did not provide a particularly fertile source of models for these, with one exception. Ivanhoe was particularly popular because of its adventurous plot and use of romantic motifs such as the disguised and disinherited son, or the vulnerable young woman who is in danger of falling into the hands of a powerful villain. Situations and characters from the novel - particularly that of Rebecca - found their way into the work of the dramatist Thomas Archer, or of T.P. Prest, the author of Sweeney Todd.

Ainsworth was more susceptible to such imitation or, indeed, outright plagiarism. As Ainsworth's Tower of London was published in shilling parts, the publisher
Edward Lloyd brought out an "adapted" version under the title of *A Legend of the Tower of London* by W.H. Hainsforth: a production on a par with the numerous plagiarisms of Dicken's novels. Characters are renamed to make them more easily accessible, and the comic element is stressed. Lavish descriptions of surroundings and clothing are given, more elaborate even than Ainsworth's own: Louis James 28 compares these to the elaborate baroque of fairgrounds and circuses. *Old St. Paul's* was also imitated, though not by Lloyd.

What these imitations show is the historical romance of this kind made a powerful appeal to a mass market, which explains the eventual development of this genre as a part of popular literature despite the association with apparently intellectually demanding subject matter. The books of Lloyd, and later popular writers such as G.W.M. Reynolds, whose *The Mysteries of the Court of London* and *Mysteries of London* were set in the Regency, emphasised the sensationalism of their subject matter. Reynold's productions verged on the pornographic, with a frequent use of a brothel as setting and a stress on the Regent's love-affairs, and his *Mysteries of the Inquisition* emphasised the element of cruelty in scenes of torture.

Thus the "Salisbury Square" fiction of Lloyd and the other popular productions suggest that what the majority of readers valued in historical novels was their potential for sensationalism. The remoteness of even the recent
past meant that the constraints of everyday reality could be dispensed with and fantasy allowed freer play. At the same time, the location of the story in a specific historical setting, rather than in the more vaguely exotic Middle Ages of the Gothic romance, validated the most fantastic action and made its more questionable aspects seem respectable. Since historians of the period tended to concentrate on the actions of great men, and in particular on the actions of past kings and noblemen, the story could reasonably focus on the activities of the aristocracy, and consequently admit lavish descriptions of locations and costume. The past was brought to life as a more savage, but more vivid age; and both these aspects gave pleasure. This kind of pleasure remained dormant in nineteenth century historical fiction of the mainstream, but it was eventually to become an important ingredient in later popular historical romance, whether the plot focussed on adventure, love, or "bodice-ripping".

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In the early part of the nineteenth century, therefore, historical romance was already developed in embryo. Nonetheless, it did not develop fully until later in the century. The reason for this is the growth of the
more realistic tendency in fiction. Readers who at one time were satisfied with a combination of formal realism and melodramatic plots came to demand fiction which related more closely to everyday experience and dealt seriously with the issues of the day, even while it entertained. Such a development can be traced through their preferred reading: that is by the impact which the taste of the readers had on writers and publisher. John Sutherland 29, for instance, has compared the career of Dickens with that of Harrison Ainsworth. He has isolated in both a crucial turning point: Dickens, with the publications of David Copperfield in 1849-50 and Ainsworth, with Mervyn Clitheroe in 1851 attempted books which extended their range, and which were at first coolly received by the readers, as can be seen in reduced sales. Dickens refused to return to his old formula; Ainsworth did so, and his sales thereafter went steadily downhill, until he could scarcely expect any profit from his books and eventually had to sell the house he had bought in a time of prosperity. Dickens, of course, went on to dominate nineteenth century writing and publishing. More of the same old fashioned romance could please for a time, but ultimately the new tastes which developed as the readers followed writers such as Dickens and Thackeray drove out the old.

A taste for realism in historical fiction developed at the same time as that for romance, as can be seen by
the success of the work of Edward Bulwer-Lytton. He was a writer of more serious pretensions than Ainsworth and James. Like Scott, he thought that the past was relevant to the present, and believed himself to be creating a new national epic. He interpreted the crises of the past as a myth for the present, and felt that it was the business of the historical novelist to explore the minds and feelings of the great men of the past. Consequently, his novels are centred round actual historical figures and in many ways The Last of the Barons and Harold are more like fictionalised biographies than the portraits of whole societies which Scott had popularized. The books contain romantic plot elements, but they are necessarily more tied to the facts of history than Ainsworth's, for all the latter's research.

Bulwer Lytton achieved a "bestseller" status only just short of that of G.P.R. James. A realistic historical setting could, therefore, be as much a recommendation to public favour as could an exciting tale. Sanders feels that Bulwer Lytton represented a new mood in the public: one which rejected romanticism (which Bulwer thought "morbid") in favour of interest in politics, national consciousness and historicism. He aimed to produce a "national epic", and his work is essentially serious and high-principled, finding in past crises much that throws light on relevant moral issues. In this his work contrasts with that of Ainsworth or James, who escape
into a wildly nightmarish past. Ernest A. Baker has pointed out that the historical novels of the mid-nineteenth century were realistic rather than romantic, and works like Thackeray's *Henry Esmond* and his other historical novels, or Mrs. Gaskell's *Sylvia's Lovers* exemplify this spirit, eschewing sensation to give a sense of what it really felt like to live in a past age, thinking and feeling as men really did then.

This kind of historical fiction has always been important, and sometimes achieved a popular success as great as that of the romancers. This was, perhaps, because of their recreation of a past age, or their relevance to issues of contemporary concern, but perhaps also because they combined elements of adventure and sensation with their debates and reconstructions. Cardinal Wiseman's *Fabiola*, for instance, though serious in intent, has a plot filled with unlikely coincidences and bizarre events. J.H. Shorthouse's popular *John Inglesant* showed a man searching for religious and emotional fulfilment in seventeenth century Europe; the serious theme is combined with an exciting adventure story. Charles Reade's *The Cloister and the Hearth* celebrated the new learning of the Renaissance; it confirmed Victorian attitudes to knowledge, positivist and scientific, by its resolute anti-clericalism, at the same time as it provided entertainment through its picaresque tale. An example from the beginning of the present century is Maurice
Hewlett, whose books were not unlike Bulwer's in dealing with real historical figures, though it must be admitted that, at a time when romance was again predominant, the atmosphere of the books is more romantic than realistic. Perhaps a better example would be Ford Madox Ford, whose "Fifth Queen" trilogy, about the life of Katherine Howard, comprised books of a basically serious intention which showed the forces of history at work upon the individual.

In general, historical fiction of this kind could be differentiated from more romantic stories by a concern with serious issues; the adventurous elements sweetening the "pill" of moral concern. It made appeal to more reflective readers, who found that the past could be used to validate attitudes in the present. Stories of the early or medieval church, for instance, could promote positions within nineteenth century religious debate. Early Christianity was presented as a light in the pagan gloom in Wiseman's Fabiola or Cardinal Newman's Callista. In Hypatia, Charles Kingsley showed his philosopher heroine reaching towards a faith which integrates the best of Platonism with a pure and uncorrupted Christianity only to be destroyed by the intolerance of a church which has become institutionalized and intolerant. Later, Pater's Marius the Erpicurean was to take a similar theme.

In the twentieth century, too, there have been important novels dealing with serious issues in a historical setting: books by Helen Waddell, Margaret
Yourcner, H.M. Prescott or Mary Renault, for example. Robert Graves and Alfred Duggan are examples of historical writers who try to bring history closer by a lively, sometimes cynical tone, and an emphasis on the seamier aspects of past societies, but they deal none the less with serious themes. Mainstream novelists such as John Fowles or William Golding, too, have sometimes used the past as a setting, and in Graham Swift's *Waterland* history itself is the major theme. Books by writers such as these formed the centre of the debate about historical fiction in the forties and fifties. There was a growing sense that they represented a form of literature as worthwhile as a mainstream novel; but they were firmly differentiated from popular historical romance, which was another matter altogether.

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For romance had not been destroyed forever by mid-nineteenth century realism and seriousness. It survived, as has been seen, in some of the plot elements of the more serious novels, as well as in the literary underground of Lloyd and Reynolds. In mainstream fiction it received a new impetus, as Baker pointed out, with the success of Blackmore's *Lorna Doone*. This was succeeded by a large
number of popular romantic stories, such as those by R.L. Stevenson, more adventurous and less sensational than the romances of the early part of the century.

Adventurous plots had always been a part of the appeal of the historical novel. There are battles and a number of hair's breadth escapes in many of Scott's novels: some of the most popular, Rob Roy and Ivanhoe, are examples. Knightly combat was a natural concomitant of medieval settings, and these were especially popular in the nineteenth century. They confirmed the Victorian interest in chivalric values and the proper conduct of a gentleman. In addition, the geographical discoveries and explorations which came at the end of the middle ages and the beginning of the Renaissance were of interest because they flattered Victorian imperialism. Both periods offered scope for adventure of an active, outdoor kind; as exciting in its own way as the more sensational interests of the earlier historical novels, but to be promoted as healthier and more manly. The chivalric ideal tended to depress sexuality, and, in particular, the element of violence and sado-masochism which can be found in some of the semi-pornographic thrills of the cheaper fiction; in their place, the chivalric gentleman substituted respect for women and an ideal of love which tended towards worship. Both this change in attitude and the encouragement of an interest in outdoor adventure rather than sensationalism had the effect of at once raising the
status of women and of removing them from the chief sphere of action as far as the historical novel was concerned. As for the male reader, the encouragement of such fiction had a great deal to recommend it from his point of view; desire for adventure took many men from the country and sent them abroad to seek new markets for an expanding foreign trade.

Charles Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* is a good example of the expansionist spirit of this kind of fiction. The hero, Amyas, goes on his westward quest to rescue the woman he loves. He fails in this, and the rest of the story concerns his revenge against the Spanish captain who abducted the girl. This gives scope for exciting adventures among savage Indians, and episodes of endurance, initiative and bravery. Avrom Fleishman has commented on its jingoistic tone. Together with the same author's *Hereward, Last of the English*, he says that the story "leads us to another world ... the playful, legendary world of juvenile fiction" 33. Many of the historical adventures written in the latter half of the century tread the borderline between juvenile and adult fiction. Thus, R.L. Stevenson's *Treasure Island* was intended for a juvenile audience, as we know since it was told originally for his step-son, Lloyd Osborne. His *The Black Arrow* has a similar feeling of uncomplicated adventure, though with a certain complexity in the portrayal of Richard III. *Kidnapped* and *Catriona*, with
their focus on the likeable but fallible Alan Breck Stewart, suggest an approach to the Jacobite cause which is more detached than a child might be expected to bring to it, and these books link with the Scott tradition very strongly, to the extent that Catriona shares characters with Rob Roy.

Stevenson was one among many. Fleishman 34 comments on the number of "prolific commercial writers" who fill the lists of such bibliographers as Baker and Neild with an "inundation" of adventure stories set in the past. Of these, he notes G.A. Henty, Sabine Baring-Gould, Howard Pyle, and C.M. Yonge as typical. Charlotte Mary Yonge's Lances of Lynwood, for example, has a medieval setting and a strongly chivalrous atmosphere to complement its adventures. Nothing more different from the sensational thrills of the "Salisbury Square" fiction could be imagined. G.A. Henty was a prolific writer of adventure stories set at sea. Though these were set in the past, and past wars gave the adventures their starting point, the sea and the adventure provided the major interest.

Henty was probably one of the most popular purveyors of fiction for boys at the turn of the century, but his popularity was rivalled by that of Stanley J. Weyman. Weyman was less limited in range than Henty, and his books are clearly aimed at an adult audience. Kunitz and Haycraft 35, in their biographical accounts of nineteenth and twentieth century authors, say that he was the

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dominant historical novelist at the end of the nineteenth century, his novels making an appeal on a number of different levels. They always contained an element of adventure, arising from a quest, a mission, or an escape. The raison d'être of the adventure was, however, a moment of historical crisis, which was as important as the adventure. Weyman was particularly successful in finding the right balance between reassuring social attitudes and exciting adventures. Similar attitudes and plots can be found in the work of contemporaries such as his friend "Henry Seton Merriman", A. E. W. Mason, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. It is in the books of these writers that one first finds the prolific use of stereotyped plot situations and characters, such as disputed inheritances, lost heirs, abductions, misunderstandings between lovers, rescues of heroes by heroines and vice-versa that have formed the staple of historical romance ever since. Their plots have a unity which differentiates them from earlier novels, however romantic and adventurous; although here Doyle may be said to be an exception, since his episodic plots look back to earlier adventure stories such as Kidnapped. His books, with their foregrounding of the historical detail which clearly fascinated him, seem in many ways transitional, bound to the rest of the group by his use of adventure and romantic motifs, but with older elements remaining. Weyman and his followers belonged to a newer tradition; they began writing as the traditional three-
volume novel became extinct in the eighteen-nineties (only one of Weyman's books is recorded in the British Library catalogue as a "three-decker", the early Gentleman of France) and the result is a tautness in their plotting quite alien to earlier writers. It seems likely that they owe some of their popularity to this.

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As a genre historical romance has shown itself adaptive in responding to changes in public taste, and there have been some minor changes, and at least one major one - that noted in the previous chapter as a swing towards women's romance - during the course of the past ninety years. The first of these was a change from adventure to intrigue and family dramas as a centre of plot interest. New authors arose to threaten the dominance of Weyman and Merriman, with their combination of realistic historical settings and adventure. Weyman continued to produce work in the first decade of the century. A.E.W. Mason moved away from historical romance to produce contemporary adventure stories such as The Four Feathers, though later returning to the genre in which he first made his name, with Konigsmark and Fire over England. Jeffrey Farnol's novels, with settings ranging from the medieval Beltane - 54 -
the Smith to the more favoured Georgian or Regency of his Jasper Shrig stories, continue to create the open air adventurous atmosphere of Mason's early work, or the chivalry of Doyle's romances. Nonetheless, he marks a departure from the tradition represented by Weyman. The historical setting is less realistic and provides an escapist context for a melodramatic story.

This kind of plot, in which history was merely an exciting setting, became common. Glamorous settings became more evident. In Baroness Orczy's *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, the world of Sir Percy Blakeney, friend of the Prince Regent's and leader of fashion, provides the gloss and glamour, while the Pimpernel's exploits provide the excitement. Sir Percy was a new kind of hero, of a type also to be found in the work of Raphael Sabatini, in books such as *Scaramouche* and *Captain Blood*: cool, always debonair, with an indifferent manner which hid deep feelings. Such a hero was more likely to appeal to women; his effortless superiority was a bar to easy identification for a male reader. The fact that when stories by these authors were filmed, they were vehicles for screen idols such as Errol Flynn and Leslie Howard, emphasises this; though a librarian has pointed out that Sabatini is still read by both men and women 36. In this, it seems, his work is unusual; historical romance written today is read largely by women. The writer most responsible for this change was Georgette Heyer.
Heyer's first novel, The Black Moth, was published in the same year as Sabatini's Scaramouche, and with its wrongly disgraced hero, disguised as a highwayman, its abductions and duels, it has much in common with a good deal of Sabatini's work. Her early historical romances were adventure stories with cloak-and-dagger plots; but gradually the element of social comedy began to predominate. These Old Shades (1926) is a reworking of characters who are essentially the same as those in The Black Moth, but the heroine rivals the hero in importance and some of the action is seen from her point of view. Heyer takes the opportunity to include a good deal of detail of fashionable life in London and Versailles. The success of this novel, which sold 190,000 copies in hardback, showed Heyer the direction in which her talent might most profitably develop 37. She wrote occasional swashbuckling stories, such as Beauvallet - which sold well, but not with the success of These Old Shades - but her later work followed the pattern of the latter. A characteristic Heyer romance, such as Regency Buck or The Quiet Gentleman, might well contain an element of danger, but its chief appeal is in its social comedy, its light, graceful style, and the interaction of amusing characters. The action is seen largely through the heroine's eyes, which gives the book a special interest for women. Above all, Heyer creates what is virtually a world of her own,
in which the details of fashionable life in the Regency are lovingly described.

It is this world which gives her work its appeal. Naturally, her work had - and has - its imitators. Writers such as Clare Darcy and Patricia Ormsby put together adroitly plotted comedies of intrigue which contain many of the Heyer ingredients. Such novels form what is virtually a sub-genre of their own - the Regency romance. Not all its exponents keep Heyer's light touch. Barbara Cartland's Regency books are more overtly romantic; her heroines are at once more serious and more innocent, and her heroes more passionate. Her views on the importance of romance, and of female virginity, are well known. Love is presented in a rhapsodic style, as an experience beyond words: unlike Heyer's books, her stories take the reader beyond the courtship to the moment of consummation. Novels set in other periods and locations - Ruritanian kingdoms in the latter part of the nineteenth century are favoured, for instance - follow a similar pattern. Another writer of note, Jean Plaidy, belongs to a different tradition from either Cartland or Heyer. Like Margaret Irwin before her, she writes fictionalized biographies. The plots are constrained by actual historical events, but the treatment is heavily romantic, with emotion and relationships being stressed at the expense of political events. These, however, differ from the other novels in that the use of romantic stereotypes
is not really possible in books which keep so close to the known facts of someone's life, so that it seemed inappropriate to consider them at length here.

The general pattern of development in historical fiction has been, therefore, one which shows the taste of the reading public moving between romantic sensationalism or adventure and realism. In the early years of the genre - perhaps its heyday - the elements were mixed, a romancer like Ainsworth priding himself on the accuracy and minuteness of his research, while a serious historical writer like Bulwer provided a quarry for sensational publications like those of Lloyd. By the end of the century, though, serious historical novels no longer dominated the market as they had earlier. Though "light history" - factual descriptions of historical events, or biographies, with a romantic flavour on the Bulwer model - continued to be written, for a reader of the nineteen-hundreds, historical fiction by and large meant historical romance: the work of writers such as Weyman or Mason, or, later, of Orczy or Farnol. These are the "cloak-and-dagger" stories which offered escape to an exciting and glamorous past, and which were later to give place to a more feminine-centred story in the works of Heyer and her successors.

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A full account of historical romance, therefore, needs to show it as a genre which retained popularity through changes in public taste by adapting flexibly to new conditions. These adaptations have included changes in style and structure, and also in the way in which history itself was used. Some elements, however, have remained constant. As a genre it has always provided a blend of fantasy with historical fact, presenting both as though they were part of everyday, individual human experience. As will be shown later, the changes have adapted the genre to a mass market, one less interested in being informed and more attentive to personal relationships than the earlier readership; plots have become simplified, formal elements have increasingly helped the reader to identify with the fictional experience rather than reflect upon it, and history is used more as an exciting backdrop to a romantic tale than for its own sake. Nonetheless, though the functional significance of the historical content may have changed, this does not mean that it has no ideological function for its audience, nor that its presentation does not reflect traditional differences in perspective on the part of the author.

Henry B. Harrison has pointed out, in his account of historical fiction in Versions of the Past, that a historical novel functions as an "inverted" utopia: a whole past society has to be recreated, and because of its
unfamiliarity the structure is necessarily laid bare. It is not, however, a positivistic assemblage of facts about the past, but "an imaginative ordering of materials in an attempt at the recreation of experience" 39. The author's viewpoint is relevant here, in that the materials are ordered according to his or her view of the function of history. Romantic writers use the past as an exotic setting to add to the "escape" value of their stories; but it also functions as a mirror for the present. On an explicit thematic level the past may be seen as the amniotic fluid in which the seeds of the present float: tendencies can be isolated in a historic period, which, however alien that time may seem, nonetheless prefigure characteristics of the contemporary world. For other writers, the circumstances of a past society produce what is virtually a different kind of human nature, so that historical periods are seen as self-sufficient with no overt link to the present: theirs is what Harrison has called the "holistic" as opposed to the "progressive" approach. The author's view of both past and present is, in either case, conditioned by ideology.

For Harrison, the recreation of the past in fiction partakes of the nature of "myth", in line with Levi-Strauss's definition of the term: history is both "a sequence of past happenings" and "a timeless pattern" which can be seen in the structures of contemporary social experience and helps us to understand it better 40. Claud
Cockburn used the term in a slightly different sense in *Bestseller* 41; a picture of a past society which functions as myth is unreal, but appeals to and expresses the deep-seated inarticulate concerns of its readers. The two senses are not incompatible, however. Cockburn's inarticulate concerns are about the nature of contemporary events and, since history is a social science, of contemporary society. Levi-Strauss's "timeless pattern" is one which gives an overt structure to our perceptions of contemporary society; and Cockburn's unreal picture of the past, in addressing the reader's concerns, produces just such a structure. Even if the myth created seems to offer little more than wish-fulfilment, those wishes arise from perceptions which are far from being "merely" escapist. An escape, as Cockburn points out, must be from something and to something, and the starting point determines the ultimate point of arrival. An "escapist" fiction is still an inverted utopia, conditioned by perceptions of the society which gave it birth and in which it is received.

Since the end of the nineteenth century a movement from one "use" of the past to another can be detected. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Stanley Weyman, and, to a lesser extent, Raphael Sabatini, show history as a process of change, leading towards a present which, seen in the light of these historical processes, may be viewed favourably. The appeal of a writer such as Jeffrey Farnol or Georgette
Heyer is different, however. A sense of the present is irrelevant in reading their books: they create a self-sufficient past world whose attractions are seductive, drawing the reader in to an uncritical experience of history as real life. The ingredients of this world may be familiar everyday events but they are heightened and sanitized by the imagination. Nonetheless, they do have a base in the real world and in seeing what that base is and how it has been modified the messages of the text - which concern the contemporary world of author and reader - can be understood.

An increase in the "romantic" element of the genre can be seen to run parallel with these changes in the presentation of history. This, too, can be related to the function of the genre as literary myth. One of the most striking ways in which romance combines with history to give a "mythical" message is the concern with a notion of what it means to be "English". In writing of the mythic function of history, Levi-Strauss 42 sees it as of particular importance to the politician, who can use it to create a national or communal feeling which can be drawn upon for support. In different ways the work of Conan Doyle, Baroness Orczy and Jeffrey Farnol develops a pride in England and its history; the heroes of A.E.W. Mason feel sick with longing for it in their exile; and even Weyman, who rarely sets his novels in England, presents as virtues those traits which have been traditionally
associated with the English. Of course, the fostering of a sense of national heritage is in itself an important use of history.

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Another development which is connected with the changing balance of the historical and romantic elements is the change of focus from public to private action. At the end of the nineteenth century the heroes of romance were active in public causes: activities which involved danger and the excitement of adventure. The qualities such heroes needed were bravery, a certain ingenuity, and the skills of combat. They also have a strong sense of duty and loyalty, and are capable of self-sacrifice in the service of their cause. Such books continued to be written occasionally in the twentieth century, especially for juvenile readers: the works of D.K. Broster or L.A.G. Strong are an example. However, as Gillian Avery notes in an article about historical romance in the *Times Literary Supplement* of 21st September, 1984, any remaining taste for such books seems to have virtually disappeared during her lifetime: even historical books for children are now very different, as her own writing bears witness. The new popular writers of the early twentieth century produced a
different kind of story, one which still used elements of danger and adventure, but in which the focus of attention was on family intrigue and private revenge. If the hero is active in a political cause, the chief interest this involves is the clash of public and personal loyalties which he feels.

Both kinds of adventure story frequently turn on the use of violence, though this is increasingly ritualized. The role of violence in society - its use and control - is another theme which can take on the function of myth. Violence as a cleanser of a socially corrupt society, or as a natural and sometimes sole resort in the protection of a valuable way of life against disruptive social forces, has been noted as an important socio-literary myth by John Cawelti in an article in *Critical Inquiry* 43. In historical literature, public violence is increasingly feared. By the second phase of romance, the hero's fights are with personal, not public enemies. Violence in historical novels may therefore have begun to change its significance, and to lose its mythical status.

Certainly, Cawelti's examples are not taken from historical novels but from genres which were already beginning to rival the popularity of historical romance in the early twentieth century: the "hard-boiled" detective story, the gangster story or the Western. Owen Wister's *The Virginian*, for instance, demonstrates two forms of the myth, according to Cawelti: the hero as vigilante,
turning reluctantly to violence to rid society of an evil, when public organs of social order have failed, and the low-born hero rising to leadership of his community through his skills of combat, used against corrupt men of wealth and power. Such myths are also to be found in thrillers such as those by Hammett, Chandler and, in more naive form, Spillane. Similar uses of violence can be found in the novels of Doyle and Weyman - in Sir Nigel by the former, for instance, or in Weyman's Abbess of Vlaye. They become much less obvious in later novelists. Genres which continued to contain such myths were increasing in popularity at the same time.

This was the case with the Western, for instance: The Virginian was published in 1902, and confirmed the success of a genre which had been developing since the end of the nineteenth century. This may have been caused by successful marketing to some extent: the genre achieved popularity in England with the flood of dime novels or yellow-backs, which included gangster and thrillers as well, and which were sold on the railway bookstalls. They also provided, however, a rival to historical novels in examining the relationship between individual violence and courage and society: a rivalry which threatened historical romance from the time of its greatest success onwards. Though yellow-backs were thought of as catering for the lower end of the popular market, there were more "middlebrow" versions: Wister himself and, from 1912
onwards, Zane Grey provided more substantial versions of the Western, and in England detective fiction was entering its respectable "Golden Age" with the publication of E.C. Bentley's *Trent's Last Case* in 1913, to be followed by authors such as Christie, Sayers and Allingham.

Novels such as these may be seen as taking part of the market for historical romance in the years between the end of the nineteenth century and the middle of the twentieth. Though the developments in historical romance can be seen as developments of an established genre to changing needs in the readers, it may well be that their expression of some of the important concerns of a general readership - and in particular the male section of it - proved to be less potent than that of some of their rival genres. Violence is only one of these concerns, which also include the relationship between the classes, the role of women and the nature of government. As such concerns changed or became less acute, or better expressed by other literary forms, so historical romance became less popular: at any rate, though an occasional historical bestseller like Raphael Sabatini's *Scaramouche* appeared in the twenties, and established authors continued to write books in their accustomed vein which found a readership not very different from the days of their greatest success, the flood of minor writers (like Claud Cockburn's uncle, who at the end of the last century was "fairly widely read" without achieving anything like the success of Weyman) was no longer in evidence.
At the same time, a female readership existed which had different needs and concerns, and these, it may be inferred, were satisfied by the modified form of the genre which Heyer introduced. Certainly the focus of her novels is markedly different from that of the older novels. There are social considerations and violence is still important, but in a context of a consideration of male nature and role in society. In appealing to women she had found for historical fiction a large and stable readership: as Ken Worpole has pointed out, at the close of the nineteenth century "women formed the majority of readers of fiction. The historical pattern continues." It was also a readership whose interests were clearly predictable; Heyer herself was very aware in the later part of her career of those features in her work which made it popular, and was able to target it accurately because of this. This may account for the increasingly conventionalized nature of the genre, a feature which may be observed in contemporary historical fiction. In changing the target audience for her work, Heyer was not dispensing with the traditional ingredients of the genre, as has been noted in chapter one; but changes in the form and emphasis of her fiction are noticeable, and these changes were in response to the needs and interests of a different readership - involving, perhaps, the creation of a new myth.

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If the new readership produced changes in the genre which made it more akin to women's romance, that genre itself was affected too. Worpole claimed that "The 19th century romantic novel was almost always a religious novel", whose emotional power came from a "divine-erotic" impulse. The novels described by Rachel Anderson in her account of women's romantic novels cannot all be defined in this way, but it is certainly true that books such as The Heir of Redclyffe (1853), The Soul of the Bishop (1893) or Only a Girl Wife (1889) combine a concern with religion and love, and others made of love itself a kind of religion. "I am not going to instruct anyone on religion" wrote Rhoda Broughton in 1870. Her novels are characteristic of one important strand in the genre: one which almost equates passionate love with religious feeling. Rachel Anderson quotes her as saying "Love ... is raised higher and higher above this world's low level ... til it merges in ... the essence of the Deity". Later novelists, such as Elinor Glyn, showed love in a similar light - through their popularity probably arose as much from their portrayal of love's physical aspects, the "drossy, worthless part of earthly passion" which Rhoda Broughton thought often formed "the largest part of it".

Such a view of love gave a peculiarly serious tone to early romances which endured during the early years of the twentieth century and, indeed, can be detected in some romantic novelists today - such as Barbara Cartland, for
instance. It was, perhaps, the prevailing tone of women's romance before the rapprochement with historical romance, though E.M. Hull's *The Sheik* had developed another important strand. This was a sado-masochistic power relationship between the hero and a spirited but ultimately submissive heroine: a relationship which involves a degree of transformation in the hero as well, from aggressive cruelty to tenderness. Rachel Anderson shows this to be traditional in what was virtually a sub-genre on its own, the desert romance; but such stories, though potent in their appeal - as suggested by their popularity - are limited in range.

Yet the appeal suggests the importance of this particular relationship to the women who read the romances, as though it symbolized something close to the heart of their major concerns. Heyer's stories showed that the essence of the romance could be contained within the historical novel, in a context which offered more range and flexibility than the limited one of the desert. The conventions of the historical romance, with its abductions, intrigues and disguised identities, allowed the development of a story basically similar to that of *The Sheik* though without the consummation of the threatened rape which takes place in the desert romance. Heyer was able to take the cynical rake who formed one of the stock characters of historical romance, merge his characteristics with more heroic ones - also
characteristic of the genre — and provide a world-weary hero as appealing in his way as Hull's sheik. The combination of this character-type with a love-story which involved his conversion to tenderness stamped a pattern on romance which can be recognised in both historical and contemporary stories today.

Historical romance retained its distinctive setting in the past, its stock of characteristic motifs (not to be found in all kinds of romance), and more interest in the social and political context of the story than is at all usual the contemporary women's fiction. "Too often", Anderson writes, "these" (women's romances) "turn political issues into crude moral issues ... rather than [conflicts] between different ideologies" 51. Issues in the past can be treated crudely too, and often are, but when the conflicts of history are important in the story, ideological differences must at least be taken seriously. In general, historical fiction, however romantic, tended to be more secular and social in its tone than traditional romance. Even when it had largely been subsumed by women's romance, it retained these distinctive characteristics. The genre retains a stable readership, though not so popular today as contemporary romance, however, to suggest that the historical setting itself satisfies needs which the contemporary romance cannot.

There are areas of overlap between the genres of romance, of course, just as there are between "serious"
and "romantic" historical fiction. This is not unusual: divisions between genres are rarely clear-cut. The Western is, after all, a kind of historical fiction, and Farnol and Heyer both wrote historical romances which are also mystery stories. Genres combine as they develop, and historical fiction, after a period of comparative neglect, has not come to the end of its evolution. A historical romance is a rarity on the best-seller lists in 1988, but other forms of historical fiction have been, and are still, popular.

In the 1970s, the "bodice-ripper" or "sweet-and-savage" (what John Sutherland has defined as "erotically fantasized woman's bondage in a historical context") 52 swept the market - partly, it is evident, because of new marketing techniques. What this had in common with historical romance of the Heyer variety was that it was marketed as a woman's genre and had the same core of hero-heroine relationships, but without the emphasis on virginity and reputation notable in Heyer, Cartland and their followers. Instead, there were explicitly detailed episodes of sexual consummation, often amounting to rape. Such books, according to Worpole, appealed to men as well as to women, but Radway's survey of American women readers showed that, for them, they were a form of especially female escape. Peter Mann's survey for Mills & Boon 53, however, showed that English readers of their romances did not care for such novels, and he commented in a letter -74-
that it was an ephemeral fashion. To a large extent, he was proved right: by the end of the seventies, interest in such books, even in America, was more or less exhausted. Historical romance of the kind published by Mills & Boon continued to find a safe market, though some books which otherwise conform strictly enough to the romantic pattern, such as Danielle de Winter's *Passionate Rebel* or Rowena Tenet's *Bewitching Imposter* contain an element of sexual consummation explicitly described.

The kind of historical fiction likely to feature in the bestseller lists today is a saga, tracing the fortunes of a family through several generations, and featuring the kind of intricate inter-relationships and intrigues usually to be expected in contemporary soap-opera. R. Hewison, reviewing a number of historical novels for the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1981, noted that most form part of a family series. The form of such sagas is less self-contained than twentieth century historical romances, as the development of family fortunes from one generation to another makes concentration on an individual love affair or adventure difficult. These novels have something of the appeal of traditional romances, but essentially, thinks Hewison, they are a celebration of "getting on".

Other developments, if that is what they can be called, are as yet in embryo. The last two decades have seen the publication of some historical novels which
centre on witchcraft, like Elizabeth Byrd's *The Lady of Monkton*, or Catherine Danby's *Whisper down the Moon*. Kathleen Herbert's *Queen of the Lightning* and *Ghost in the Sunlight* bring together elements of the sexually explicit romance, the adventure story (with a heroine adventurer), the saga, and the kind of serious recreation of a past age which Peter Vansittart 56 noted as the strength of writers such as Mary Renault. In writing of the decision to give the Historical Novel Aware in memory of Georgette Heyer to *Queen of the Lightning* in 1985, J. Black and D. Pearson 57 admitted that Heyer herself would not have liked the novel. On the other hand, the author had maintained her scrupulous standards of research and, like her, combined the ability to bring a past age to life with an exciting story. They were implying, therefore, that the day of the Heyer romance was done: Kathleen Herbert is a Heyer for the eighties.

In doing so, they were tacitly admitting that historical romance was changing to meet the needs of its time. Though in some ways the genre remained the same, new elements were being foregrounded, so that contemporary historical fiction gives a totally different impression from the now traditional romance which Heyer herself modified in the twenties and thirties. The form seems to be striving in different ways to accommodate new views of sexuality and of sex roles within society, together with a changed awareness of their psychological and social basis.
This is to say no more than that this genre conforms to the pattern of generic development postulated by Formalist critics such as Tynyanov or Jakobsen, with familiar elements rearranging themselves around a new dominant and changing their function accordingly. In this case, however, the changes are due not only to the exhaustion of a traditional form, though this is undoubtedly an element, but also to changes in social attitudes. Throughout its development, in fact, the genre has shown itself responsive to such forces.

One cannot say, therefore, that in describing a genre any one definition will adequately express its nature, since it is constantly changing. All that is possible is to note the common elements which allow the reader to recognise a certain kind of book, and the way in which the form at any one time responds to the needs of the readers. At the same time, it is necessary to be aware of the ways in which the genre has developed, both as a renewal of an exhausted form and as a response to changing circumstances and needs in the readers. This is the project of the succeeding chapters.
Chapter Three

Style and Structure: changes in the form of historical romance, 1890 - 1987

When a new audience emerged for historical romance in the 1920s, the change had an impact on the genre, even though an essential thread of identity runs through it. This impact is not so apparent in the actual plot, though love rather than adventure becomes foregrounded, as in the way the books are constructed - the textual characteristics which determine the way the reader creates meaning, and so have an important function in producing the actual experience of reading. There was no abrupt change: many features of style and structure remained the same. But there was a tendency to move towards a form and style which suited a popular audience better.

This development was by no means straightforward. In some ways the novels of Orczy and Sabatini, for instance, are more like traditional Victorian historical novels than those of the Victorian Weyman or Mason are. In general, however, there is a development in the novels towards a more unified plot with a single central action, and a reduction of obvious structural and stylistic barriers between text and reader.
It was a significant development: the more a reader decodes a text without being consciously aware of doing so, the more completely he or she is immersed in the imaginary experience, which does not seem fictional but real. At the very least, the reader is willing to accept it as such while reading. If, as Viktor Schlovski suggested, the purpose of poetic language is to defamiliarize, the language and structures of popular romance seem intended, on the contrary, to dissolve the reader's critical awareness thus, as Janice Radway describes it in *Reading the Romance*, "masking the interpretive character of the act of reading".¹

The effects of this are two-fold. First, the experience of reading becomes more obviously pleasurable: James Donald and Colin Mercer claim that the illusion of "realism" cannot be distinguished from "escapism".²

"Reading will be marked not as 'work' but as 'pleasure', writes Radway,³ and Pierre Bourdieu suggests that the experience of "identifying with the characters' joys and sufferings ... living their life" is connected with a mental set towards pleasure ("we're here to enjoy ourselves") and is only possible when "formal experiments and specifically artistic effects ... can be forgotten".⁴

A development towards such a state may well be connected with a more popular readership.

Secondly, in operating the conventions of the text, the reader is encountering and, to a certain extent, through the active creation of meaning, collaborating with
ideological systems which may, according to Donald and Mercer, "run counter" to his or her "cultural position and experience". Temporarily, some readers may well accept this contrary system without question, taking the opportunity offered by the "realism" of the text: a "fantasy" use which can give a momentary resolution to problems of insecurity and boredom: "a utopian working through of the contradictions of everyday life".

So, as historical romance reached a wider and in some ways less sophisticated audience, its style and structure became markedly more "realistic": easier to read, more readily associated with enjoyment (or even self-indulgence), and giving more "escapist" or "utopian" relief from the problems and concerns of everyday life.

In offering this, historical romance had the advantage of an exotic location in time which enhanced the element of escape. At the same time, there are inherent barriers to an unconscious response to the textual codes, in the need for a factual historical context, and a convincing representation of the speech of a past era. One of the signs of an increasingly "popular" element in the genre is that at the end of the nineteenth century Weyman was already adept at creating plots which move forward rapidly despite the need for historical explanations, and at using a relatively modern style which yet had a flavour of the past. Oddly enough, novels from the early part of the twentieth century are in many ways
less easy to read today. The romances of today, however, allow the reader to manipulate language and narrative codes with ease, so that the act of reading them is not so much reading as experiencing. Language, narrative time and perspective, and sequencing of incidents, are all deployed in such a way as to make the task easy for the reader and help her to forget she is reading a story rather than living an experience.

The most obvious change has been in the nature of the language used. The language of historical romance has always been the subject of controversy. In 1979, Mary Renault wrote in The London Magazine that archaism was a problem in historical writing. She seems to have felt that it would stand between the reader and identification with the world of the past created or recovered in the text; and since the reader of historical novels was, she thought, searching in the past to find themselves, this identification was important.

In Tales out of School, Geoffrey Trease quoted from Gertrude Hollis's Spurs and Bride 'Yonder sight is enough to make a man eschew lance and sword for ever and to take to hot cockles and cherry pit' (popular games) exclaimed the earl of Pembroke, adding an oath which the sacred character of the building did not in the least restrain." It was an example of the kind of writing which made some historical romance ridiculous; and Hollis was not alone in using it. Dorothy Mary Stuart is referred to as using
"I joy me" and "Wot you what?" and Carola Oman is guilty of an unfortunate mixture of ancient and modern: "I am not in a great hurry, if you truly desire aught, but I think I ought to be turning home now." According to Trease, it was Naomi Mitchison who set the fashion for "natural, modern, but not anachronistic" dialogue, a fashion confirmed by Robert Graves in *I, Claudius*. Geoffrey Trease comments that what he calls the "varlet-and-halidom" style was not supposed to be the authentic diction of the period - middle English in a book about Robin Hood, for instance, or Latin for *I, Claudius*. "What was expected was a bogus sort of Wardour Street jargon which was supposed to 'convey period atmosphere'." Trease believed, however, that such jargon was no longer used.

One might therefore expect to find the style of Victorian historical romance full of this sort of false archaism. First impressions seem to confirm this; but as Hemstedt says in his chapter on the Victorian novel in Laurence Lerner's *The Victorians* there was a stylistic homogeneity about the Victorian novel, from the beginning to the end of the period, so that a certain kind of rhetoric, typical of the novel at that time and slightly archaic in its diction can be found in all the books written at this time whether set in the past or the present.

If this is borne in mind, a glance at Stanley
Weyman's *Under the Red Robe* suggests that this author at least was not interested in Wardour Street jargon (had the British film industry existed in his hey-day). If anything, he seems anxious to keep his style simple for his wide readership. His paragraphs are perhaps a little longer than might be expected in a popular novel today - perhaps containing six or seven sentences. Descriptive paragraphs are longer than narrative ones, which might contain three or four. Short and long sentences are kept in balance. The sentences themselves are not particularly long or complex. Main clauses (there is usually one in a sentence) are qualified by descriptive phrases rather than subordinate clauses, and there is much use of phrases in apposition, marked with a dash. This gives a feeling of informality which fits in with the first person narrative; the impression is given of someone actually reminiscing. The style's intimacy helps to draw the reader in. Weyman has been criticised for using anachronistic dialogue, but clearly he was interested in compelling his reader's interest rather than in accuracy of effect.

The dialogue sounds fairly modern, which is reasonable, since it is supposed to be French. The archaic features are few - occasional words or turns of phrase. "Fellow" is used for "man", for instance, - sometimes it becomes "lout" or "knave". This gives an oldfashioned tone but also is appropriate in the mouth of the snobbish narrator. On the same page one finds
"leagues" for "miles" and "bade me abstain from" instead of "told me not to ask". This is not much further from contemporary English than that of a number of Victorian novels set in the present. A greater effect of strangeness is given by French words and phrases dotted about the page, like "Monsieur will doubtless have heard" and "the house is triste". Yet these too are not over-numerous; the effect is gained by scattering them about the text.

A more noticeably archaizing style is to be found in the writers who flourished in the early years of this century. Farnol has a particularly flowery style, though it must be remembered that in this period a flowery, over-rhetorical and rather sentimental diction was not confined to historical novels, or to English ones; it is a notable feature in the books of an author like Gene Stratton Porter, for instance. Sabatini's style is less lush but is none the less highly rhetorical, and full of Trease's "Wardour Street jargon". In The Lion's Skin (1911) he writes as though he were producing a memoir of the hero, a device he also uses in Scaramouche and Captain Blood. For example, on page 70: "Mr. Caryll needs explaining as he walks in the moonlight; that is, if we are at all to understand him." Later, on the same page, the action is held up again for a similar effect: "His mood was extremely complex; its analysis, I fear, may baffle us. It must have seemed to you ... that he made a mock of
her". The effect is of a lecturer appealing to his audience rather than a novelist trying to immerse his readers in an imagined world. The reader becomes an assessor, not a participant.

Liveliness comes from the dialogue, and fortunately for the reader there is a great deal; the scenes being, in fact, told largely through dialogue, to a greater extent than Weyman's, though it is interspersed with lavish descriptions. Sentences, even within the dialogue, and certainly in the descriptive passage, are long, with numerous dependent clauses and parentheses. Though the paragraphs often contain no more than two or three sentences, they therefore seem longer than Weyman's.

What is most noticeable about the style, however, is the large amount of quaint 'period' diction. The love scene on p.262 is particularly stilted, though not much more so than many others, containing words and phrases such as "fleering coxcomb", "deemed", and "quoth", together with archaic-sounding phrases like "you were not mistook" " or " 'You want nothing for self esteem' " or " 'Tis not in such words that I'll be wooed''", said she. "'A fig for words!' he cried. 'Art wooed and won'".

From this it can be seen that though to a certain extent the ornate, archaic style can be found in the 1890s, it is more typical of the early years of this century. Georgette Heyer, under the influence, according to Jane Aiken Hodge, of Farnol and Orczy, uses it in
early romances such as The Black Moth (1921). Hodge notes examples such as "'Death will not be your lot, my pretty one'." It was a style she abandoned once she found her own voice. The beginning of The Quiet Gentleman is more typical; "In the guide-books it figured as Stanyon Castle; on the tongues of the villagers it was the Castle; the Polite World spoke of it as Stanyon, as it spoke of Woburn, and of Chevely. It was situated in Lincolnshire, not very many miles from Grantham, rather nearer to Stamford: a locality considered by those who were more interested in the chase than in any particular grandeur of scenery to be admirable." 13 The parallel main clauses of the first sentence is matched by parallel qualifying phrases in the second, which is further extended by a chain of subordinate clauses. The effect is formal and highly structured, rather like that of the eighteenth century guide-book it seems at times to be parodying ("Later generations had enlarged and beautified the structure..." or "A medieval fortress ... had previously stood on the site"). This effect is enhanced by the formality of the diction: "now used by Mr. Theodore Frant as an office", or the periphrasis of "those who were more interested in the chase than in any particular grandeur of scenery . . ." The formality is, however, interspersed with comments in a more contemporary style - "not very interesting records", for instance, and these have the effect of suggesting that the formal style of the
rest, the castle, and the family who built it, all have a certain absurdity. Perhaps Heyer's model was Jane Austen, as has sometimes been suggested. Whatever model she had in mind, however, she had created a style which suited her writing very well, and which she could use flexibly and with a good deal of humorous effect. This is the kind of effect that writers such as Clare Darcy try to create, though with less sureness of touch.

Barbara Cartland does not attempt any such formality. Her style is both more colloquial and more up-to-date. Rosalind Brunt has remarked on the "oral" quality of her style - the "qualities of direct speech" - and with its "arresting" sentences and short paragraphs it has much in common with "tabloid journalism". Each episode, she says, is told by means of "direct quotation" and reported speech. Her sentences have few subordinate clauses and though her paragraphs are full of detail they are short, containing not more than one to three sentences. The effect, says Brunt, is to hold the readers' attention without effort on their part.

It is probably the brevity of the paragraphs which a reader fresh from the work of Georgette Heyer or one of the older writers would be likely to notice first. One or two short sentences can give a disjointed effect, and at times the novels read more like dialogues with stage directions. The device of interspersing the words of the characters, especially those of the heroine, with strings
of dots helps to provide emphasis and suggest extreme emotion, an effect which is arresting enough if irritating. None the less, it is true that the style makes for easy reading, and although few other writers follow her more idiosyncratic devices, many of the contemporary writers such as Marina Oliver or Mira Stables follow her lead as far as simplicity and short paragraphs are concerned.

Present-day writers, however, do include a certain amount of archaism in the dialogue, particularly if they are using an English setting. Dinah Dean's *The Briar Rose* is an example. Her sentences are quite substantial, and her style is plain, with a certain formality of language: Sir William Cressy's house is busy because it is "expected to accommodate some of the overflow" when the King "took up residence", for example. Period flavour is given by such archaisms as "at the last" for "in the end", or "above stairs" for "upstairs". However, these are not used by any means so extensively as Sabatini used them. They are scattered sparsely through the text to give a hint of the past, though on the whole the style of the dialogue is modern - sometimes disconcertingly so. "Oh, there you are, Katel!" exclaims one of Cressy's servants when Kate comes to ask if her cousin is "above-stairs".

On the whole, therefore, it seems true that the full-blown Wardour Street swashbuckling style has disappeared. It would read oddly in a novel written today. Nor are
readers likely to accept over-long descriptive paragraphs and sentences, unless they form one of the distinguishing features of the genre, as in Heyer, Darcy, or Patricia Ormsby. Here a more formal style is used to comic effect. More usually, the novels scatter a few archaisms through the dialogue and otherwise use a modern, easy-to-read style with little complexity; at times, when such features as elided clauses have not been edited out, it can seem surprisingly naive and stilted. However, the language is successful if it does not draw attention to itself, and also if it manages to incorporate the necessary background detail in a natural way.

Janice Radway, in *Reading the Romance* 16 claims that "the language of the romantic novel can be said to function as an instrument for the transfer of meaning ... Words, phrases, and sentences do not themselves become the object of attention but exist as a channel or conduit through which the reader gains access to ... the meanings." The characteristics which produce this effect include "Simple syntax, elementary realism, repetitive vocabulary, and authorial interpretation"; and the language stimulates the reader to draw upon a repertoire of familiar experience to build an imagined world which seems realistic and credible, even though the linguistic conventions of the text (such as an early reference to a remote place or time) promise a world which is different from the everyday, one in which fantastic events are
likely to happen. Such characteristics can be found in the word of Cartland and other historical romance writers, and help to reduce the distance between the reader and the text.

A description at the beginning of Dinah Dean's *The Briar Rose* 17 shows how Radway's description might apply to the language of an English historical romance. Kate slipped through the crowd unnoticed, and entered her uncle's house, which was of no great size, but gave an impression of comfortable living, with fine oak panelling and furniture, gleaming from frequent applications of beeswax, which mingled its sweet scent with that of the rushes and a few autumn roses in a bowl on one broad window-sill. The "applications of beeswax" suggests the housewife's craft, and there are familiar domestic details - furniture to be proud of, and flowers on the window-sill. At the same time, the rushes (which, as we have been previously informed, are for strewing on the floor), the panelling, and the broadness of the window-sill are more exotic cues, invoking the reader's knowledge of the past to help her recreate the scene and blend the strangeness of the past with the familiarity of her own life. In this way, the reader is invited to experience a period in the past in a way which is easily meaningful to her, but, at the same time, as having its own precise individuality; a device to aid identification with the scene. Radway believes
that this blending of familiar and exotic is typical of romantic literature in America.

In particular, she notes the interest taken in detail of dress, which is also noticeable in *The Briar Rose*. Shortly after the description of the room quoted above, the heroine has a conversation with her cousin, who is described as wearing "a gown of deep blue damask, worked in a pattern of leaves in silver thread," of which a full account is then given. Radway suggests that such detail "may be the celebration of the reader's world of housewifery, dominated as it is by shopping trips ... and ... tips about replicating *Vogue* on a tight budget." Such description is, she believes, "a variation of a literary practice that Umberto Eco has aptly termed 'the technique of the aimless glance'." Eco believes that the minute descriptions of inessential detail in Fleming's James Bond thrillers function as a trigger to our "capacity for identification" and necessary suspension of disbelief. They tend to focus on the familiar rather than the exotic, so that the imagined world seems "possible and desirable" and the narrative "realistic". The blend of familiar with exotic in romance means that the reader is supplied with a mixture of cues, some detailing a fantasy world and the others validating them. In historical romance the exoticism is provided by the historical detail, which Radway finds to be true also of American "historicals": "the narrator"s eye lingers lovingly over
the objects and accoutrements of pre-electrical living".

It may be added that, though Dinah Dean interrupts the action to interpolate such passages, they need not be experienced by the reader as a delay; the detail is presented as though it were what the heroine was half-consciously noticing, occurring naturally in the sequence of her thoughts and actions. The device is structurally a further aid to identification, since it mimics what we do naturally in picking up information about our current background, even when our thoughts are preoccupied with other matters. Such mimicking is characteristic of popular romances, and is connected with a point which may be made about the language of romance. In helping to give the impression that we are actually experiencing what the heroine experiences, the device reduces the distance between the reader and the imagined world, or diegesis in Gerard Genette's terminology. The reader is given only the information which is available to the character whose point of view we share (in this case, the heroine), and the fact that we see most of the action through one person's eyes, the characters being, moreover, allowed to speak for themselves with a minimum of narrative intrusion, is according to Genette's consideration of the use of perspective in novels one of the factors in creating an impression of realism.

In a contemporary popular novel, on the other hand, an over-extensive description, or one which did not take
the viewpoint of a particular character, would seem unnatural and disrupt the reader's expectations in a way which Radway points out is far from the aim of most contemporary romances. Though this can be seen to be true of structure, Radway 22 applies the point particularly to the language of romance: "syntax is almost never deformed for 'poetic' or shock effect", and the words are familiar, so the reader feels at home with them: the minimum of interpretative effort is demanded.

The element of "authorial interpretation", which Radway 23 also mentions, provides a further narrowing of the reader's interpretative options: in The Briar Rose, this kind of redundant authorial closure is to be seen in the frequent explanations of the heroine's actions and reactions. Thus, when the name of Sir Richard Rich is mentioned, Kate "gave a little involuntary shiver, for she had an instinctive dislike for the Chancellor of the court of Augmentations" 24. The "little involuntary shiver" might have been supposed to have provided an unmistakable clue, but the author is not content to leave even so little to the reader's interpretation. The closure of "gaps" in Iser's phrase, is a feature of contemporary romantic texts. This particular example also demonstrates how clearly the novel signals structural cues which enable the reader to construct anticipatory hypotheses. The reference to Rich, stressed by the need to explain who he was, has been gratuitously dragged into a conversation.
between the heroine and her cousin which was about the latter's jewellery, a topic which has nothing to do with Rich or his court. This has the effect of underlining the importance of the name; the reader's familiarity with the conventions of the genre will enable her to put this together with the heroine's reaction to surmise that this is to be the villain of the story, which in fact is true.

All the reader has to do, therefore, is to bring into play a familiar series of expectations which are almost immediately fulfilled. This makes the novel an extreme example of what Barthes called a "lisible" text, one which leaves little to the reader's creativity; a quality typical of popular literature. It is one which has its roots in the language as well as in the structure of the text. As Radway points out, it seems as though the reader is expected to experience the language of the text as a transparent medium through which a predetermined meaning - the events of the narrative, experienced as though they were real - may be discovered. On the other hand, textual conventions such as "elaborate similes and rhetorical flourishes" are a constant reminder that the events are not in fact real. In The Briar Rose such rhetorical flourishes might be exemplified by such a description as that of the fish at the king's feast, "neatly arranged in rows as if they had swum onto the dish in a shoal, ready-fried and decked with sprigs of tarragon and slices of lemon". Despite the homeliness of the image, this is not
quite the language of everyday conversation. The words, as Barthes observed of conventions such as the use of the preterite and the third person in Writing, Degree Zero, are "nothing but the fateful gesture with which the writer draws attention to the mask he is wearing."

The language of The Briar Rose is less literary and strange than some of the examples quoted by Radway (e.g. "Somewhere in the world, time no doubt whistled by on taut and widespread wings", from Kathleen Woodiwiss's The Flame and the Flower,) and in general the tone of Dinah Dean's book is more sober than that of many romances. Far from aiding reader identification, such lack of rhetoric may, paradoxically, make the reader more aware that what she is doing is reading a book, not entering a world. A "literary" style comes to be part of the reader's expectations. Too much detail can also be alienating. Barbara Cartland, for example, does not include so much descriptive detail as Dean, and in this she is more typical of historical romance. In The Briar Rose "the aimless eye" pauses a little too long to seem entirely natural. Novels with extensive descriptions can have the interest of a museum display brought to life, and there are readers who enjoy this. On the whole, however, such detail can stand between the reader and the "meaning"; the events of the story.

Rosalind Brunt has noted, however, that though Barbara Cartland's paragraphs "are not of any discursive
length" they are "full of detail", and in fact Cartland seems to have mastered the technique of giving sufficient information for the reader to build an image of the context, while at the same time getting on with the story. When compared with successful novels of the last century, however, it is clear that this balance changes from one period to another; the Victorians could cope with long passages of extensive description. It appears, therefore, that our ability to "concretize" as it were subliminally, without interfering with our concentration on the story, is relative and depends on our response to familiar conventions of narrative discourse.

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Gerard Genette considers the ways in which such conventions operate in Narrative Discourse. The amount of description as opposed to narrative in a text is regulated by the balance between "story time" and "narrative time" - the time the imagined events are supposed to have taken, and the time it takes to tell them. This can be varied by changes in the sequence of events, or by varying the relative duration of the two time sequences. Thus, in a "scene", story time and narrative time are almost equal in duration, while in a
"pause" the narrative time lasts longer than the "events" apparently taking place, and in a "summary" the events of a long space of time are compressed into a brief narrative span. In an extreme form of this ("ellipsis") the events of many days, weeks, or even years may be summed up in a phrase. Such a device increases the perceived distance between the reader and the fictional world, diminishing the sense of identification. Contemporary historical romances use it sparingly. A certain amount of summary is necessary to explain the circumstances in which the story is taking place, or to reveal the hero's motivation to the heroine. Such summaries usually coincide with a slight disruption of the sequence of events - again, a device which tends to distance the reader by making her aware of the text as text. However, summaries and disrupted sequences are necessary to give the reader sufficient information to construct hypotheses and thus involve herself in the story; but they are kept to a necessary minimum.

The "pause" when the narrative takes much space to cover a minimal period of time is more to be found in the work of writers such as Dina I Dean, part of whose aim seems to be to recover a period of past time for the reader, then in that of a "breezy story-teller" (in Brunt's phrase) like Barbara Cartland. A certain amount of circumstantial detail is of course necessary to give an illusion of the past, but Cartland and other romantic
writers whose aim seems to be to provide escape are careful not to provide so much that it becomes noticeable. "Scenes" are the most common component of contemporary romances, and it is these which contribute most to an illusion of reality in the fictional experience.

The reader's role in operating such conventions is close to that described by Wolfgang Iser in The Implied Reader, though Iser's theory is concerned more with the process of reading than with the text. According to him, when we read a novel we concretize the sights and sensations of an imaginary experience, which we build from the schemata presented in the text. The reader's experience is not a passive one: there is an interaction between the segments of the text and the reader's imagination by means of which the reader can "bring the work to light" 31. Though the concentration is on "imaging", William Ray in Literary Meaning 32 suggests that reflective knowledge and concept development have their part to play in the total literary experience. Iser's theory can account for not only the reading process but also the state of mind which follows it.

Thus, while we are reading we are aware of a concretized imagined experience, but we are also, perhaps unconsciously, searching for abstract meanings which make sense of the text. This search is a dynamic process in which understanding is constantly modified: each sentence is "a pre-view for the next and forms a kind of view-
finder for what is to come", expectations are set up and either confirmed, in which case new knowledge is added to the reader's existing stock, or frustrated, leading to modifications of his or her understanding.

Iser applied his ideas to historical fiction in a study of Scott's Waverley, taking Scott's description of his aims, as expounded in the preface, to mean that what interested him was the interaction of a past world, the hero's experience, and the world contemporary with his supposed readership. The hero provides a bridge between the reader's world and that of the past, revealing the historical world to the reader; the past world has a relevance to that of the present, in that human motivation is essentially the same, though with particular characteristics which arise from historical circumstances. A fuller range of human characteristics can be displayed in historical fiction, as "historical reality" may be said to give them validity.

In The Implied Reader, these remarks of Scott's are taken as the basis for a discussion of Waverley which brings out the way in which the hero's experience gradually discloses the world of the eighteenth century Highlander to the reader. Not all historical romances work as conveniently, and authors have different means of presenting their historical worlds to their readers, but Iser's discussion none the less highlights the necessity for doing so, and, in addition, suggests that by examining
the cues in the text one can discover much about how the reader creates the imagined world of the text in his or her own imagination.

Iser's theory is open to criticism in a number of ways, most notably in the difficulty of actually locating "meaning": is it supposed to be in the text or in the reader's actualization of it? Sometimes Iser writes as though it were in the one, sometimes in the other. However, the notion that the cues within the text prompt particular responses in a reader who has been brought up in a specific culture is a useful one, even if it is allowed that the meaning finally actualized may differ from reader to reader, especially if their cultural context also varies.

The reader's response is, however, constrained to some extent because in any one period there are ways of inter-reacting with the text which to a degree are common to all readers. Thus, since the novel's inception, the form has been credited with a mimetic function which relates the text to the reader's perception of everyday reality, and this raises expectations which operate even when the purpose of the text is to disrupt them. We expect a novel to give an illusion of reality even when - as is the case with most historical romances - the actual narrative differs widely from any reader's everyday experience. In *S/Z*, Roland Barthes has suggested that in reading narrative we are operating a series of codes,
some of which have the function of drawing the reader into
the narrative and maintaining interest, and others which
relate the language of the text to our perception of the
"real" world.

Barthes identified five codes to which the segments
of a text might relate: the proiaretic, the hermeneutic,
the semic, the cultural and the symbolic. Of these, two
are chiefly concerned with our response to the narrative,
and its formal qualities. The proiaretic code applies to
the sequence of events, and the hermeneutic code is the
problem solving element: the questions raised by any text
which are to be resolved during the course of the
narrative. The other three are used to enable the reader
to build the imagined world of the novel and to ensure
that it is related to his or her perception of reality.
The semic code offers a gradual accretion of specific
detail which gives fullness and verisimilitude; the
cultural code helps us to validate the imagined world and
link it to our experience by appealing to our knowledge of
"reality"; and the symbolic code relates the imagined
world to the underlying power relationships and ideology
of the reader's own culture.

In historical romance the importance of such
functions is particularly acute, because of the dual
nature of the form. Since it is a popular genre, the
story-telling codes - the proiaretic and the hermeneutic -
might be expected to dominate. However, the historical
dimension means that the imagined world must relate in some way to our picture of the "real" past. Even the most fantastic picture of the past - the idyllic society created by Farnol, for instance - must have some "realistic" elements, and draw upon our knowledge of history so that it can be specifically located in place and time. In addition, fantasy is not something alien to our lives, but is created from elements within the human psyche, reflecting our ideological perceptions of individuals and their relationships.

The structural development in historical romance which changed it from a form which appealed to a Victorian general reader to one which conformed to the conventions of twentieth century women's romance may, therefore, be demonstrated by an analysis of a number of representative texts in each period using a framework which draws upon the uses of time and perspective, cues and structural codes of the kind outlined above. From this it may be seen that although in some ways the authors are less concerned with helping the reader to create the illusion of a realistic historical past now than they were in the nineteenth century, the element of verisimilitude is if anything more important and allows the reader to create an imagined world with the minimum of difficulty and conscious awareness. In doing so, the present day reader at once builds upon and confirms an ideological picture of the culture in which she lives.

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The reader expects a certain amplitude of detail, a leisurely development of plot, in a Victorian novel which, for all the "realism" then predominant, ensured that the boundary between fiction and "real life" remained clear. Although by the nineties the "three-decker" had largely given place to the single volume novel, authors still tended to introduce readers to the main features of their imagined worlds in gradual stages. Doyle's romances are an example of this.

*The White Company* 35, for example, begins not with an introduction to the plot, but with two scale maps of the areas where the action is to take place. The first two pages of the novel then describe the ringing of the great bell of Beaulieu Abbey. The sound is made an occasion for a very extensive description of the scene as it might have appeared to a "reader in the text", in Iser's term, were he or she present. At this point no character has been introduced to provide a point of view. The implied reader is even described hypothetically: "a stranger who knew nothing of the Abbey or its immense resources" who, had he or she been there, "might have gathered" something of its immensely varied functions.

Such a hypothesised reader is more difficult to identify with than a character in the text. The "aimless
glance" technique has already been noted in Dinah Dean's novel as a means of helping the reader accommodate the historical detail within the imagined experience of a central character. Such a technique reduces the distance between diegesis and reader. In *The White Company* the location of the imagined reader, who provides the viewpoint, is more problematic than in the later text.

Horst Ruthrof, in *The Reader's Construction of Narrative* 36, suggests that while some cues in narrative help to build up an idea of the imagined world, others give a sense of the presentational process. Such cues, for example, give an idea of the narrator and his or her point of view (whether or not the narrator may be seen as a functional persona of the author, for example), the place and time of the narration, and the implied reader's relationship with the imagined world. The beginning of *The White Company* suggests a certain distance between the reader and the imagined world. "Peat-cutters on Blackdown and fishers upon the Exe" hear the Abbey bell, and their reactions are described before the focus is narrowed to "All round the Abbey" in the second paragraph and finally to "the broad and lofty chamber set apart for occasions of import" where the Abbot is pacing.

The effect is of a leisurely sweep from bird's-eye view to concentration on one character, at which point the story might be expected to begin. This expectation is immediately disappointed, however, since there is more
contextual explanation to come; and, in any case, the reader soon learns that the Abbot is not an important person in the story; the whole of the first episode, in fact, is not centred round the hero at all, but explains how the hero's friend, a much less important character, is sent out into the world to seek his fortune. Attempts to set up hypotheses about the story as a whole are thus progressively frustrated.

The time-relationships also present some elements of difficulty in Doyle's romance. At first sight, the reader is set less obviously at a distance in this respect. There is some complexity in the relationship of any implied reader to a historical period; rarely is he or she appealed to as a contemporary of the author. Rather, it is as though author and reader were assuming the roles of near-contemporaries of the novel's characters, reflecting back upon an action completed in the relatively recent past. This means that a knowledge of some aspects of the historical setting can be taken for granted and appealed to as though they were part of the reader's present-day experience - a convention which clearly gives more immediacy and vividness to the experiences described. Despite its articiality, this convention appears easy to operate, and in any historical romance is used to help the reader identify with characters who must be assumed to be long-dead. In The White Company, the reader seems to have a good deal of ignorance, both of the finer detail and of
the major movements of the period, combined with an eager desire to learn (hence the term "stranger" in describing him or her). On the other hand, general cues which imply some awareness of medieval circumstances are there to be picked up, such as Angelus and Vespers, or what a "grange" is. This is not very different from the way in which the experiences and thought of Dinah Dean's heroine are contextualized, though contemporary romances typically assume more knowledge than Doyle does and explain less. The more knowledge is assumed, the more the reader can share the experience of the characters.

Doyle's time-scheme is in fact more complex than that of most later romances; a writer of the present-day would locate the action in a specific period as rapidly as possible and vary from it only with a few cautious flashbacks presented often as part of the central character's memories. Such a technique can be seen in an analysis of Barbara Cartland's The Proud Princess, later in the chapter. The time-scheme in Doyle's imagined world fluctuates between a general location - in a period when the Abbey bell was "a common sound" - to a more specific one "within the memory of old lay-brother Athanasius" which stretched back to "the year after the battle of Bannockburn" - and finally to that particular moment "when the shadows were neither short nor long", the bell is ringing, and the Abbot pacing in the chamber. The effect is a little disorientating, particularly when the author
digresses to describe the life of the monks.

In this section, which is quite lengthy, the time location is reasonably specific at first, since the monks are presented for the reader's inspection as they approach the monastery as though in procession, by twos and threes. The actual time-scale appears to be minutes, though a moment's reflection suggests that the monks' approach must have taken much longer, particularly since the outlying granges are described as being some distance from the Abbey. Yet the suggestion of immediacy is reinforced by the fact that the monks appear to have broken off suddenly from what they were doing, and to have come carrying spades or shearing tools, or without pausing to wash the signs of labour from hands or clothes. Further complication is introduced by a flashback to the previous evening, which describes the monks' summoning.

The complexity which is added to the narrative by this contradictory time-scale is not compensated for by any sense that the reader is approaching the heart of the narrative. The function is too obviously to give a picture of monkish occupations - each bears some sign of his craft, a bundle of faggots, shears and wool or a basket of carp. The story itself is kept in mind merely by a few phrases which relate to Barthes's heuristic code: "Why should the great bell of Beaulieu toll?" or "so urgent a message ..." The reader is left to wonder what the message was.
Such reminders keep the reader's curiosity alive while he or she struggles to interpret the scene which is displayed, and the attention is drawn inward through concentric circles to the Abbey and Abbot Burghersh at its centre. As in Dinah Dean's book, a great deal of information is given easily, but the conventions of this text are more difficult for a twentieth century reader to operate. This introduction represents a long pause before a passage of dialogue ushers in the first scene, which has the effect of keeping the reader at a distance from the diegesis.

The result of such extensive passages of description - relating to the semic cultural codes and unsupported by the hermeneutic and proiaretic codes which appeal to a basic human curiosity and need for significance - is to present a twentieth century reader with some difficulty in experiencing the events of the imagined world as "reality". The contrast is therefore clear between the older text and the kind which Radway discusses. In the later romances the codes are so deployed that the reader is drawn in, unaware, to experience something which she thinks of as an artless picture of reality; whereas there is a certain amount of effort necessary to interpret the earlier text which keeps its literary nature firmly in mind.

The general structure of the book, too, is one which would scarcely be tolerable in a popular text today.
There is no one central enigma, as there is in most twentieth century popular romances, which draws the reader forward through the text in the hope of a solution. Instead, the structure is linear but sporadic; the maps at the beginning form a fitting emblem of it, each displaying a triangular and self-contained route which the hero is to travel. Thus the English map is separate from, though related to, the French one. The story follows the lines suggested by the routes each displays: in England, Alleyne journeys from Beauleigh to Sir Nigel's castle at Twynham with a digression to visit his brother at Minstead, while in France the story follows the trail of Nigel's company from Bordeaux eastward to Cahors and Villefranche, and then south-west to Roncevalles. The connection between the two parts is a slender one.

Each of these broad sections of plot is decorated, like a medieval church, with excrescences which seem at first sight unnecessary but which are vital to the structure - indeed, these episodic decorations are the structure. Each episode has its own quality - dangerous, amusing, or bizarre - but remains a self-contained incident, like the encounter between Alleyne and the Bailiff of Southampton. The interest in the book lies less in resolving an enigma, than in finding out, over and over again, what happens next - a dominance of the proiaretic code. The strength of such a structure is that what happens is often surprising enough to hold the
Sir Nigel, too, has a similar richness of incident and gothic extravagance of detail, combined with the slenderest of connecting plots. It is structured like a folk-tale, with the hero encountering three separate adventures - trials before he achieves his ultimate goal. Like the earlier book (set, of course, later) the story is interspersed with long descriptions and historical comment. This structure was one which had been popular in historical novels earlier in the century - Reade's The Cloister and the Hearth is a notorious example - and was by no means abnormal at the end of it, as can be seen by the immense popularity of Doyle's contemporary, the immensely popular writer of boys' sea stories, G.A. Henty. His stories are exciting yarns, but they are also drily written and dully informative, making few concessions on the surface to the reader. Yet the schoolboys of the period loved them.

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This may suggest that all novels of the nineties were alike in this respect. The reader who opens a book of S.J. Weyman's with similar expectations, however, would have a considerable surprise. Though elements of the picaresque
were to remain in historical romances - in the work of
Sabatini or Farnol, for example - the general tendency of
historical romance was towards a unified plot structure
centred on a single adventure, which contained elements of
mystery as well as danger, and which involved the
relationship between hero and heroine as an essential
element. Weyman's romances were structured along these
lines.

Thus Under the Red Robe develops a single adventure
which happens to be a turning point in the life of the
hero and also, to a certain extent, in the history of
France. In contrast to Doyle, Weyman keeps his details to
a minimum in his description, preferring to trigger his
reader's knowledge of the period by mention of a key
detail like a green bough hung over a tavern door as an
inn-sign. The concentration is upon suspense, mystery and
exciting action. The blurb to the 1929 (Murray) edition
promises the clash of swords in the very first page. This
is not quite true, but it does open with a favourite
episode of historical romances, and one which has its own
suspense: a game of hazard and an accusation of cheating.
Swords are out well before the end of the chapter.

The first words - "Marked cards!" 37 - draw the
reader immediately into a scene, Genette's term for an
episode whose duration is equivalent to the time taken to
read it. This alone means that the experience is a more
direct one than that of reading the first scene of The
-111-
White Company. The dominant code here is the hermeneutic, since the words by themselves constrain the interpretation so little that effectually they are meaningless; their significance is a puzzle to be solved. The cultural code operates to a certain extent, since in one context the words could be an accusation of cheating - a solution which is confirmed in the next paragraph. Though more immediately involved in the scene than Doyle's reader, the reader of Under the Red Robe must at once become active in hypothesizing and in drawing upon previous knowledge.

This is because there is very little direct explanation during the whole scene. The reader needs to infer a good deal if the narrative is to make sense. For instance, the opening words trigger knowledge of a period when to cheat at cards meant dishonour and social ruin, and the accusation was therefore one which could only be wiped out in blood. Expectations are thus aroused of a duel which forms the heart of this first episode.

What makes such expectations important to the reader is that his or her imaginative experience is located within the episode in a way it is not as the beginning of Doyle's. The story is told by a narrator, who is himself one of the major actors: point of view and centre of interest are thus identical. What is described is limited to what the narrator himself was aware of; at first, no more than his antagonist, and then the room and the ring of spectators. In temporal terms, the very fact that the
first words are a response to something which has already been said gives the impression that the reader has been precipitated into the middle of the action. There are a number of cues which reinforce this impression, with only the use of the past tense to suggest, weakly, that this is a completed action and that the experience is a fictional one. This gives enough distance to reassure - the narrator has survived whatever has happened, so there are no substantial reasons to fear for him, and in any case this is literature, not life - but all the other cues give an overwhelming impression of reality, and an immediacy which makes the reader feel that he or she is taking part in the action.

The semic code adds the verisimilitude necessary to vivify the scene. The spectators and their reactions are described in enough detail to make them clear to the reader. More importantly, the narrator himself is defined by a series of implications and antitheses which make him seem both real and problematic, so that the reader's curiosity is partly satisfied and partly further stimulated. The grim face with which the narrator receives the accusation of cheating and his reference to those who "storm and swear and ruffle" give an impression of honest indignation, but this is immediately belied by the cries of "Shame" from the spectators, and the reference to the antagonist's youth. Furthermore, the description which the narrator himself gives of the youth
stresses his look of openness and integrity: all of which provokes a suspicion that the accuser himself is callous in receiving the accusation as he does. His own honesty may even be a pose: the spectators seem to feel that he will take the slightest opportunity to force a quarrel ("at his trade again", one comments). This code therefore functions as a series of paradoxes and hints which the reader must work out if the text is to have any meaning.

The cultural and symbolic codes are operative throughout the passage. The references to values and attitudes, and to the power relationships which ensure the reader's awareness of what De Berault is actually doing must be noted before the underlying sense of the passage becomes clear. In a way he is defying his society: but he is doing so in terms of that society's standards and because he is, in a horrible way, one of them. He represents the aspect of their code that they will not acknowledge: De Berault thus has the function of a scapegoat. This is only clear if the reader is aware of his claims. In a society which values nobility, he is a nobleman; at a time when a nobleman's good faith was held to be beyond question, he will allow no-one to question his - even when he is almost openly cheating. He can do so because, according to the gentlemanly code, a gentleman does not need to prove he has acted honorably; the fact that his honour is beyond such question means that he only needs to defend it with force. According to this
convention, any bully and cheat can be honourable if he is a good enough swordsman, as De Berault is.

De Berault is thus taking advantage of the code and, in a way, using it against the spectators, who know he is wrong yet must admit he is acting correctly. The reader's task is to interpret this from the oppositions within the text. Thus they will note the conflict between De Berault's expressions of courage (his claim not to be one of those who "storm and swear and ruffle" suggesting a real valour as opposed to mere bravado) and signs of actual cowardice (he looks round to see if there is anyone who can give him any dangerous opposition before making his challenge). His abuse of the gentlemanly code by implication shows it to be false and flawed. In Iser's terms, the implied reader has a scale of values which enables him or her to understand this - valuing kindness and integrity over mere strength and callous legalistic quibbling, for instance. In terms of Barthes's codes, the reader must be aware of the seventeenth century gentlemanly code and at the same time aware of those elements in his or her own culture which oppose it. The story of the seventeenth century thus symbolizes a late nineteenth century ideology.

This antithetical reflectiveness characterizes the story as whole; for a further paradox remains when other questions in the opening are resolved: how, if De Berault is a poseur, a bully and a cheat, are we to sympathise
with him? Yet if we do not, it is difficult to follow his situation with any interest. The paradox can only be resolved by reading the novel as a whole, since the answer to it is the story; this element in the opening is, therefore, an adumbration of a major theme, which lies close to the heart of the book's ideology.

Apparently, therefore, the reader must be very active in interpreting the beginning of this book, and it seems as though it ought to be more difficult to read than the beginning of The White Company. This is not so, of course. The paradoxes are easy enough to resolve within the context. The experience which is drawn upon in order to "read" the episode is not arcane and could be described as inter-textual: any reader of historical romance would pick up the necessary information about the gentlemanly code to understand the implications of what is said. The cues are cliches; De Berault's contemptuous references to a clearly innocent and honourable young man as a "fool" are enough to make him a villain, for instance. The reader is not expected to bring into play any unfamiliar concepts, and the context in any case makes the intention obvious. Attention is thus drawn to the central paradox: the disruption of expectations based on knowledge of the genre - a disruption which lies in the discovery that the hero and narrator is also the villain. Awareness of the novel's theme is thus made easy.

Though one cannot say that this text, like Radway's
romances, is over-determined in its explanations, yet the response required of the reader is almost equally constrained. Even though the reader is active in constructing the meaning, the range of options open to him or her is a narrow one. And, like Radway's texts, Under the Red Robe gives an impression of unmediated reality through the handling of time and viewpoint, while at the same time signalling a reassuring fantasy quality in its stereotyped and "literary" language.

The structure of Weyman's work is thus more like present day romances than like Doyle's, in these respects at least. What is true of Under the Red Robe is true of his other novels as well, even when they are narrated in the third person. Count Hannibal, for instance, begins with a scene, and, as in Under the Red Robe, a feeling of immediacy is given by the fact that the first words ("M.de Tavannes smiled.") are evidently a response to something which preceded them. Though the point of view is not immediately evident, there are enough clues to the heroine's emotions and reactions ("Mademoiselle ... shivered", and "his hateful breath stirring her hair") to suggest that it will be hers, and this is soon confirmed ("Mademoiselle, watching him go, saw so much" - and the remainder of the scene is described through her eyes). Though the novel's perspective varies between hers and de Tignoville's, with occasional excursions to see the story through other eyes, there is always, thereafter, a clear
sense of a personal viewpoint, and this always belongs to an important actor in any scene.

In both books - and in other books by Weyman, too - the first scene offers a central enigma or paradox which draws the reader into the text in an attempt to solve it. The incidents are closely linked - the quarrel in Under the Red Robe, for example, leading to the duel, de Berault's arrest and his mission - and the final episode gives a successful outcome to the whole while at the same time resolving the central mystery. This too, is a structure closer to that of popular romance than that of Doyle is.

Weyman was unusual in thus anticipating later popular fiction. For the most part, his contemporaries - even younger ones like Orczy or Sabatini - seem to have been inflicted with a need to give information, which can make their work dull reading at times. Yet the plots of these writers of the next generation, like those of Weyman, are a unity, and once their passages of historical information are complete, the action is as brisk, in its way, as that of Weyman's novels. Even Farnol, after a surprisingly "modernist" opening to The Broad Highway in which the characters discuss the nature of the book they are in, plunges into the middle of an exciting situation.

Orczy's The Scarlet Pimpernel is a clear example of the ways in which these texts mix Victorian erudition with twentieth century readability. In the opening chapters
there is little aid for the reader who wants to live vicariously through the events of the story. There is a kind of Prologue which exemplifies the Pimpernel's operation. This begins, it is true, with a heading - "Paris, September 1792" which gives an early location in place and time, and the time is soon made more specific: a particular evening in September. But there is no single point of view. A crowd is described, and there is reference to a "tyrant", a decade later. Only the date gives a clue to the fact that these are Parisian revolutionaries and the "tyrant", Napoleon. The reference forward in time confuses; the story loses its precise sense of temporal setting.

There is no single character with whom the reader can feel an imaginative bond, either. The first few pages give a brief account of the sufferings of the aristos, through the eyes of the crowd - reported as though it were a kind of mass soliloquy. The attitudes revealed are both naive and cruel: the crowd is an untrustworthy narrator, as in their dismissive comment on the aristos: "traitors to the people, of course". The reference to the "children" who are dying, immediately gives the comment the lie.

To operate the cues in this passage the reader has to use sophisticated reading skills, and the effect is lively and amusing; however, it goes on for a long time and runs the danger of taxing the reader's attention. The effect
is that of a film sequence in long shot, with nameless individuals moving in inexplicable activity. When the first specific character is at last named, it is clear that he is stupid and cruel: not a focus for the reader's empathy. No such focus appears in the chapter at all, for it is not until the very end that it becomes evident that the Pimpernel had been amongst the crowd, in disguise. One surmises that it is mainly the energy of the vituperative and denigratory writing which carries the reader's attention through to more conventionally written passages.

Indeed, since the following chapter in the Fisherman's Rest Inn presents more characters who are peripheral to the story, it is not until the third chapter that the major group of characters begins to assemble, and not until the eighth that the action is presented from a single point of view - that of the heroine, who provides the narrative viewpoint for most of the rest of the action. The book thus leaves the reader to flounder a little through the first chapters; it is possible that even at its most popular the book invited a certain amount of skipping.

This writer is apt, too, to intersperse her action with "summaries" which offer general comment on the revolution as a whole. The style of these passages is sometimes like that of a conventional history book, as is, for example, this description of Robespierre from The
Triumph of The Scarlet Pimpernel: "Robespierre at the time was at the height of his popularity and of his power. The two great committees of Public Safety and of General Security were swayed by his desires .... the Dantonists, cowed into submission by the bold coup which had sent their leader ... to the guillotine, were like a tree which has been struck at the root." 40. More follows, in the same vein.

Writers in the early years of the twentieth century seem, in fact, to have been seized with a desire to inform which makes their novels difficult to enjoy today, when very different conventions operate. Sabatini, too, for instance, includes passages of detailed historical explanation, and also accounts of periods in the hero's life - "summaries" and "ellipses" which help to give the impression that the reader is faced with a biography of a real person, and a very dry, academic biography at that. As has been noted, the effect was to a certain extent counteracted by the lavish use of dialogue; and the scenes themselves are narrated without too much digression. Otherwise, it seems difficult to account for the success of books like Scaramouche, or like Orczy's, since though the matter is exciting, the manner is forbidding.
The authors of women's historical romances returned to Weyman's narrative techniques. Even Heyer, despite the formality of her language, tells most of the story through "scenes" and keeps to one or two narrative view-points. The description quoted earlier from the beginning of The Quiet Gentleman, for instance, soon gives place to a scene, told from the point of view of the heroine, in which a family awaits the hero's return. This episode is narrated at some length, with detailed descriptions of the room and characters, but the sensation of living through the scene with the heroine, who is constantly reacting to her observations, is never lost. Subsequent scenes are not narrated in so much detail.

In the work of Cartland the later writers, language and narrative structure combine to place the least possible bar between the reader and the imagined world. This can be shown by a brief analysis of Barbara Cartland's The Proud Princess (1976). The plot is set in motion by an episode in which the heroine, Ilona, out riding, comes upon a mysterious group of men conferring together in a clearing of the forest. The leader tells her to go; as he leads her horse out of the clearing he kisses her. The whole of this episode is a "scene" in Genette's terminology; all that happens is told at much the same rate as it might have happened in reality. Moreover, the action is told as if through the heroine's eyes: what Genette calls the "perspective" or point of
view is unified and there is no sense of a narrator to intervene between reader and the imagined experience of the heroine. Three pieces of necessary information are given to the reader at the opening: the date, 1872, as a heading; the heroine's name (significantly, the first word of the actual text); and the fact that she was riding through a wood. In fact, she is "galloping wildly" and "glancing back", both of which combine to suggest a situation of danger and rouse the reader's curiosity.

That "glance" is the second idea in the sentence, immediately following the heroine's name; and as soon as the circumstance of riding has been stated, the object of the glance is given:

"she saw the broad open steppe with its brilliant green grass richly interspersed with flowers. "It was very beautiful, fading away to an indeterminate horizon beneath the wooded slopes that rose higher and higher until they touched the snow-peaked mountains.

"But Ilona realised that once she was in the open country she would be in full view of those who were following her."

The scene is given in enough detail for the reader to form an image, but the description is very general and succinct, not given for its own sake (the glance is not "aimless") but drawn into the heroine's calculations as she tries to escape whatever it is that threatens her. The
sense of danger is increased at the same time. Any suggestion that the reader is an outsider watching the heroine is dispersed after the first sentence; the rest of the scene is described as though it were part of the heroine’s experience - more, as though it was part of what she does in escaping, so that had there been a sense of a pause, it is quickly banished. It is almost as though the reader is being forced into the role of the heroine.

But feelings of danger and role-play cannot be maintained indefinitely in a vacuum. Enough explanation has to be given for the reader to sustain her sense of role. This is still given in the form of Ilona’s thoughts, however, and in a direct speech format, so that has the effect of seeming to break up explanation with dialogue: "'Could anything,' she asked herself, 'be more frustrating than to go riding accompanied by two elderly Army officers and two grooms?'". This apparently artless statement, Ilona’s mental comment on her situation as she finds herself pushed into hiding, which seems to occur as a natural reaction to the action, in fact tells the reader a great deal. It explains why she is running away, and releases the reader from the immediate sense of danger. Clearly, the main story of the book is not yet under way: the reader has, as it were, arrived in time to see the curtain go up. If she has been wondering about the significance of the title, the idea of "princess" is confirmed by the pomp and evident need for security.
contained in the notion of such an entourage. At the same
time there is a suggestion that Ilona is rebelling against
her situation with its hints of stuffiness (elderly Army
Officers) and unwanted ceremonial. If this Princess is
proud, it must be in her independence and impatience with
control, rather than in setting too much store by her
position; the reader can easily identify with her. This
is immediately confirmed (authorial redundancy) by a
reference to her walking down the steps of the Palace and
the statement that she dislikes pomp.

Six further sentences of explanation follows, telling
the reader that Ilona has been looking forward to riding
on the horses of Dabrozka, which are brought up in
wildness like those of the neighbouring Hungarian plain,
giving them a "unique magnificence." They have Hungarian
blood in them, as do the Dabrozcans themselves; and the
reader is brought back into the immediate situation by
"It was the Hungarian in her now that made her determined
to escape and enjoy the freedom of the wind on her
cheeks". There is no need for this, as we already know
the Ilona prides herself on her Hungarian blood, and in
any case all romantic heroines enjoy the freedom of the
wind on their cheeks; its function is clearly structural,
to bring our attention back unaware to the actual
situation. Yet so brief has been the explanation that the
narrative time has been no longer than it might have taken
Ilona to remember the scene at the palace, a natural
-125-
association with the thought of her retinue, the feeling
of disappointment which went with it, of being robbed of
her exciting ride, and the associations which come along
with the notion of the Dabrozcan horses. Such a train of
thought seems on the surface a natural reaction to the
flash of wryly amused annoyance which comes with her
backward glance as she rides through the trees, and is so
brief that the reader can accept it as this with no
feeling of a pause.

Yet an enormous amount of information has been given,
almost as an aside. The reader now knows that the action
in Dabrozka, evidently a Balkan country between Hungary
and Greece with an "age-old" history going back at least
to the Romans; and that Ilona, its Princess, has lived
away from it since she was ten, but has now returned home.
In addition, enough references to the beauty of the steppe
have been made to ensure that a favourable impression of
the country has been given - a pleasant place to escape
to, in fact.

The impression is now given that as heroine and
reader together become aware of their surroundings they
are reaching a new stage of the journey, when something
unexpected might happen: "She realised, as she guided her
horse through the last of the trees that on her left lay
the river that divided the valley like a silver ribbon"
43. (My underlining of the relevant cues.) The scene
setting having been done very much en passant, the account
of the ride now continues, at first in a relaxed fashion as Ilona looks for wild animals and sinks into a nostalgic reverie which culminates in her humming a "peasant song which came from the past"; but if the heroine is relaxed, the reader is not, having taken note of the cues at the beginning of the account. The effect of the reverie is thus paradoxically to create suspense, culminating in a reference to the sound of voices. The sentences, which had become rather long with a string of dependent phrases and co-ordinating clauses, are now short, almost staccato; as the Princess reacts to the sound, the thoughts seem to be racing through her head. It is possible that the effect may even be to make the reader's pulse beat faster.

The Princess now rides softly towards the sound ("Twisting in and out of the pine-trees, her horse's hooves made very little sound"; presumably it was the horse, rather than the hooves, which was doing the twisting, but the mistake serves to show the effort towards compression at this moment when the reader's blood is supposed to be racing). A new scene opens before her eyes; new characters are introduced, but despite this the viewpoint is still that of the Princess. As the men in the clearing are described, the reader is constantly reminded that she is seeing through Ilona's eyes, with phrases like "Ilona looked at them with interest ... looked to see ... intent on what she was seeing ...". As the horse continues to move forward, what had been a
silent, gesticulating crowd seems to gain a voice, to
which Ilona "listened" but fails to understand, since the
men are talking in Dabrozkan, a language she has almost
forgotten. She understands two significant words,
however: "fight" and "injustice". The reader is thus
given a clue to the nature of the gathering without
finding out too much: curiosity is still intact, though
suspense arising from a sense of danger is reinforced.
Throughout all this, however, the way in which the scene
is presented, never outstripping what the Princess can
see, hear and understand at any moment, keeps the
identification of reader and Princess almost complete.

It is maintained throughout the episode, though the
form changes from narrative to direct speech as one of the
men, Aladar, addresses her. During the dialogue Aladar's
words are given without comment, while the motives behind
Ilona's speeches are given as though she was thinking them
before speaking. The dialogue is interspersed with her
reactions to him and to his speeches. When he first leads
her horse back to the river and then suddenly kisses her,
there is no word of why he did this, but her reactions are
described. The detail of the episode shows how closely
the unified perspective draws the reader into the
narrative.

The episode is to some extent a self-contained one,
though Ilona remains puzzled and outraged. There is
narrative suspense: Ilona feels that she should not be in
the wood and the reader is aware of a potential danger should she be discovered. The moment of her discovery forms a slight climax, followed by a surprise coda in the kiss which Ilona receives. Though the episode ends here, unresolved questions remain: who were the men? What were they doing in the forest? Why did Ilona have to be sent back across the river? The kiss, and Ilona's outraged reaction, suggest the possibility of a relationship of mutual attraction and antagonism. The leader, Aladar, is marked out as a potential hero, not only by his action, but by being young, tall and handsome, with an air of mastery. Though Ilona is outraged, she has noticed how handsome he is—"she saw that he was ... extremely good-looking". The suggestions of both mystery and attraction lay the foundations on which the plot can build. Thus, though it has a pattern and resolution of its own, the episode makes a contribution to the development of the whole.

Although in its unity of viewpoint, which gives it both the potential for reader-identification and a "realist" character, the episode may seem simple, the detail of the analysis shows that it invites the reader to perform a number of complex operations. The process by which it does so may be described in terms of Barthes's codes. The sequence of event and reaction already described, for example, correspond to the proairetic code, while the questions set up by the text correspond to the
hermeneutic code: the writer ensures that the reader focusses upon the ones which are important to the central enigma of the plot by rapidly satisfying our curiosity in the case of the others; why Ilona was trying to escape at the beginning of the book, for example. Important questions are left unresolved at the end of the episode, and in fact it is some time before we are in a position to answer them, though in the course of the episodes which immediately follow - the Princess's ride back to the Palace, and her interview later the same day with her father and the Prime Minister - details are mentioned which seem to associate with the mystery of the men in the forest. Thus, their talk of injustice can be related to the question of why the peasants no longer sing, a point which Ilona notices on the way back to the Palace. It may be noted, however, that though there is a sense of developing mystery, the author continues to limit the reader's interpretation by providing a number of partial explanations - the account of the split between Radak and Saros, given to Ilona by her Army officers on her return to them, for example - which make it obvious what the truth is. Redundant authorial explanation of the kind noted in the episode from The Briar Rose will ensure that any hypotheses which the reader forms will be confirmed in due time.

This contrasts with the lack of immediate explanation already noted in Under the Red Robe. More latitude is
allowed to the reader's interpretation in the earlier text - a reader who knows something of the gentlemanly code of the seventeenth century would react differently to the text than an ignorant one would, for example, and the cues set up by the text are only gradually explained by the outcome. Cartland, in common with most present day romance writers, is more concerned with closure.

In contrast, the associations of naturalness and lack of pomposity connected with Ilona, and those of untamed freedom connected with Dabrozka (connotations sufficiently alike to suggest that though Ilona is more or less a stranger to the country she is very much a part of it) - associations which function as part of the semic code - are given in indirect hints, unstated implications, and phrases included as though they are afterthoughts, mentioned by the way. Thus, a description of the Dabrozkan horses likens their freedom to that of the Hungarian horses, adding that "like the people" they were more than half-Hungarian ; the point is underlined, together with the link with Ilona, when it is remarked a little further down the page that her Hungarian blood makes her want to "enjoy the freedom of the wind on her cheeks" 44. Thus the association of Ilona with Dabrozka, and of both with a love of freedom, is gradually being built up and will continue to be: it is an important part of the narrative.

It is by such hints as this that the semic code
functions in this novel, in contrast to *The Briar Rose* with all its direct description. James Donald and Colin Mercer, in their analysis of *The Maltese Falcon*, say that the semic code sets up "a little web of enigmas" which help the reader to read on; the operation of the code through half-stated hints and implications may be seen therefore as drawing the reader more surely into the text, and explain why a narrative method such as Dinah Dean's is relatively rare in a genre whose main purpose is to entertain. Certainly, Cartland's use of it corresponds closely with that of Weyman.

The references in *The Proud Princess* to "the great Hortobagy Puszia" on which the Hungarian horses were bred functions as part of the cultural code and flatters and informs the reader at the same time (who, after all, does not know the great Hortobagy Puszia?). Janice Radway's Smithton readers praised romances for teaching them about "faraway places", and Peter Mann's respondents also praised romances for being informative. It seems to be such details as this (the wild horses of Hungary) which they mean, rather than the careful extended descriptions of a writer such as Dinah Dean, for one respondent stressed the painless, incidental nature of this way of acquiring information: "You don't feel you've got a history lesson, but somewhere in there you have". Janice Radway believes that such comments show a desire to make romance reading respectable: not self-indulgence but
a kind of education. At the same time, the author is associating the fictional Dabrozka very closely with the real Hungary, so that in a way this random detail endows the invented land with a kind of spurious reality. The reader swallows more than a disconnected fact about horses. Again, the way the code is used is very like Weyman's use of it; his historical detail is given in the same kind of incidental way, a point which differentiates him from Doyle, as has been seen.

The reader may thus be responding in a fairly naive way to cues such as this, while at the same time operating the cultural code in a much more sophisticated manner when recognising heroine qualities in Ilona, marking out Aladar as a potential hero and responding to their interaction as suggesting the possibility of a "merry war". But it is probable that, sophisticated or naive, the process is equally unconscious; otherwise, the reading of romances would not offer the escapist pleasure which it evidently does. This may explain why both Cartland and Weyman have in their time and in their own way dominated the field of popular literature.

The same mixture of sophistication and naivety, both unaware, can be seen in the operation of the symbolic code in *The Proud Princess*, which works through automatic assumptions derived from the reader's position within society and developing towards a full-blown ideology. In the episode quoted, it is cued by details such as Aladar's
behaviour to Ilona; when, seizing her horse's bridle, he leads her from the clearing with a contemptuous "Don't be a little fool!" 47, Ilona feels that he is being "intolerably bossy" and has no right to order her about. But she does nothing to counter his behaviour, and so, though she displays the correct independently-minded characteristics for a heroine, her acquiescence implicitly underwrites the conventioned picture of a relationship between a man and a woman. A man's reaction to a woman who calls him a little fool would be very different. The symbolic code is concerned with the reader and her society, but the cues are none the less in the text.

The rest of the novel follows a pattern similar to that of the opening episode. It is made up of a number of episodes, each of about the same length, and each told in the same way - as scenes, with a balance of dialogue and narrative. They are linked by brief summaries or, on one occasion, by an ellipsis which covers four days. The summaries are, however, kept to a minimum, as is any variation in the time-sequence. They are only used when absolutely necessary for information. Thus, when Ilona rides back from the clearing, she enquires why she should not have crossed the river: this leads on to an explanation about the Dabrozkan situation which puts the previous events in context; this is followed by the memories of the Princess as she thinks back over the events which led to her return to Dabrozka. The more
extensive timescale here does not interrupt the rapid flow of the story, however, since it forms an episode in itself with a well-marked internal structure: Ilona's hardships during the seige of Paris are detailed, leading to a climax when she finds herself destitute after the death of her mother, and a happy ending when she is discovered by the king's messengers and told she is now the heir to Dabrozka. The pattern is simple, familiar and satisfying, and in addition the reader can share in Ilona's pleasure as she goes on a shopping spree and buys trunkloads of lavish clothes.

This story is narrated as though Ilona were thinking back over the events as she rides home. In this way the time-scale does not seem to have been disrupted, since the reader is aware of the story going on in an imagined present, even while the events of the past are being narrated. Rosalind Brunt has remarked that part of Cartland's effectiveness as a story-teller comes from her use of "a continuous present" by which she means a story told as if it were happening at the very moment of reading, even though it is told in the past tense. Here, the method of narration adds to this effect by seeming to draw a past event into the "continuous present".

The remainder of the book comprises dialogues, when information needs to be given or a character needs to express emotion at length - these are often used, like the
dialogue with the Army officers, to avoid a summary or pause and scenes, each of which forms a small episode and like the first has its own little web of enigmas, suspense, climax and resolution, while contributing something - either information or a deepening of the mystery - to the main plot. Thus each increases the need to read onward while not overtaxing the reader's attention by maintaining a mystery over too long a period; she always knows that her curiosity is to be satisfied, at least in part, almost immediately, though she needs to read on to the end to resolve the major enigma. Thus the drawing power of the hermeneutic code is unusually strong in this book.

The major mystery of the book arises from Aladar's inexplicable refusal to consummate his marriage to Ilona on their wedding night. The sequence of events which follows includes a scene in a gypsy encampment, which seems to prove that Aladar has a gypsy mistress, but also makes Ilona realize that she loves him. In another, Ilona is abducted by bandits, and rescued by Aladar: a rescue which seems to show his concern for her. The contradictory nature of these clues adds to the mystery of Aladar's behaviour. Throughout the sequence the relationship is presented as a puzzle to be solved. This seems to confirm Rosalind Brunt's observation, that Cartland's novels are surprisingly lacking in descriptions of powerful emotion: "It is as if 'romantic love' is almost external to the
whole narrative enterprise" 49. The presentation of romance in _The Proud Princess_ seems to bear this out.

Two major problems are offered for the reader's solution, both in the area of feeling, but neither excessively charged with feeling 3. The first is the state of Ilona's heart; the second, that of Aladar's strange behaviour (he comes into Ilona's bed-chamber on the night of their marriage, sits down without a word to her, takes out a book and reads for a measured hour, and leaves, still without a word spoken). Of these, the first is the most conventional and soonest disposed of. Because this story has sent out the conventional signals of romance (sympathy with the heroine, attraction/antagonism between her and the hero, etc.), the reader is interested in her fate, which is, tentatively at least, seen in terms of marriage. Rosalind Brunt sees the typical Cartland plot as a gradual closing of options for the heroine. Ilona's options are not active choices, since in marrying her to Aladar, the king is using her as a pawn in a political game and she is not in a position to initiate action. Her options are those of feeling. The scene in the gypsy camp resolves this issue by making it clear to Ilona that she is in love.

There remains the puzzle of Aladar, whose behaviour is contradictory. He had seemed to be attracted by Ilona when he kissed her, yet his position as head of a rival faction suggests hostility. Marriage does not resolve
this; it only leads to mysterious behaviour on his part which excites the reader's curiosity. To Ilona he does not appear hostile, and he is affable in public; yet when they are alone the same behaviour as on the wedding night is always repeated. Later episodes - the gypsy camp, the rescue from the bandits - continue to offer contradictory evidence. Thus the reader's curiosity is kept alive and her attention drawn onward into the story.

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The general structure of The Proud Princess conforms to a very common, and simple, structural pattern in contemporary historical romance. The plots of early Victorian romantic authors such as G.P.R. James and Harrison Ainsworth have been described as characterized by: "a rapid, almost dizzy, change of incidents, their stories moving at a hectic pace with an abundance of small climaxes and sudden surprises." This structure has been attributed to the demands of periodical serialization. Contemporary romances are not shaped with serial publication in mind, and there have been, as one might expect, changes in form: the proliferation of plotlines, for example, typical of early romances, has no parallel today. Yet Rosalind Brunt's description of
Cartland's story-telling method suggests that much remains the same: "Cartland's fictions rely upon pace of action, much plot incident and scene shifting ... the plot ... proceeds according to a basic formula that is made up of a series of familiar elements which are constantly reordered and reworded in a process of 'bricolage'. 51 This "process of bricolage" suggests the way in which formulaic fiction is structured. It is a quality noted in the work of Weyman and Sabatini to some extent, but the essential difference between their work and that of contemporary novelists is that the earlier texts contain more incidents, describe them less concisely, and are less exclusively bound to one point of view.

A comparison of works by Barbara Cartland with those of other writers suggests that this description of her plots is true, not only of Cartland's narrative method, but of that in contemporary historical romances in general. The description of Victorian plot development quoted above could in some ways stand as a description of romances written today. Plots are still characterized by a rapid pace and a succession of minor climaxes. Typically, the story moves towards a major climax in which the elements of love and adventure are finally resolved, but this movement is through a chain of incidents, each of which has its own climax and resolution besides contributing to the main one. In other ways, the structure of contemporary romance is much tighter; the action is
seen almost entirely from one point of view, that of the heroine, and the language, narrative time and perspective, and sequencing of incidents are all deployed in such a way as to make the task easy for the reader and help her to forget she is reading a story rather than living an experience.

The ways in which such texts differ from earlier ones may be exemplified by a brief return to the structure of Weyman's *Count Hannibal*. Although the actual story of *Count Hannibal* is essentially the same as that of *The Proud Princess* - the heroine is forced into marriage after initial hostility towards the hero, in order to save others, and comes to realise eventually, after solving the puzzle of her husband's strange behaviour, that she is in love with him - the structural pattern of *Count Hannibal* is more complex than that of *The Proud Princess*. The book is much longer, and consists of a number of episodic blocks, comprising a range of minor episodes. These, especially at first, are told from more than one viewpoint, though eventually only that of the heroine and occasionally of the hero, is used. The settings, too, are more varied: the events of the night of St. Bartholomew are set in Paris, and this block is followed by a peripatetic sequence, the events of the ride to Angers. The next block is set in Angers itself, and is followed by the escape from the city, the ride to the south, and, in the final block, the siege of the heroine's Girondin home.
Half of France is thus covered in the course of the story, which begins expansively: a sense of growing tension is suggested by the way in which the later blocks become shorter than the early ones, and simpler in construction, with increased concentration on one point of view.

The reader's response can not be as simple and direct at the beginning of a Weyman novel as it is likely to be at the beginning of The Proud Princess. As has been said, the significance of the first scene of Under the Red Robe must be inferred from hints and implications; and a similar indirection is evident at the beginning of Count Hannibal. In this book, it is important for the success of the story as a whole that Hannibal is taken to be a sympathetic character while his rival, de Tignoville, is a man of charm but is ultimately unsympathetic. Yet at the same time Hannibal is a Catholic, implicated in the horrors of the massacre of St. Bartholomew. De Tignoville is automatically more sympathetic because he is a Huguenot, and therefore one of the innocent victims. Furthermore, some at least of the action is presented from de Tignoville's point of view, whereas Hannibal is presented objectively - we are very rarely given a glimpse of his thoughts or feelings - and as a villain. Clothilde shrinks from him at the beginning of the book, and he is quite unscrupulous in taking advantage of her danger to force her into marriage with him.

The actions of the characters run counter to this
impression, however: de Tignoville is following up an affair with another woman just as he has become engaged to Clothilde, and has left her embarrassingly alone in a riotous court. Hannibal accepts his part in the massacre fully — on the surface. When asked his opinion of the plans, however, he says "I think nothing, sire ... it is enough for me that it is the king's will" and "his face was inscrutable". Later, he is angry with the captain of the guard for showing enjoyment in the plot, and warns the Huguenot de Rochfoucauld not to leave the king's protection. Riding through the streets, his apparent clumsiness in handling his horse enables a Huguenot to escape a part of the Catholic mob. His intentions in doing this are never clarified, and the description of his manner, and of Clothilde's reactions to him, still makes him seem villainous. The cumulative effect of his actions, however, is of a man of a basic goodwill. He is too ambitious and political to stand out openly against something he knows to be wrong when such a stand would serve no purpose, but, Machiavelli-like, he serves authority while circumventing any abuses by stealth and ingenuity.

It is the reader's task to work this out from the contrast between villainous appearance and manner and harmless activity, just as de Tignonville must be recognised as slightly contemptible, despite his innocence. Weyman seems, in fact, to be playing a game.
with the reader, but one which demands his or her complicity. At some point in the story Hannibal must be recognised as heroic, even by the most naive of readers. From the moment of enlightenment, the story offers a double pleasure: of recognising a hidden truth, of being in the know, while following Clothilde's journey to a similar realisation sympathetically.

The reader is thus made to work harder in Count Hannibal than in The Proud Princess. There are switches of viewpoint to be made, and inferences and ironies which can only be picked up if the semic and symbolic codes - our awareness of the horrors of religious fanaticism balanced against the inferences which we are initially led to make about the nature of the hero's character, for instance - are competently operated. In a way, the reader's values must be used as a measuring stick for the values apparently expressed in the text. In The Proud Princess there is a mystery about the hero's motivation, and the heroine is mistaken in her reading of him - as is Clothilde about Hannibal - but the reader is not made aware of this until the end of the book, when the hero explains all, and the reader shares the heroine's enlightenment. The attitudes drawn upon by Weyman may not be in themselves more complex than those appealed to by Cartland, but they are used in a more complex way. If Weyman's books are simpler to read than Doyle's, they make more demands than a modern romance.

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What Weyman's books have in common with those of the novelists who followed him is that they tell a single story based on a unified action. This is as true of writers like Orczy and Sabatini who began their careers soon after Weyman, as it is of a present day romantic novelist. Orczy's *The Scarlet Pimpernel* has already been mentioned as a book which begins, perhaps, more clumsily than one of Weyman's novels - though its basic mystery, that of the Pimpernel's identity, is presented in the opening scene, and builds up an impression of the Pimpernel which is more than exciting enough to compensate for this. Although the opening episodes move from one group of characters to another, the mystery of the Pimpernel gives a unity since the reader expects it to be resolved at any moment. Before it becomes obvious that this is not going to happen, the narrative viewpoint becomes settled as that of the heroine, and the reader becomes involved with her fears and aspirations. From that point the plot unfolds as a unity, and the concentration is upon hero, heroine and villain.

The direction of the reader's sympathies and antipathies is, in fact, more settled than in *Count Hannibal*, though more demands are made of the reader than in *The Proud Princess*. Clues to the Pimpernel's identity are frequent and obvious enough in the early part of the book to make it unlikely that the reader can remain ignorant of it until the moment when Marguerite discovers
it. As in Count Hannibal, therefore, the reader can have the pleasure of being better informed than the heroine. On the other hand, it could easily be read as though it were a story like The Proud Princess: a mystery centred round the hero's actions and feelings, to be solved by the heroine, while the reader's role is simply to follow her path to discovery. Certainly, there is no playing upon ironies and contrasts as there is in Weyman's books. The Scarlet Pimpernel can be seen, therefore, as a further development in the movement away from the picaresque adventure story towards the unified plot based on a central discovery or danger.

All three books, however, present a mystery: that of the hero's true nature and feelings. Although she gives preliminary clues to the truth in the sudden contradictory memories which Marguerite holds of her husband's courtship, Orczy is the writer who chooses to keep her secret best; though, in common with the other writers, she makes her clues more obvious and frequent as the climax approaches, especially in the night scene at Richmond which immediately precedes the climax and in which the intensity of Percy's feelings for Marguerite is made clear. Weyman uses the rather clumsy device of telling the reader what was in the hero's thoughts long before the heroine discovers it. There is no real moment of unveiling when we share the heroine's realization; from this point of view the book is less satisfying than
many later books, though some minor writers are sometimes unsatisfactory in the same way.

Cartland's solution to the mystery of Aladar's behaviour is efficiently presented. The chained episodes lead at last to the major climax, which is double. The first and major part resolves the story's political dimension: Ilona and Aladar together save Dabroska and defeat the treacherous king. The second, a kind of coda, resolves the love-plot. This pattern is common in Cartland's novels. The Magnificent Marriage, London 1974, The Bored Bridegroom, London 1974, Love leaves at Midnight, London 1978, and Light of the Moon, London 1979 all end with a final interview between hero and heroine which at last reveals the state of the hero's feelings. In The Proud Princess this interview is the major key to the novel's mysteries, revealing the secret of Aladar's behaviour and casting a new light on the apparently inappropriate title.

The narrative therefore leads the reader to the solution of a puzzle rather than to a wallow in feeling. There is only one "love-scene", and it comes at the end of the novel. Its function is as much to unravel a mystery as it is to express the reader's feelings. No doubt the reader enjoys the display of tender feeling, especially since the identification with the heroine remains very strong; but also the satisfaction of curiosity must give a potent reward for reaching the end of the book.
The older novels presented more than one source of interest or tension. The effects in *Count Hannibal* are complex ones, and the book is of course fuller and longer than either of the other two. Orczy solves her puzzle halfway through the book, and thereafter concentrates on the danger to hero or heroine; though there is plenty of tension, the plot of *The Scarlet Pimpernel* seems broken-backed. In Cartland's novel, everything is subordinate to the mystery at the heart of which is a love-story, and, therefore, the operation of the hermeneutic code is dominant. The semic code works by hints and implications, and the cultural code is important insofar as it provides familiar cues to trigger the reader's responses. The use of a "continuous present" and the heroine's viewpoint leads to strong identification with the heroine. The telling of the story through a sequence of scenes, avoiding summary and disruption of time sequence where possible, adds to the effect of realism. The cultural code operates to validate the fictional world by associating it with facts in the real one (the Hungarian horses), and this too helps to make the narrative realistic. Some of the effects in the older novels are similar. *Count Hannibal*, and, once the plot gets under way, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, avoid summary, use scenes and enable the reader to feel that he or she is taking part in the story. The hermeneutic code is important in both, but in *Count Hannibal* it is two-layered; the reader is anxious to know
why the Count seems so anxious to marry Clothilde against her will, but this depends on another enigma: what kind of man he is. This is something which the reader is essentially left to work out for his or herself. Orczy gives her readers greater help, but in The Scarlet Pimpernel, too, the mystery of the Pimpernel's identity is tied to the greater mystery of Percy's true nature. There are changes of viewpoint in both Orczy's novel and Weyman's, which adds to the effect of greater complexity.

Above all, the structure of Cartland's work gives the reader the least possible problem. Reading is a painless process of responding to familiar cues while being drawn into the narrative through curiosity; because of this the text becomes transparent and the reader loses the consciousness of interacting with the text and instead seems to be living through a real experience. This experience may not always be pleasant, since if there were no elements of frustration or conflict there would be no story; but the reader wants to find out what happened and, through her knowledge of the genre, is reassured that the normal romantic signals are being set up and she will be satisfied in the end by a happy conclusion which solves all problems and unites hero and heroine. The older texts do not make reader identification quite so easy.

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A general course of development may therefore be seen in the structure of historical romances, from the end of the last century to contemporary writing. Doyle's structure is reminiscent of the picaresque, rather episodic one to be found in such romances as Stevenson's Kidnapped. Weyman provided a more unified adventure story, which from the beginning used the devices of what Ian Watt has termed "formal realism" to help the reader into the text in quest of a satisfying resolution. Historical information is presented incidentally, by means of the "rapid glance" technique, so the narrative is not disrupted by the need for explanations.

The importance of these devices varies in the work of later writers. Sabatini and Orczy break up their narrative by including passages of historical explanation. Farnol and Sabatini both keep the reader continuously aware that they are reading and not experiencing by the kind of language they use: archaic and academic in the case of Sabatini, a kind of flowery rhetoric in the case of Farnol. But the novels of all these writers followed Weyman's example in using a unified structure and time sequence, with most of the action presented in the form of scenes and a movement towards a single viewpoint. More and more the attention is centred on the fates of a single group of characters, for a brief span of time. These devices are taken to an extreme in contemporary female romance, with a much simpler plot and concentration on
very few characters: ultimately, only the hero and heroine are important with minor characters having a very slender claim on the reader's attention.

The effect of these developments has been to make the novels increasingly transparent vehicles for imagined experiences, though with the reassurance that its dangers are safely located in a past time and, often, a far distant place. This is what makes them so successful as escapist entertainment, though it also means that when the text confronts issues of contemporary concern or conveys a contemporary ideology the implications of this slip by unnoticed by the reader, who seems to be living in a value-free Arcadia. The easier texts are not necessarily more enjoyable for every reader; Doyle is still read while Weyman is forgotten, even though his books did not enjoy the same contemporary success. But the ease of reading is connected with the books' contemporary popularity, and it is likely that the structure combines with the use of familiar but significant motifs to become powerfully persuasive.
Chapter Four

The Stock Motifs and Characters of Historical Romance

In discussing the appeal of the middle ages for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Umberto Eco differentiates "cloak-and-dagger stuff" from "historical novels" by suggesting that the former need to include "real" historical characters to support their credibility. Not all popular historical romances use real figures in what Eco calls "crucial" roles, however; credibility may be given by period detail instead. Unless historical accuracy is to be so flagrantly breached that only the name of the character is kept, the need to keep within the framework of the actual career is restrictive; and the former policy is in itself a threat to credibility.

Most historical romance since the end of the last century has therefore used historical figures, when at all, in very minor roles. Thus, though Henry IV of France is evidently a favourite of Stanley Weyman's, his main function (as in A Gentleman of France (London, 1895) or The Abbess of Vlaye (London, 1901) is to send the hero on a mission: hero and mission, and almost all the adventures he meets, being purely imaginary.

Such situations may be compared to the "motifs" of Boris Tomashevski, as "the smallest unit of plot" in that they form the building blocks from which the story
may be constructed. In Tomashevski's terminology they would remain undifferentiated, all being "bound" motifs in that they all function as essential parts of the plot; so that to call them motifs gives no indication of their character as stereotypes or of their duration, which varies according to the situation. Some, like an impertinent kiss, may last only for a second, while others, such as a misunderstanding which keep hero and heroine apart, may be complex and last for nearly the whole of the story, though the initial occasion may be more simple. Such misunderstandings are usually aggravated by incidents occurring throughout the book: is each of these a separate motif? Their functions are the same, contributing to the same basic situation, and they are often almost identical. Perhaps Tomashevski's division of motifs into "dynamic" and "static" might express some of these differences, but in the context of historical romance Umberto Eco's concept of the "frame" is more helpful. In The Role of the Reader, Eco differentiates "common" from "intertextual" frames. "Common" frames appeal to our normal experience - eating a meal, for example. "Intertextual" frames are stereotyped situations from textual tradition. Historical romance contains both.

"Common" frames are used in an individual way peculiar to historical fiction. Though the reference is to situations within the reader's experience, it is often the
difference from normality which is stressed. When Neoma, in Cartland's *Light of the Moon* (London, 1979) hears the forks squeak on the Marquis's gold plate, we know we are not in an ordinary household. The most trivial events of everyday life are narrated in a detail one would not expect to find in other genres: characters are described dressing, cooking, eating, doing their hair and even having a bath (an enterprise fraught with danger in Frances Lang's *The Filigree Bird*, London 1981). This is because such frames carry the period detail; and the narrative emphasises this ("He ... wore the exaggerated 'Incroyable' fashions which had just crept across from Paris to England" for example, in Orczy's *The Scarlet Pimpernel*) 4. At the same time, as noted in chapter three, many writers try to assist reader identification by using the consciousness of hero or heroine to make the detail seem normal, or by integrating the detail into the narrative in some other way: a scene where a girl dresses for her first ball, for instance, makes a description of her gown quite natural, but the period character is plain ("a breathlessly excited maid helped Serenity into one of the new dresses ... of peach jaconet which enhanced her clear skin and dark hair" - Caroline Courtney, *The Masquerading Heart*) 5. Details of this kind are important, as they are often associated with the themes and attitudes to be found in the text. Thus, when in *Under the Red Robe* Berault places on Mme de Cocheforet's
table "a white glazed cup, an old-fashioned piece of the second Henry's time", it is a reminder of his Breton childhood and an important factor in his return to traditional family values 5; when the "few herrings" 7 of a Parisian super during the Revolution, as described by Orczy, are contrasted with "a cut of your cheese and home-baked bread" as served at the Fisherman's Rest at Dover 8, the comparison is intended to show the wretched privations which are the direct consequence of revolt. "Intertextual frames", on the other hand refer to previous romantic and adventurous texts and have little specific historical content. They vary in nature, frequency of occurrence, and importance in the narrative. Though Eco mentions some frames which he calls "stereotyped iconographical units" 9, which are static, the stereotyped situations of historical romance usually have some narrative content, however little. In another terminology, that of Tzetvan Todorov, these frames would all be "predicates" rather than "agents" 10 (like the "rough diamond" hero).

Some of the frames are of such frequent occurrence that they seem essential to the genre. To find them in book after book can give the impression that all romances tell the same story. Since most novels contain some degree of conflict, for instance, and since most present day romances focus attention so strongly on the hero of heroine, a difference between hero and heroine at some point in the story is an almost universal situation. In
about half the romances I have looked at, a sample of just over a hundred, this difference arises out of a misunderstanding, ending in reconciliation once it is resolved. Frequently the conflict is so marked at the beginning of the story as to amount to actual hostility.

Certain of the stereotyped situations are more common in the earlier romances and seem to derive more from Victorian adventure stories than from romances. Their characteristic narrative pattern begins with the hero's being sent on a mission, which he achieves after a period of danger and is rewarded by the sender (in Propp's terminology) with wealth and status. Though this pattern is also characteristic of other genres, it is particularly suited to historical romance, since the hero can be sent on missions of great historical importance. Historical events provide numerous occasions for such adventures: since the outcome of events is known, the author can slot the adventure in in a plausible way and has no need to fall back upon imaginary dangers to ensure a happy outcome. Thus there is no need to fall back on villains who dream of world domination, like Fleming's Dr. No, or upon fictitious organizations like S.M.E.R.S.H. Many of Weyman's novels contain missions of this kind: Count Hannibal, for example, is sent by Charles VI to order the destruction of the Huguenots of Angers; de Berault is sent by Richelieu to arrest one of the Orleanist rebels in Bearn in Under the Red Robe; Henry of Navarre sends the
heroes of both *A Gentleman of France* and *The Abbess of Vlaye* on similar adventures. Mason's heroes are usually entrusted with important tasks for the Stuart cause, usually by the Pretender himself. The Scarlet Pimpernel creates his own mission, but his activities are endorsed by the Prince Regent. In this kind of story, in fact, the most important function of real historical characters is to initiate the action on this way.

In the books of Farnol and Sabatini the place of missions of this kind is taken by more personal quests. None the less there are vestiges of "mission" motifs even in some contemporary love-stories. The hero of Cartland's *The Bored Bridegroom* (London, 1974), for instance, is a kind of Scarlet Pimpernel. In Darcy's *Rolande* (London, 1981) and Stables's *No Impediment* (London, 1979) the hero goes to France to rescue victims of the terror. Eva Macdonald's "Cromwell's Spy" is trying to capture Prince Rupert (London, 1976); the eponymous "Royalist Enchantress" of Lee Stafford's *Novel* (London, 1982) is a member of the "Sealed Knot" society; and in Marina Oliver's *Sybilla and the Privateer* (London, 1976), the heroine discards her lover when she discovers he is a Parliamentary spy, only to discover that her brother is a spy for Prince Charles, and she is abducted in order to foil his mission. In these books, however, the historical events are the occasion of misunderstandings rather than of dangers, and the mission only occurs in about a fifth
of the books in the sample.

Instead, more personal quests which do not depend on specific historical situations are favoured in later romance. Heroes and heroines search for a lost mistress or family, a vanished inheritance, or seek revenge. In "mission" books the key incident is an escape; in "quest" books, it becomes confrontation. Thus the action of the story may culminate in a fight between hero and villain.

A number of characteristic situations are connected with this pattern which help to give the genre its romantic flavour. The newly discovered heir's fight for his lost inheritance; the abduction and rescue of the heroine; the machinations of the villain, often himself a disappointed heir: all these are a part of such stories. They are situations with a long ancestry, reaching back ultimately, as has been said, to the situations of Greek Romance and New Comedy. They are updated, but only to some extent: heroines are abducted by lustful suitors rather than by pirates, and heroes lose an inheritance through a false accusation rather than being stolen at birth; but a strawberry mark, that hoary device, is still being used to differentiate twins in Caroline Courtney's 1984 romance *The Masquerading Heart*.

The very nature of such situations accounts for much of the fascination shown by romantic authors with the idea of disguise or concealed identity. Actual disguises are necessary on secret missions. Taken more widely, the
revelation of the hero's true nature or the heroine's feelings is perhaps the most common situation in the novels. In a study of situations in over a hundred historical romances, disguise, mostly of the hero though sometimes of the heroine, was a motif in nearly a third of the sample, while a substantial number (twelve) turned on the revelation of the hero's or heroine's identity and there were a similar number of instances where an "illegitimate" hero or heroine is proved to be legitimate after all (usually through a secret marriage) and thus capable of inheritance.

This may take two main forms: there may be a revelation of true social status, usually implying membership of a particular family, or a revelation of character, good or bad. Both major and minor characters may have disguised identities, but on the whole it is the hero whose social status or true nature is revealed. Often this is because the hero had fallen in status for some reason before the novel begins. In Sabatini's The Tavern Knight, (London, 1904) for instance, Roland Marleigh has been robbed of his lands, his wife has been killed, and his son abducted, by the villainous Ashburns; under the name of Crispin Galliard he becomes in turn a galley salve, a fencing master and a mercenary soldier. John Carstares, hero of Heyer's The Black Moth (London, 1921) is the heir to the Earl of Wyncham, but goes into exile to save his brother from social disgrace. He, too,
becomes a fencing master, and later a gamester; by the
time the novel opens he divides his life between being a
highwayman, and a disguise as the foppish baronet, Sir
Anthony Ferndale. Dorothy Dunnett's hero, in *The Game of
Kings* (London, 1962), Francis Crawford of Lymond, is the
heir to the Earl of Culter, but forced to go into exile
when suspected of treachery after the battle of Solway
Moss. Like Sir Crispin Galliard, he becomes a galley
slave and then a mercenary. Andrew Moreau (Sabatini's
*Scaramouche*, London, 1921) forced to leave home because he
is suspected of revolutionary sympathies, disguises
himself by one of the Commedia del Arte roles in a
travelling theatre company; he, too, later becomes a
fencing master. It can be seen that not only is the
disguise a favourite situation, but that the careers of
the heroes in exile often follow a strikingly similar
pattern as well.

These heroes were of course aware of their true
identity; but another favourite situation is the
discovery of an unknown identity. Many heroes and
heroines grow up unaware of their aristocratic birth.
Kenneth, a minor character in *The Tavern Knight*, is really
the son of Roland Marleigh, thought to have been killed
when his mother was murdered. Justin Caryll, in
Sabatini's *The Lion's Skin* (London, 1911) is the son by a
secret marriage of the Earl of Ostermere, and in
*Scaramouche* Andre-Louis Moreau turns out to be the natural
son of his greatest enemy, the Marquis de la Tour d'Azur. The plot of Clare Darcy's *Eugenia* (London, 1977) turns on the discovery that Richard Liddiard is the legitimate cousin of the Earl of Chandross, and heir to Coverts. In John Buchan's *The Blanket of the Dark* (London, 1934), Peter Pentecost is the lost son of the Duke of Buckingham.

Heroines, too, make similar discoveries. Leonie in Georgette Heyer's *These Old Shades* (London, 1926), is the daughter of the Comte de St. Vire, exchanged at birth for an inn-keeper's son because of the need for an heir. In S.J. Weyman's *The Castle Inn* (London, 1898), Julia has been brought up by one of the Pembroke College servants, but just before the story begins, she has been found to be the heiress to the Soane lands and fortune. A second discovery reveals that she is in fact nothing of the sort, the real heiress having died in infancy. Julia is the daughter of a French emigre, adopted in the heiress's place - which assures her gentle birth if not her right to a fortune. Xenia, in Barbara Cartland's *Love Leaves at Midnight* (London, 1978), is the grand-daughter of the King of Slovia, though brought up in poverty.

The assumption of someone else's identity, particularly when family likenesses are in question, is another favourite situation. Characters will sometimes assume other identities on the slenderest of pretexts, to create an attractive plot. Richard Liddiard, in *Eugenia*, stays at Mere pretending to be his cousin Gerald, for no
clear reason. Xenia, in Barbara Cartland's *Love leaves at Midnight*, also poses as a cousin on a visit to King Istvan; this is to give the cousin a holiday. In each case the masquerade is made possible by the startling likeness between the cousins. Family likeness is also significant in Dorothy Dunnett's *Checkmate*, (London, 1975) where Marthe, Francis Crawford's half-sister, is so like him that in men's clothing she is mistaken for him and killed in his place. Travesty is in fact a frequent accompaniment of such masquerades. In Georgette Heyer's *The Masqueraders* (London, 1928) a brother and sister change places, the heroine pretending to be a man and vice-versa. In *These Old Shades* and *The Corinthian* (London, 1928), also, Heyer's heroines masquerade as boys. And there are many minor masquerades: Heyer's *Arabella* (London, 1949), pretends to be an heiress: Cartland's Neoma in *Light of the Moon* poses as a high-class prostitute in order to attend the Marquis of Rosyth's Derby-day house-party - hampered by the fact that, despite a keen interest in the poetry of John Donne, she is totally unaquainted with the facts of life.

Discoveries and masquerades have been the stuff of comedy and romance since the days of Menander. The plots of historical romance are unusual, however, in the frequency with which they turn on this device, whatever their date and whether or not their major theme is adventure or love. Romantic novels with a contemporary
setting use it far less frequently, perhaps because the situation would seem ludicrous in a familiar twentieth century setting, or possibly because social status and inherited wealth are perceived as having been more important in the past. No doubt a part of what historical romance offers its readers is this: a chance to identify with someone as ordinary as ourselves, who can none the less claim a prestigious place in a stable hierarchy.

The idea of masquerade is perhaps initially connected with that of a saturnalia, but masks and cloaks are naturally connected with hidden identities as well as a changed social order. There are also connotations of expressing parts of one's nature which are normally repressed in accordance with social constraints. Hence the fondness for masked highwaymen in romance, and the reason why some dispossessed heroes (of Oliver's *Highwayman's Hazard* (London, 1983), for example, or Heyer's *The Black Moth*) actually take to the road; but also the reason why so many ingenues found themselves being insulted at masqued balls which their more prudent sisters would never have thought of attending. A highwayman mask is used to cover her sexual and social identity by the Wicked Lady Skelton, who can thereby indulge not only a taste for adventure but also her sexuality. The mask, with all its varied associations, is in fact a favourite motif in historical romance, functioning not only as an object which can transform identities and release what is hidden,
but also as an image of all the ways in which we hide our true selves from one another within society.

Thus, in Georgette Heyer's *The Masqueraders*, the title can be taken as applying to the disguises worn by the heroine and her brother, with their associations of travesty; or to the apparent masquerade of their father, in reality a baron whose hidden identity is revealed at the end of the novel, after a lifetime of masquerading, as a confidence trickster, gambler and soldier of fortune. The book also contains an episode at a masked ball, and a masked hold-up. Sexual and social roles, and the question of "real" (i.e., by right of birth) social station and fake, which helps to suggest the unreality of social distinctions, are thus explored. Even in a romance such as Constance Heaven's *Castle of Eagles*, in which there is no masquerade, though the story contains a certain amount of mystery in connection with the heroine's birth, the image of the mask is much in use. When the hero falls asleep, the heroine, looking down at him, reflects "the mask had slipped ... it was as if a shutter had rolled up" 12. Later, in his home environment, she feels, "I was discovering the real Julian, the man who lived behind the charming, impenetrable mask he wore in Vienna" 13. The image is easy to translate as a revelation of a "true", or natural mask which contrast with the formal deceptions forced upon the individual by the constraints of society.

Because both missions and bids of inheritance often
involve danger, from which the romances derive a good deal of their excitement, rescues, particularly of the heroine by the hero, are popular - one of the most frequently occurring situations, in fact. The salvation may be physical, the hero often fighting single-handedly for the heroine's life or honour; though the heroine may simply be saved from social embarrassment. Physical rescue is more likely, often forming the climax of the book. The denouement of Heyer's *The Black Moth*, for instance, comes about when the hero is recognised as the Earl of Wyncham when fighting a duel with the villain in order to save the heroine from rape. The heroine of Sabatini's *Love at Arms* (London, 1907), is being forced into a loveless marriage, but is saved by the stratagems of a man she believes to be a wandering knight - in reality, the Count of Aquilia, cousin to the Duke of Babbiano. The fighting here is done by mercenaries, but the element of personal conflict is nonetheless important: the Duke is the Count's rival and well aware of who opposes him. Both hero and heroine are threatened by the villainous Prime Minister of Slovia in Cartland's *Love Leaves at Midnight*. He is about to shoot them when the hero pushes him over a waterfall, thus rescuing himself as well as the heroine.

Such rescues confirm the roles of men and women as protector and protected. The need for a heroine to show bravery, to show the uniqueness of her individuality and difference from conventional women in order to deserve the
hero is also important, however. Individuality is of over-riding importance in the stories, a point to be discussed in more detail in a later chapter, and one often finds the behaviour of hero and heroine running counter to expectation. Hence the frequency of rescues of the hero by the heroine. In Cartland's *Love for Sale* (London, 1980), the hero and heroine are both tied up and left to die in the cellar of a deserted house by the hero's ne'er-do-well brother. This time it is the heroine who saves the hero; with teeth strengthened by her habit of using them to crack nuts with, she gnaws through the ropes which bind him. She immediately faints and has to be carried into the hero's house, which redresses the balance to some extent. In any case, the hero had already rescued her from the fate planned for her by his brother, who had been trying to entice her into a brothel. The motif is found even in older romances: Bonne in Weyman's *The Abbess of Vlaye* makes a similar rescue of des Ageaux, cutting the ropes which bind him while she herself is tied upside down on a galloping horse. Like Cartland's heroine, she shows proper feminine weakness - so that the conventional roles remain intact - by fainting as soon as she and the hero are free. Phillippa Somerville rides through the night in order to save Dorothy Dunnett's hero, Lymond, from being flogged, perhaps to death. The motif is surprisingly frequent, with twenty-three instances in the sample as opposed to forty-three of the more conventional rescues.
by the hero.

In the case of Love for Sale, the aid which the hero gives initially to the heroine is the first sign that behind an arrogant and callous facade there beats a warm heart and a sense of honour. This is often the case when a hero lends his aid to a heroine early in the novel. The Marquis of Rosyth in Cartland's Light of the Moon first shows that he is not the villain he appears by saving Neoma from the unwanted embraces of one of his house-guests; and S.J. Weyman's Count Hannibal, presented as ruthless and unpleasant in the early part of the story which bears his name, begins to seem more sympathetic after he saves Mdlle. de Vrillac from the Bartholomew's Day massacre by marrying her. His methods are virtually blackmail, but he acts out of love for the heroine, and he does save her, and her household. Rescues, therefore, are not merely responses to danger, devices to bring about the happy ending; they are an important device in revealing the hero's true nature and in this respect are connected with the "hidden identity" motif.

Rescues can go wrong, notably in the case of a sexual threat, and the heroine's danger is thereby drawn out and made more acute. Numerous romances hang upon such situations, and the failed rescue is one way of bringing this about. Sir George Soane, in Weyman's The Castle Inn (London, 1898), not only begins his relationship with the heroine by refusing to fight a duel on her behalf, but
later, after her abduction by the villain, he fails to find her. She is saved from rape and a forced marriage almost by pure chance; the villain's accomplice bundles her into the wrong carriage, and a friend of hers happens to be travelling in it. This is the more surprising in that it happens on a lonely country road in the small hours of the morning, when coincidences of this kind could hardly be expected. In Clare Darcy's *Gwendolyn* (London, 1979), the hero tries to save one of a family of sisters from having to marry for money by pretending to elope with her younger sister while planning to marry the eldest. Not surprisingly, this complicated stratagem goes awry, and the heroine nearly finds herself abducted in good earnest.

Abductions, elopements: the roads of eighteenth and early nineteenth century Britain must have been thronged with closed carriages on nefarious errands, if we are to believe the romances. Perhaps the novelists of the eighteenth century are themselves responsible for this, abduction having been a popular motif from Richardson's *Pamela* onwards. Whatever the date of the novel, the power of such a situation to excite and titillate must come from a juxtaposition of helpless innocence with aggressive sexuality and violence: the images of *Justine*.

In addition to these situations, which are almost universal in historical romance, there are a number of other types of recurrent episode, some of which are clearly connected with the basic situations of the genre,
others which seem on the surface more puzzling - even bizarre. The importance of property, and of inherited wealth in particular, which lies behind the fascination with lost heirs and hidden identities, also explains the interest in marriages of convenience, and in the "love versus money" theme - another which has been appearing in romances since very early times. The heroines who were brought up in genteel poverty (sixteen instances in the sample), or the hero exiled after the accusation which is later proved to be false (ten instances) are natural concomitants to broader themes such as lost heirs and loss of wealth through marrying for love. And - since a hero must do something to keep himself while living in exile - the number of heroes who have lived by gambling or even kept a gaming house is not surprising. Learning to fence and becoming a fencing master (as in Sabatini's The Tavern Knight, Scaramouche and The Marquis of Carabas, (London, 1940), Heyer's The Black Moth and The Masqueraders) can explain the hero's proficiency at arms: a spell on the galleys or in prison, his bitterness. There is a logic behind the surprising similarity, already noted above, between these careers in exile.

It is also possible to understand why so many plots turn on the heroine's taking someone else's place in an arranged marriage (eight instances). To marry for money suggests greed on a heroine's part, but if she sacrifices herself so that someone else, usually a sister, can marry
for love, this shows nobility. The heroine's reward is that love comes after marriage (in thirteen instances, since there are more reasons than one for marrying without love: a brother's gaming debts, for instance, or a mother's extravagance). But the fascination with doubles and twins (twelve instances) is less easy to interpret, though it is a very old motif, appearing in a number of folk-tales, and can be connected with an emphasis on individual differences (more emphasised where the appearance is so similar) which links the motif to the mask, a point which will be further explored later. It is also a fertile source of misunderstandings and exchanged identities.

Many eventually happy relationships begin with an insulting kiss: for these there is some justification in that the hero has taken the heroine, in her natural, unconventional guise, to be a servant, while the heroine feels at once annoyed by the hero's arrogance and violated by his action. So the action has a complex meaning: it reinforces the idea of male power and feminine weakness, and is akin to the rape motif, though more acceptable, since it concerns the hero, and at the same time sparks off rebellion in the heroine, who can thus affirm her individuality and spirit - qualities which are eventually to make the hero fall in love with her. If nothing else, it testifies to an initial attraction between the couple.

But why the popularity of the mock engagement (eight
instances), or the association of the heroine with a brothel or a group of prostitutes? True, the heroine's virtue and weakness may be emphasised by contrast, but the motif seems excessively frequent in romances (nine instances).

It is worth remembering that a situation such as this is likely to have a long history in romance. The most famous instance of the brothel scene, for example, is Marina's story in *Pericles*, which itself was based on Greek romance. Twins are an important source of both comedy and romantic adventure both in the work of Plautus and in Greek New Comedy and, of course, missing heirs provide a favourite romantic motif. Although such romantic plot incidents may appear odd in a Regency or Victorian setting, their existence shows the romantic provenance of the genre. Presumably they remain meaningful as long as the social context continues to give them meaning. This can be seen in the way contemporary romances portray prostitution: attitudes towards prostitution, have no doubt changed and the heroine may become more friendly towards her fallen sisters in a twentieth century romance, but as long as a woman's sexual role is circumscribed by society, brothel scenes will remain a potent image of disgrace and danger. Abduction may today sometimes be replaced by sexual rape, but the essential meaning of the motif remains the same.

Some of the "intertextual frames" no doubt relate to
the escapist, wishfulfilling element in the genre: the introduction of the hero and heroine into society, for example, one of the most frequent situations (in a quarter of the sample), enables the reader to enter a glamorous world by proxy. The same element has been noted in the rescue of the heroine by the hero, which, with its connotations of support and defence, is an archetypal romantic and wish-fulfilling situation. More significant, perhaps, are those instances, as in The Abbess of Vlaye, where the heroine saves the hero. Though many of these instances are used to give the opportunity for the heroine to show her feminine, nurturing qualities (as in A Gentleman of France, where some such opportunity is badly needed) there are others which depend on the heroine's skill and guts. This suggests that the meaning of the motif is more complex than appears on the surface.

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If such incidents form the "predicates" of historical romance, in Todorov's grammar of narrative, they are closely associated with the actors - the subjects of the narrative "sentence". Certain situations require certain types of actor, and these are drawn from the stock of stereotypical characters proper to romance - as characteristic a feature of the genre as the stock
situations themselves. As in the case of the situations, the characters connect with the social code in a variety of ways, conflicting with or confirming a range of social attitudes, though the nature of the connection is not always obvious on the surface. Some of the characters appear unattractive, but they presumably fulfil some need of the reader, in the same way that some apparently unpleasant situations such as rape or abduction do.

Heroes vary according to the type of romance: those of the earlier, more adventurous stories, being less idiosyncratic than the notable hero types of later stories, especially those written with a female readership in mind. Stories which turn chiefly on adventure tend to have less complex central characters so that the reader can share their feelings of fear and suspense. The hero of later romance is characteristically in control of events, and is also usually described from without. If we are to share the hero's feelings, he must be a man as vulnerable and subject to fears as ourselves, though perhaps braver and more energetic.

Such heroes divide into two main groups: the ingenu, newly starting out in the world, and the more experienced man whom a lifetime of warfare and adventure has left in some ways still immature. Of these, the first type is the most common, though some writers, such as Stanley Weyman, had a preference for an older, more straightforward hero. The difficulty in creating such a character is to avoid
making them contemptible. A young man's naivety can be more easily understood.

Both kinds of hero share a good many characteristics. They are brave, skilful fighters, and love adventure and the outdoors. They are seen at their best in action, and among men; they often have a gift, perhaps latent, for leadership; and they have a good, practical intelligence which can evolve complex stratagems if necessary. Socially, however, the very qualities which are effective on the battlefield make them gauche and uncertain in courtly or ton-nish society, though they are often shown as attracting men and women of sense who value frankness and ingenuousness.

Their social qualities show to the least advantage when they have to deal with young women. They may not be courtly, but they are usually chivalrous, sometimes exaggeratedly so, so that they regard women with a puzzled awe. Such a regard is not always a good basis for an easy relationship. The heroine is often provoked into behaviour which seems on the surface whimsical and irrational, and the hero has to try and cope with her moods and humours, unable to understand what has caused them. Before he comes to understand how to deal with them he has made innumerable wrong moves, and provoked a variety of uncomfortable situations which provide a basis for social comedy mingling with the strands of love and adventure.

Stanley Weyman's Gaston de Marsac, the hero of A
Gentleman of France may serve as an example. He is fairly typical of Weyman's older heroes: when the book opens he is forty, and beginning to be concerned about the amount of grey in his moustache. A Huguenot, he has fought with the Prince of Conde until that prince's death, distinguishing himself in his service. It has not, however, made him rich; and as the revenues from his small estates in Brittany have all gone to support his mother in Paris, he has never been able to afford to marry, or to take his place at court. When he tries to transfer his allegiance to the new Huguenot leader, Henry of Navarre, he is forced to attend his court. The courtiers call him "Old Clothes" and play tricks on him. Later, at the court of Henry III, he is totally at a loss, unable to bring himself to introduce himself to any of the confident-looking groups chatting round the king - though later finding his own way of making his mark among them. This character type - the man of action, brave and distinguished on the field of battle but ill at ease in society - is a useful cipher, since the reader can see the court from without any share of the hero's feelings on entering it, but feel that there can be no doubt about the hero's competence in the adventure.

His relations with the heroine are similarly uneasy. He is given the mission of bringing Mdlle. de St. Vire secretly from the house of her guardian, Henry of Navarre's rival as a leader of the Huguenot party, to that
of M. de Rosny, one of Henry's court. She shows her resentment by coldness and contempt. All de Marsac's plans go awry; he loses the token which was supposed to prove his identity to the girl; all his money is stolen from him by the men who are supposed to be guarding the two of them; finally, he cannot find M. de Rosny. His poverty disgusts the girl. It is only his prowess and ingenuity in coming to her rescue which win her round.

Other heroes in Weyman's work show a similar backwardness in female company. Des Ageaux in The Abbess of Vlaye "shunned if he did not dislike the other sex. Women dubbed him shy, and some a clown, and all - a piece of furniture." Like de Marsac, when he falls in love he cannot really believe it, and in fact fights the feeling. When he finally admits it, it is to rationalize it: "What a wife would she be! What a mother of brave and loyal and gentle children, meet sons and daughters of a loyal sire!"

Only when he thinks she has been married by force to his enemy does he realise the true depth of his passion. Sir George Soane (The Castle Inn) suffers because he can never predict the mood of his Julia - until the last scene of the book when he "punishes" her for doubting his love and honour by pretending to buy her off, and she finds herself caught in the trap of his own whims. Until the very last page of My Lady Rotha (London, 1894), Hugo of Leuchtenstein cannot be made to believe that Rotha cares for him despite all her attempts to make him realise the
All of these heroes are very "masculine" men, though as Janice Radway has noted in Reading the Romance 15 - they are not so much tamed and feminized by love as allowed to express a more feminine side to their natures, hinted at in de Marsac's nursing of a plague victim, or Leuchtenstein's grief for his son. At the beginning of each book, however, the world of emotions is totally alien to them and they lack any skill in interpreting them. Nor was Weyman alone in creating heroes insensitive to nuances of feeling. A.E.W. Mason's Laurence Claverin, John Buchan's Peter Pentecost and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's Alleyne of Minstead are all monastery-bred and unworldly, and each is tormented by the waywardness of the girls with whom they fall in love. Clavering can never understand why Dorothy Curwen becomes suddenly cold when he refers to the beauty of Mrs. Herbert, with whom he was entangled earlier in the story. Peter loses Sabine to a more worldly-wise youth; only Alleyne is fully successful in his dealings with his girl, Lady Maud Lorin. Of all these heroes he is the most sensitive and ready to learn the ways of a world which is strange and delightful to him, "sympathetic and adaptive" but with a "native firmness" underneath his gentleness. Conan Doyle comments that an "older and more worldly-wise man" might have been puzzled by the "varying moods" of Lady Maude (though the implication is that Alleyne is more so). Alleyne's
firmness finally comes through, until Lady Maude is under his influence. These heroes too, therefore, learn to temper masculine lack of awareness with feminine understanding; if they do not, they fail to achieve a complete relationship.

Heroes of this type are more common in early romance. A hero who is over-sensitive might well ruin a story which depends frequently on mystery and suspense; the puzzles would be solved too soon. Dorothy Dunnett's Lymond is knowledgeable and aware, and so there are few mysteries for him in the situations which arise; in order to maintain suspense and surprise, Dunnett is forced to use other viewpoints to describe the action. The viewpoints she chooses are often men of action with markedly less sense and sensitivity than Lymond - Will Scott and Jerrot Blyth, for instance - and these, in addition, being respectively very young and bred in a religious community, know much less of the world.

The pairing of a "man of action" hero with a more worldly-wise friend, and vice-versa, is common in adventure stories. In Henry Seton Merriman's contemporary adventure story, *The Sowers* (London, 1896), the hero, Paul Alexis, honourable but a utopian visionary, has the cosmopolitan Karl Streinmetz for ever at his elbow, watching out for his interests and all but managing his life for him. The unhappy Gaston de Marsac (Weyman's *A Gentleman of France*) gains the friendship of the exquisite
court gallant, François d'Agen; Des Ageaux, in the same author's *The Abbess of Vlaye*, is accompanied by another court gallant, the volatile, emotional and dissipated Duke of Joyeuse. The contrast is not always to the advantage of the worldly-wise, however. François d'Agen is charming, but can be childish; these characteristics are intensified in Joyeuse, and it is he, rather than the hero, who finds himself fooled by a clever woman. Under such circumstances the firmness and honourable nature of the hero are seen as positive characteristics to be admired.

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Perhaps this is because the hero of a Victorian or Edwardian adventure story is a model for the reader's imitation as well as a focus for identification. In women's romance, where the hero is the desirable other, the case is quite opposite. Women's historical romance contains the most notable hero-stereotype of all, the arrogant, ruthless rake-hero, who proves susceptible to tender feeling after all. Georgette Heyer, for example, admitted that she had two kinds of hero, mark one and mark two. Mark two was a smooth, polished, imperturbable wit and man of the world. Mark one was a rough diamond; but
both types are equally powerful and ruthless. Heyer did not invent these types, though she may have set the mould: Mark two looks back to Sir Percy Blakeney, the dandified hero of Orczy's The Scarlet Pimpernel (London, 1905), while Mark one is reminiscent of some of Weyman's heroes: Sir George Soane in The Castle Inn, for instance, or Captain Clyne in Starvecrow Farm (London, 1905). What seems odd is that these are evidently attractive and popular figures, yet they have so few attractive qualities. Often they are noted for their abuse of women; Clyne is a brutal disciplinarian to men. They are often ruthless, arrogant and rude. Yet this kind of hero remains the romantic stereotype.

They are, of course, to be found in romance with a contemporary setting, too, but they are developed in historical romance to the full; the distance in time glamorizes the bad behaviour, the social setting (the French court in the sixteenth century, say, or the ton of Regency London or the Borgia's Italy) normalizes it and helps us to condone it and, in any case, it proves to be yet another disguise. The hero is simply waiting for circumstances, or the heroine, to uncover his good qualities.

His is normally older than the heroine, often just entering middle age but still athletic; in a coat of the Regency period the muscles can be seen pulling the shoulders taut, and no padding is needed for the calves of
his legs in tight trousers or hose. He "strips well" if he wants to fight; the Count of Acquila's figure is described as "splendid" when he bathes. But his face is usually swarthy and unhandsome; Heyer calls many of her heroes "harsh-featured", and Sabatini calls Sir Crispin Galliard "haggard". They show the signs, in fact, of an aggressive masculinity: their faces show them to be embittered and experienced; more often than not, their behaviour - contemptuous to men; contemptible with women - springs from the consciousness of some past betrayal or hurt. Janice Radway's belief that the "feminine" side of such heroes is hinted at by one softer feature is not generally true of English romances.

There are exceptions to the rule of past betrayal. The Duke of Oswestry in Love for Sale finds the whole of the female sex unworthy of him: "it was his fastidiousness and desire for perfection which made him find that women palled on him quickly". But most of the heroes, like Mr. Rochester, could tell a tale of past disappointments which have made them what they are. The Marquis of Rosyth had, as a young man, married for love, only to find that his wife already had a lover, and was only interested in his money. His behaviour with women is his revenge. Sir Crispin Galliard, too, is motivated by vengeance: in his case, for the murder of his young wife. Hatred has made him unfeeling and reckless. Margaret Douglas has amused herself with Francis Crawford of Lymond.
in Dorothy Dunnett's *The Game of Kings*, only to betray him and send him into embittered exile. In *These Old Shades* the Duke of Avon has not only been refused the hand of the Comte de St. Vire's sister, but in addition her brother has threatened to horsewhip him. Shame and frustrated love have soured him.

Brutal in private relationships, they seem to lack also the normal public loyalties. They never attach themselves to a cause. Count Hannibal seems to hate Catholic priests and respect Huguenot ministers, yet he remains a Catholic, looking to the fanatical Catherine de Medici and the Duke of Anjou for patronage. He seems concerned with self-preservation rather than with belief. Francis Crawford refuses to say whether he is Catholic or Protestant and will not attach himself to any party in the state. Sabatini's Andre Moreau is a republican in eighteenth century France, but he is a mouthpiece for the ideals of others, using the revolution cynically for a private vengeance. Peter Blood in Sabatini's *Captain Blood* (London, 1922) is tried by Jeffreys as a rebel after Sedgemoor, but he himself is no rebel: he had merely gone to the battlefield to tend the wounded.

It is left to the reader to infer that these men will not have anything to do with a fanaticism which produces such effects as the St. Bartholomew's day massacre, the murder of Protestant missionaries from Scotland, the excesses of the Terror or the Bloody Assize. For the hero
is not so much unconcerned as true to his own individual code. He has his secret loyalties and affections. Heyer's Duke of Avon loves the family he has made afraid of him, and has a warm friendship for at least one man; her arrogant "Sylvester" loves his mother, as does Francis Crawford of Lymond. The Tavannes brothers (Count Hannibal) are totally loyal to each other. And though all the heroes struggle against love, all are mastered by it in the end.

They often, in fact, assume a callousness in order to survive in a cruel world. Circumstances force them to pit their wits against society; they have to improvise their morality as they go along. Beneath the mask they are more than usually sensitive; the traces of high ideals and compassion are still to be seen, half-smothered and sometimes perverted. Their most apparently cruel acts may often prove to be a concealed kindness. Count Hannibal carries the King's letters to Angers, ostensibly to start a massacre of Huguenots there. In reality he is saving his wife by getting her out of Paris, and he intends to save Angers, too. Francis Crawford sets fire to his brother's castle, but it is to quell the suspicions among the Scottish nobility that he, a traitor, is being harboured by his brother. Captain Blood is forced to turn pirate, but it is in order to help his fellow-slaves escape from Barbados; if he imprisons a woman, it is for her protection, and he is impeccably polite to her. Even
Cesare Borgia, in Sabatini's Italian stories, can be seen as the dealer of a kind of harsh justice. All of these men will go to considerable lengths to maintain the facade of cruelty. Often, as in Count Hannibal or The Game or Kings, there really seems no need for this; the reader cannot help but feel that a great deal of suffering could have been averted by a little candour.

If these heroes derive their combination of passion and cynicism from the Byronic hero popularly exemplified by Charlotte Bronte's Rochester, their energy, intelligence and love of stratagem may derive ultimately from the sixteenth century Machiavel or the seventeenth century Don Juan. Perhaps it is from some such provenance that they derive an attractiveness which survives their faults. It has been suggested, variously, that female interest in such a hero is a sign of a masochistic tendency in women readers who secretly wish to be dominated; that the creation of insufferable heroes is a secretly feminist protest against male aggressiveness; or that the hero's final succumbing to love is a "feminization" of his aggressively masculine qualities by forcing him to develop the nurturing side of his nature. Furthermore analysis of the text will suggest which interpretation, if any, is more likely.

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The ingenu still has a role to play but is usually a minor character, highlighting the hero in the same way that a man of action hero is sometimes paired with a more worldly wise friend. The induction of a young man into society and, in particular, an attempt to save him from the romantic entanglements into which his inexperience has drawn him, is a frequent sub-theme of historical romance. Lord Morecambe, in Heyer's Faro's Daughter (London), and Lord Orsett in Jean Merrill's Edwardian Belle (London, 1979) are both "saved" by their guardians from their relationships with the heroine of the story, whose background is "unsuitable" - the guardian, in both cases, falling for the heroine himself. In Farnol's novels, a hero sometimes saves a young man who has been tempted into dissipation from himself; in The High Adventure (London, 1926), he does so by going into society himself, so that in a way there are two ingenuus in this book.

That some of the authors at least were well aware of the nature of their stock heroes is evident from the parodies which were occasionally produced. One such is Georgette Heyer's Cotillion (London, 1953). In one movement of the cotillion the lady is partnered by two men, and there are two heroes in this novel. The heroine is in love with Jack: a Corinthian, a womanizer, arrogant and heartless. To revenge herself on him for his careless treatment of her, she becomes engaged to Freddie. Freddie is the anti-type of the hero. He is a type found
frequently as the friend of the hero, or the heroine's brother, with little brain but a good deal of amiability: a type of whom Jane Aiken Hodge, Heyer's biographer, thought Heyer was particularly fond. Certainly she achieves some of her most successful comic portraits with this character type. Freddie is a dandy, no good at sport, but with a good deal of social expertise. The very contrast between this hero and the conventional model seems a way of mocking the reader's expectations. The contrast is reinforced in the novel by comparisons with literary heroes, in particular Scott's Lochinvar (whom Freddie thinks "a dashed loose screw"). Such comparisons strengthen the feeling that the reader is being invited to enjoy flouting the conventions. According to Hodge, Heyer thought of her heroes as "mark one" (dark and arrogant) and "mark two" (smooth and unflappable, with an enviable way with a neckcloth). Though she sometimes forgot which was which, her references to them show her awareness of their stereotyped nature.

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Changes in the figure of the heroine run parallel to the development of the hero from ingenu to man of the world, though they are less striking. A few common
characteristics link the heroines of Victorian historical romance to those of present day. They are all young - their ages ranging from the mid-teens to the late twenties; and beautiful, although with varying types of beauty (and a greater incidence of red hair than in nature). At the end of the last century, however, two kinds of heroine can be differentiated, one which owes much to the chivalrous romance popular early in the century, and one which was to develop into the typical romantic heroine of today. Because the way in which women are portrayed in the stories is an important factor in the social and political messages which the books carry - this being one of the areas in which attitudes have noticeably changed during the years - the characters of the heroines will be considered in more detail in the analysis of individual texts. None the less, the way in which the heroine figure has developed alongside that of the hero may be seen by a brief overview here.

Two major attitudes exist side by side in the early books - sometimes in the same work. Mason's heroines, for instance, are noticeably "chivalric" in type. Their innocence and purity awakens the hero's devotion; he cannot bear to see them contaminated by the masculine world of aggression and impure motivation. The hero's attitude is sometimes compared to that of medieval romantic heroes: and heroines such as Clementina and Dorothy Curwen (in Clementina, London, and Lawrence -186-
Clavering, London 1897, respectively) demand complete trustworthiness from their lovers. But though they are pure and warrant a man's chivalrous devotion, they have weaknesses which are presented as essentially feminine: little vanities, like Dorothy's insistence on wearing high-heeled shoes as she escapes with Lawrence over the Cumbrian fells. They are a curious mixture, therefore, of love-goddess, comrade and child.

Doyle's Lady Maude Loring in *The White Company* has something of the feminine perversity which is often noticeable in Mason's heroines, and Mdlle. de St. Vire in Weyman's *A Gentleman of France* is capricious to an irritating degree. Indeed, in her relationship with the hero the most frank and open character can become mysteriously capricious and prone to violent swings of mood and response. This characteristic is presented as though it were natural, even lovable, but it seems to be related closely to the emotional inexperience of the ingenu hero.

This is partly because such a hero causes a problem to a heroine bent on being loved, perhaps by not realising that he is in love, or perhaps giving offence because he is unaware of the effect of his words and actions. Mason's Lawrence Clavering can never see that the key to Dorothy Curwen's moods is the recurring suspicion that he is in love with another woman. Dorothy is willing to settle for a formal victory over her rival; all will be
forgotten if only Lawrence will call Mrs. Herbert plain. But Lawrence, ever rational and truthful, cannot see the need; even when his escape from execution hangs in the balance, he refuses to say what is necessary. Gaston de Marsac, in Weyman's A Gentleman of France, wonders why Mdile de St. Vire should be so hostile when he has lost the favour she gave him, and, further, she sees him keeping an assignation in a dark corner of Blois with an extremely pretty woman.

It is as though courtship were a game of which only one partly knows the rules. Phoebe, in Meyer's Sylvester (London, 1957), puts the irritation felt by a number of heroines into words. Sylvester has tried to make Phoebe fall in love with him, out of spite. When he proposes in earnest, Phoebe taxes him with his earlier design. She refuses to believe his protests that he loves her now. It is a hopeful, rather than an antagonistic reply: the hero should have seen that she needed reassurance. Instead, he falls silent, and continues to say nothing, apparently in a huff, when she reviles him. In despair she tells his mother the story. The older woman is amazed: how could Sylvester have been so blind? - "'and after all this encouragement'"

The difference of outlook, with the man taking literally behaviour intended as initiating moves in a sequence with a covert purpose, an intention which both the women clearly understand, suggests an important
dimension to the characterization of women in the romances. Women understand human relationships; in particular, they understand the devious ways in which women have to go about achieving what they want in a world where men have all the power. The relative openness and straightforwardness of men springs from a reliance on their own ability to meet any opposition on its own terms; female intrigues, however, are beyond their power because beyond their comprehension. On the whole, male empathy is unlikely to stretch so far, whereas women's seems to do so by a natural instinct. Only the man of the world can match women on their own ground, because the experience of women which has made him cynical and disillusioned - doubting, for instance, that innate purity with which men like to endow women - has also enabled him to understand their intrigues.

This is so taken for granted in romance that it can be used as a basis for humour, as in the example quoted above from *Sylvester*; the unexpected absence of the instinct can become the major point of a story, as in Heyer's *Venetia* (London, 1858). Lord Damerel, a man of the world hero, assumes that the beautiful Venetia knows how to flirt; when her brother sprains his hip near Damerel's house he sends her a letter nicely calculated to bring her to him, ready for his attentions and piqued by his neglect. In fact, she sees in him only a friend who has been kind to Aubrey, and thoughtful enough to set her mind
at rest. Throughout, the book she seems unaware of the behaviour expected of a female; she remains straightforward and honest in all her relationships. The vulnerability of a girl who lacks such a fundamental piece of feminine equipment as the ability to intrigue is one of the central themes of the story, since Damerel's intentions are at first by no means what they seem.

Venetia is an exception: most heroines have a hint of feminine vanity and caprice in their make-up, even in romances written by women. A Mason heroine, however, has little more. Some of Weyman's heroines, and Doyle's Lady Maude, combine such qualities with a greater courage and initiative. Bonne de Villeneuve's heroism in The Abbess of Vlaye has already been described. Lady Maude shows courage by biting her captor, the Socman of Minstead: the hero's part in her rescue is little more than a formality. The way in which such displays of "masculine" courage are balanced by "feminine" weakness has already been described: Bonne, for example, fainting as soon as she reaches safety. Edwardian romances show a number of heroines - Sabatini's Lady Margaret Trevannion, or Farnol's Charmian, for instance, in The Hounds of God (London, 1928) and The Broad Highway (London, 1910) - who unite strength and capriciousness in a similar - indeed, even more marked - way.

The typical heroine of female-centred romance is notably stronger and more masculine than her Victorian
counterpart, despite their share of "feminine" capriciousness and mystique. Such heroines are frequently outsiders - so that the reader can see upper-class life through their innocent eyes - and present a challenge to social convention. Frequently as in Heyer's Bath Tangle (London, 1955) or Caroline Courtney's Libertine in Love (London, 1982), they have been brought up by their father and treated almost like a son. Heyer's Leonie, in These Old Shades, has lived as a boy for years in her brother's tavern. All three feel a certain dismay at the limitations imposed by the female role.

In addition, the heroine's naturalness of behaviour is often contrasted with the stuffiness of social conventions and also presents a challenge to it. Patricia Ormsby's Joanna (Joanna, London, 1977) and Rowena Tenet's Shauna (Bewitching Imposter London, 1983) almost provoke scandal by the freedom of their behaviour. Their "outsider" status is emphasised by the fact that they come from Ireland, portrayed as a curious mixture of savagery and civilization.

"Spirited" behaviour - defiance of masculine authority, resentment of insults, and challenging the rules of society - is common among heroines. A favourite motif is the kiss given insultingly by the hero to the heroine, under the impression that he is kissing a servant girl or a tenant's daughter. The heroine's fury can then fuel a relationship of the Beatrice and Benedick type. If
the hero is placed, perhaps by accident, in a position of authority over her, the heroine may well remain defiantly disobedient, as does Judith in Heyer's Regency Buck. The hero also frequently tries to exert authority when he has no right to do so, and this causes even more resentment, as in Heyer's The Grand Sophy (London, 1950), Bath Tangle or Lady of Quality (London, 1972), and often the heroine will intervene on someone else's behalf, when she feels the hero is behaving tyrannically (as in Jean Merritt's Edwardian Belle, Heyer's Faro's Daughter (London, 1940), or Cartland's Light of the Moon). "Interfering" helpfulness on the part of a heroine (as in Clare Darcy's Eugina (London, 1977), or Heyer's Cotillion) or social concern (as in Heyer's Arabella or Cartland's The Wicked Marquis (London, 1973) are trials for a long-suffering hero, who has to sort out the resulting entanglements.

Active characteristics such as these seem to be seen as adding to the heroine's attractiveness, but in other ways they are not to be taken seriously. However "spirited" the heroine, she will capitulate in the end, when the hero takes her masterfully into his arms. Her defiance matches his strength and makes them suitable mates (a point made explicit in Heyer's Bath Tangle, where a shy young girl is driven almost witless with terror through being engaged to the masterful hero until, luckily for her, he discovers the strength of his feelings for the high-tempered Serena). Helplessness and social concern
are seen as the attributes of an amusing and lovable, if troublesome, child. They are not, finally, very important - even to the heroine. Orelia, in Cartland's *The Wicked Marquis*, worries about the trials of chimney-sweepers and child prostitutes. Her ambition is to spend her life campaigning on their behalf. The hero's plans are for a quiet wedding and an extended stay abroad. She joyfully acquiesces: the chimney-sweepers and prostitutes can wait.

Most heroines, of course, would have known too little about prostitutes to be concerned about them. Even the most high-spirited have a certain naivety, and an almost complete innocence in sexual matters. Authors like to underline their heroine's purity by setting it in contrast with vice. Udela, in Cartland's *Love for Sale* is only one among many heroines to fear being trapped in a brothel. This has been a favourite romance motif since *Pericles*; and Barbara Cartland, for instance, uses the idea twice, in *Love for Sale* and *Light of the Moon*, where the heroine finds herself unaware in a houseful of prostitutes.

Abduction and near-rapes stress the innocence and the vulnerability of the heroine and, as has been noted, even the most brave and ingenious of heroines is helpless when threatened by rape. At times, the stress on innocence and vulnerability seems designed to put an almost sadistic edge on the reader's enjoyment.

The general impression presented by both heroes and
heroines is that heroes, who tend to be aggressively masculine, need to develop more feminine qualities such as tenderness while the "spirited" heroine, with her blend of masculine courage and feminine mystique, becomes more important as female-centred historical romance developed in the mid-century.

Characters of heroes and heroines may have a family likeness, but their characteristics and experiences are described in some detail. Other characters are much more shadowy, especially in later romance; characterization is a more important feature of novels written earlier in the century or at the end of the last one.

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The characters of subordinate figures in a romance are generally determined by their function in the plot, though it is also true that most of the writers have favourite character types which they enjoy deploying in the stories for their own sakes. Some of these had very little functional importance, and exist as a kind of self-contained cameo portrait. One such is the "silly ass" young man about town, a character of which Heyer was particularly fond. These are sometimes friends of the hero (Lord Sheringham's friends in Friday's Child for
instance, or Lord Fleetwood in *Arabella*), but more usually have a more subordinate role: as the best friend of an extravagant brother, for instance (in *The Convenient Marriage* London, 1934), *April Lady*, London, or *Arabella* or as an aristocratic chorus commenting on the main action (as in *Arabella*).

Many characters, however, are types to be found throughout the field of historical romance. One obvious type, in a genre dealing largely with an aristocratic world, is the faithful servant. Old nurses and housekeepers who love to scold but have a heart of gold; a manservant who looks after an adventurous hero, in some cases as though he had been a nurse; these are found in so many novels that exemplification is really superfluous. Irresponsible brothers who cause trouble for their ingenue sisters by gambling, extravagance, and getting into debt are a favourite of Heyer's but are found in the work of other writers too: Cartland's Peregrine, in *Light of the Moon*, or Lucinda's brother in Caroline Courtney's *Love Unmasked* (London, 1979), match the various scapegraces to be found in Heyer's *April Lady* or *Arabella*. They precipitate the major plot situations because their sisters have to come to their rescue and misunderstandings are caused thereby between hero and heroine. A cousin of the heroine's, Waldegrave Rupert, fulfils a similar function in Weyman's *My Lady Rothea* (London, 1894) but here, jealousy is a factor as well.

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Jealousy of a rival, in particular of a past mistress, is one of the major motifs of the historical romance, especially of those which turn on a marriage of convenience. Under such circumstances, the hero might well be expected to continue his relationship with an old love - the heroine of Cartland's *The Bored Bridegroom* (London, 1974) hears the ex-mistress telling her new husband so, by means of a convenient chimney - and sometimes it is true, as in Heyer's *A Civil Contract*, (London 1961). Usually, however, the hero's passion has conveniently died before he marries; one of Marina Oliver's heroes underlines this rather forcefully by having his ex-mistress flogged.

Mistresses have a hard time of it in romance. Juliet Benzoni's Catherine, before she finds her true love and turns respectable, is flogged by her cuckolded husband, chained in an underground dungeon, starved of food and nearly raped by her gaoler, while one of Lymond's mistresses in Dorothy Dunnett's *Pawn in Frankincense*, London, 1973, has the skin flayed off her back and stuffed with straw. It is no wonder that some of them occasionally try to get their own back by making mischief, as in Cartland's *Love for Sale*, or Clare Darcy's *Victoire* (London, 1974).

In general, there is usually at least one other marriageable, or at any rate sexually attractive, female besides the heroine in a historical romance, with
contrasting qualities, whose function is to throw the heroine's characteristics into relief. Sophisticated heroines are contrasted with young, ingenuous protegées; innocent heroines with women of the world. The virtuous are often closely connected with irresponsible women of unrestrained passion: thus Bonne, in *The Abbess of Vlaye*, is the sister of the wily, wilful Odette, who will stop at nothing, even murder and betrayal, to gain her end. In Cartland's *The Wicked Marquis*, Orelia, the good cousin, stays at home to help her uncle with his benevolent schemes while the bad cousin, his daughter, peacocks about all over Europe, enjoying the life of a fashionable widow of easy morality. Mary, the heroine of Heyer's *Devil's Cub* (London, 1932), is sensible and rather prim, but her sister is feather-headed and flirtatious; and in the same author's *Bath Tangle* the sophisticated heroine seems more strikingly independent when she is compared with the conventional, gentle and slightly stupid Fanny. Heroes, too, are sometimes contrasted with other young men, as the hero and his rival Hector are in *Bath Tangle*. Janice Radway thought such secondary heroes and heroines were characteristic of romances, to suggest the possibility of an alternative relationship and act as a mask for the real romance. This is not always the case in English historical novels, though; sometimes, as in the friendship portrayed between the hero and M. d'Agen, in Weyman's *A Gentleman of France*, the function seems to be
simply one of defining the hero or heroine by contrast.

Since the induction of a proselyte into society is an important theme of historical romance, many heroes and heroines have proteges whom they are introducing to society. They are a fruitful source of difficulty and misunderstanding. Annis, in Heyer's *Lady of Quality* (London, 1972), finds the young girl she gives a home to in Bath a considerable handful, while Serena finds that the shrinking but pretty Emily becomes a rival to herself in *Bath Tangle*. Young men can be troublesome, too, either by getting into debt and bad company, or by falling in love with unsuitable females, as young Lord Morecambe does in *Faro's Daughter*. Farnol's heroes sometimes prove their love for the heroine by saving her reprobate brother from himself, as Jeremy does in *The High Adventure* (London, 1916) - going unwillingly into society himself to do so.

Older women, though sometimes hard and willing to abuse their power over the young girls in their charge - a favourite character of Cartland's - can also act as protectresses and advisers. Lady Eleanor looks after the heroine and all her family (including a blind father, a mother who has lost her memory and a maid who has never recovered from the shock of being raped, so this is no slight task) in Mira Stables *Quality Maid* (London, 1973); while the hero's mother gives invaluable advice to the heroine on how to attract her son in Cartland's *Love for*.
Sale, Heyer's *Sylvester* and Caroline Courtney's *Love of my Life* (London, 1983), as though she were passing on a feminine care for her son to a worthy successor.

The most important functional character after the hero and heroine, however, is the villain, who commonly, in fact, triggers off the action. Villains, though more various than heroes and heroines, have some character traits in common. Of course, whatever the villain's good characteristics - the Captain of Vlaye, for instance, in Weyman's *The Abbess of Vlaye*, is courageous and dynamic - they all have some evil qualities and it is these which motivate their actions in the story. This does not differentiate them from heroes as much as might have been expected, however. As has been noted, many heroes are motivated by revenge, and this gives their activities a morally questionable aspect. Not all heroes can gain their ends through straightforward action, such as a fight (for example in Sabatini's *The Tavern Knight* of 1904). Some need to be as devious as the most underhanded villain. Dorothy Dunnett's Lymond, for instance, is certainly not as wicked as he sometimes appears, but there is a Machiavellian quality about him, and a hardness in pursuit of his ends, which makes him morally ambiguous; this, indeed, is his fascination.

By contrast, the villain can appear charming on the surface, and even morally superior to the hero. "Gabriel", in the Lymond novels is generally considered to
be almost a saint; in reality he is a power-hungry and cruel intriguer. He is, however, intelligent, a brilliant politician, and has command over his emotions. These qualities are necessary to successful villainy. Occasional villains, such as Crosbie in Heyer's *The Convenient Marriage*, may be stupid, but if the villain is to pose a danger he must be intelligent enough to contrive stratagems of genuine cunning. Heyer's villains, for instance, are not usually like Crosbie: more typically, they are smooth-mannered and intelligent, like the eponymous villain of *The Black Moth*, Tracy, Duke of Andover. Sabatini is something of an exception in that he presents a range of stupid villains such as the Earl of Osterly in *The Lion's Skin* (London, 1911) or the Duke of Babbiano in *Love at Arms* (London, 1904). His heroes are usually self-controlled and intelligent, like Cesare Borgia in *The Banner of the Bull* (London, 1915), so the villains provide a foil which shows up their qualities, at the expense of the feeling of danger.

Some of the older writers built up the intelligence and charismatic qualities of their villains to a much greater degree than those of the hero, who could be seen as Everyman encountering the almost superhuman forces of evil. Weyman's Captain of Vlaye has already been mentioned, and the younger Tzerclaes in *My Lady Rotha* is as intelligent as the hero. Jervas Rookley, in Mason's *Lawrence Clavering*, makes his hero seem very naive. Such
villains combine their good capabilities with self-interest and lack of scruple.

Villains are of particular importance in the adventurous romances, of course, since without one there would be no element of danger. They appear in more particular guises in some of the love stories as well. One favourite motif of Regency romances is that of the disappointed heir. A new claimant appears with a better title, as in Weyman's *The Castle Inn*, or Farnol's *Heritage Perilous* (London, 1946), or one who had been disregarded, as in *The Unknown Ajax* (London, 1959) or *The Quiet Gentleman* by Heyer. Weyman's hero merely resorts to law to establish his claim, but in general the position of such an heir is a dangerous one; the previous heir presumptive now typically feels so aggrieved that he attempts murder. The theme is often linked to that of a marriage of convenience, as when a bachelor of wealth and position marries or becomes engaged and thus disappoints the hopes of a brother, nephew or cousin. The villain's energies are now devoted to breaking the engagement or ensuring that the marriage is childless, his strategies ranging from ill-natured gossip to abduction and outright murder. Such situations occur, for instance, in Heyer's *The Convenient Marriage* and *The Reluctant Widow*, Clare Darcy's *Victoire* and Cartland's *Love for Sale*.

Abduction is of course one of the most common situations of the Regency romance, and it is usually the
villain who does the abducting. His motive may be murder, forced marriage, or rape. In love-stories, the villain is pre-eminently the man who forces his unwanted attentions on the heroine. Even if she is not abducted, she distrusts the power such a man has over her, especially if all her friends favour his suit, as in Caroline Courtney's *Love Unmasked* (London, 1979). The heroine is usually the only character in such cases to perceive the villain's repulsive characteristics, but her instinct proves right (the villain of *Love Unmasked* attempts rape twice and is a disappointed heir who attempts to murder the hero). A heroine, however, is peculiarly sensitive: she feels an instinctive revulsion from the villain, no matter how attractive he may appear to others. This is particularly true of Cartland's heroines. A kiss from a Cartland hero, no matter how insultingly offered, can be a revelation of "heaven" or "rapture" to the heroine. A kiss from the villain, even in the context of a courtship favoured by her family, makes her feel quite sick. Other writers endow their heroines with similar powers. Clare Darcy's *Elyza* 18, for instance, recognises the sinister quality of the villain by the shiver he gives her, long before he proves his villainy. Weyman's heroine in *The Castle Inn* reacts very differently to attentions from the hero and the villain even though the villain's motives are initially more respectable than those of the hero. As in many romances, the villain proves his villainy by

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abducting the heroine; the hero his worthiness by his attempt to rescue her.

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Sexual power and greed for property are the concerns which motivate most villains; villainesses are concerned mainly with the former. If heroines are particularly innocent, villainesses are usually experienced women of the world, and sexual transgressors as well. As has been noted, cast-off mistresses often try to recapture their lover's interest by foul means if they cannot succeed by any other; or, more viciously, they try to gain revenge. Margaret Lennox, who seduced the hero and then abandoned him to the life of a galley-slave in Dorothy Dunnett's "Lymond" series, is repudiated by him and then spends the rest of the series in a dogged attempt to destroy him. She is merely the most intelligent and determined of the sisterhood. Lady Marlene, in Cartland's Love for Sale, tries to blackmail the hero into returning to her and thus initiates a plot centring on a fake engagement. Less persistent than the male villain in the same novel, however, she then more or less drops out of the story, whereas the villain (a disappointed heir) goes on to kidnap both hero and heroine and to attempt murder.
It is, perhaps, generally true that female villains are less determined and more relenting than male ones. Those who are the equals of males in their villainy, like Odette de Villeneuve in Weyman's *The Abbess of Vlaye*, are seen as having something admirable about them. The impact of female villainy is, however, devastating in one respect. Many Cartland heroes, for example, justify a life of debauchery and cynicism by their treatment at the hands of heartless first wives or sweethearts. In *Love for Sale* and *Light of the Moon* the first loves of the hero have eloped with other lovers; while in *Castle of Fear* and *The Devil in Love* the first wives of the hero had proved to be pregnant by other men on their wedding day. The heroes of other romances might have made a similar excuse for subsequent cynicism in their treatment of women; Lymond because of his treatment at the hands of Margaret Lennox, for instance, or both hero and villain of Caroline Courtney's *A Wager for Love*, the victims of an unhappy love for the same less than innocent female.

Janice Radway has suggested, in *Reading the Romance*, that such traumatic backgrounds are typical of the worldly heroes of American romances, and by and large the same seems to be true of those of English ones. Heroines, however, do not seem to condemn the whole male sex because of the treatment meted out to them by the villain; while this suggests the impossibility of having a cynical heroine, an impossibility which stems from the difference
between the way in which femininity and masculinity are regarded in the romances, it may be simply because they are more fortunate than heroes in meeting men more worthy of their love either soon after, or even before, they meet the villains.

Though all of these character-types, including the hero and heroine, are differentiated by individual characteristics, the differentiation is not very great. One disappointed heir may look different at first sight from another, as Heyer's "macaroni" villain Crosbie (in The Convenient Marriage), vain and effeminate, does from Cartland's over-masculine Lord Julius Westry in Love for Sale; as soon as they begin to act within a familiar situation, however, their function becomes clear and from then on their actions are predictable.

Such stock characters approximate to the "nouns" in a structuralist grammar of literature; when taken together with the predicates, or stereotyped situations, they may be read as easily as a sentence full of familiar vocabulary and with a straightforward syntax. If, however, the novels are formed by a process of "bricolage", as suggested in the previous chapter - that is put together from well-known elements as though from a kit - and the characters and actions are as predictable as this chapter has suggested, then what makes any particular novel different enough from all the others to be worth reading?

The answer seems to comprise a variety of factors.
The same plot may take place in a variety of period settings and locations. The characters, though basically the same as all others with a similar function, may have different surface characteristics. The superficial detail of each episode differs, if only slightly, from all other similar ones, even if the difference lies in no more than a difference of repartee, or a reshuffling of the order of some of the incidents. When Lord Damerel meets the heroine picking blackberries in the overgrown bushes on his land in Heyer's *Venetia*, he thinks her the daughter of one of his tenants. Davinia, the heroine of Caroline Courtney's *The Fortunes of Love*, (London, 1980), is also mistaken for the daughter of a tenant - a milkmaid, in fact - by the hero when he first sees her. Functionally, each episode is identical: it initiates the hostility between hero and heroine which is the prelude to love - a very brief one, in Venetia's case, since she is too sensible to take offence. The period is the same - the Regency; and the location - the hero's neglected estate, which the heroine has come to think of as her own preserve, is similar. Names, rank, and circumstances are different - Venetia as opposed to Davinia, a baron instead of a Duke, and an episode which is, in one case, part of a sequence of episodes which begins the novel and shows Venetia to be living an isolated life in which very little happens, and, in the other, part of a story which has already progressed through a number of episodes, introducing a secondary
heroine and hero, and giving the heroine a very different motivation.

Above all, the originality of each book lies in a certain oddity about the central situation. Barbara Cartland, for instance, centres her books round some detail which gives a particular flavour to each story. In The Bored Bridegroom (London, 1974), the heroine, impersonating a woman of the world, learns to use stage makeup, expressions and movement from a Regency actor, and the detail of this gives the book part of its individual character. In the same author's The Magnificent Marriage (London, 1974) the relevant detail is the sudden disappearance of the heroine's excema as soon as she reaches the tropics; in The Devil in Love (London, 1975), it is the history of champagne. Other writers like such details, too: the bathroom of a seventeenth century French Duke, Turkish in splendour, to which the heroine is carried modestly in a covered sedan chair in Frances Lang's The Filigree Bird (London, 1981), the astronomy which the hero studies, and his observatory, in Margaret Stewart Taylor's The Rejected Suitor (London, 1982), or the Victorian tea-ship in Eva Macdonald's House of Secrets, (London, 1980), for example. Such instances could be found in almost all contemporary historical romances, and they give the books any claim to individuality they might possess.

Despite the familiarity of so many of the characters
and episodes, they are none the less unrealistic in their general effect. Yet if the books are to be accepted, for the moment at least, as a "real" experience, some gesture towards verismilitude is necessary. It is here that the historical background is an advantage. The distance in time makes a certain strangeness seem inevitable; connections with known historical fact give the rest of the detail credibility. The unlikelihood of the plot is unsurprising: the situations, or "frames" in Eco's term 19, - whether dynamic or static - have a long history, and predate the need for verismilitude. Inter-textual frames (like abductions and rescues) seem to have the function of relating the texts to their genre: many seem inexplicable unless their romantic origin is borne in mind. Validated by history, they survive in this kind of romance more than in any other: when setting and manners are so strange, why should the reader boggle at a few unusual events as well?

No doubt the intertextual frames carry much of the entertainment value of the story: common frames, which carry the historical content, being more informative. Like the common frames, intertextual frames seem to be related to attitudes and values, but in a less obvious way. It is possible that when a motif or character stereotype loses its ideological reference with the passage of time it begins to seem less realistic, and to be discarded (as abduction appears to have been replaced to some extent by
rape attempts); and no doubt once too many of the motifs fail to carry conviction, the genre is doomed. Of course, the genre may simply have worn itself out through mere frequency of repetition. Yet it seems odd that a particular kind of situation should suddenly outwear its popularity after centuries of use; so that some connection with a changing climate of opinion seems more likely.

This may explain the move from historical romance to, say, Westerns or thrillers in the twenties: these have stock situations and characters, too, but presumably they still retained an ideological significance for their readers and so continued to be accepted as "realistic". In a more individualistic society, it may have seemed more relevant to contemplate an individual marshal and brigand confronting each other in an isolated Western town than an agent of the state sent on a government mission.

None the less, historical romance did survive, though with a change of readership. This shows the enduring quality of the stock situations and characters which typify the genre. A changed readership, however, may well have invested the familiar elements with new significances. If this is so, the analysis of work by individual authors written between the close of the last century and the present day will demonstrate the change. This demonstration is the subject of succeeding chapters.
Chapter Five

The Readers of Historical Romance

Even if the nature of the romantic motifs has remained constant during the twentieth century, the kind of changes in structure and style noted in chapter three, together with the change of focus from male- to female-centred stories, suggests a change in the readership of historical romance. The books themselves have changed from ones which might be considered suitable for family reading to ones aimed at a female market, and at the same time the stereotyped nature of plots and characters has become more evident. Concentration on a single view-point has become more pronounced, and the way in which the devices of formal realism were used meant that the reader could increasingly experience the story as a lived reality. The books were therefore easier to read and to enjoy; a feature which implies a readership which is, in terms of responding to fiction, more naive and more likely to apply "common-sense" criteria to what they read. This, with its implications of differences of education, suggests that the nature of the market has changed in terms of social class as well as sex. Such changes are likely to bring along with them changes in the needs and interests of the readers, so that to understand the way in which the genre has evolved some account of the nature of the readership is necessary.
Claud Cockburn pointed out, in *Bestseller*, that those successful examples of popular fiction which reached the bestseller lists form a useful index to the moods and attitudes of their public. Cockburn admits that, in the case of best-sellers, "accurate statistics of total sales are hard to come by, and of total readership there are no statistics" ¹. He points to a middle-class readership for his best-sellers through examining the numbers and prices of the various editions and comparing these with what people were likely to pay: a reasonable procedure to some extent, as long as its limitations are recognised, since inevitably book-buying choices are individual.

When evidence of this kind about the readership of historical romance - much of which reached the best-seller lists at the turn of the century - is compared with information about book-buying and reading habits from other sources, such as that supplied by David Altick in *The English Common Reader* ², a reasonably consistent and likely picture of the genre's audience in the early years of this century begins to emerge. For the later period, the task of finding out about the readership is easier. Georgette Heyer, who did so much to establish historical romance as a women's genre, has left evidence in the form of letters about sales and fan mail from her readers, of whose nature and numbers she was very well aware. Contemporary women's romance has attracted the attention of a number of sociologists in recent years: in
particular, the work of Peter Mann in England and of Janice Radway in America is useful in building a picture of the genre's readership today.

Before embarking on such an account, however, one point needs clarification. The term "popular" when applied to a genre has a certain ambiguity. Is a book "popular" because it is a best-seller, or because it appeals to the mass of ordinary readers? Or is an appeal to one section of this market sufficient? S.H. Steinberg has noted in Five Hundred Years of Printing that the term "best-seller" itself is a difficult one to define. A book which originally commanded a small audience - such as one by Virginia Woolf, for example - might continue to be bought as its quality became recognised, and even appeal to an increasing readership through the years. Such a "steady seller" would in the end have a greater total readership than a more ephemeral production whose initial high sales were never repeated. Steinberg's definition of "best-seller" is a book which "immediately on, or shortly after, its first publication, far outruns the demand of what at the time are considered good or even large sales" and then either "lapses into obscurity" or becomes a "steady seller". Cockburn restricts himself to consideration of books which have achieved immediate high sales without being formulaic in the way that, for instance, the "Tarzan" books were.

Such novels are "popular" in the sense that they are
read by large numbers of people. As Steinberg has pointed out, though, there are books which adopt a formula which has already made a prototype into a genuine bestseller. These may never reach a particularly wide readership, but their readers are drawn from the same segment of the total market which made the prototype into a bestseller. They perform the same function as the bestseller, and are popular in the sense that they belong to a genre or type of novel which is widely read as a whole. A popular genre is one which contains both kinds of novel.

If historical romance is to be considered a popular genre it is because it contains an appreciable number of both types of book. Weyman, Mason, Sabatini, Orczy and Heyer all produced individual bestsellers, and if Barbara Cartland did not achieve equal sales as these with any individual title, taken as a whole her sales are enormous enough to make her a best-selling author. She modified her production of books in the seventies, changing her output from five to twenty novels per year at her most productive, to take advantage in mass-marketing techniques of the kind described by Janice Radway in Reading the Romance and John Sutherland in Bestsellers. Publishers such as Mills & Boon and their American parent company Harlequin carried out surveys of readers' tastes and were able to target much more accurately than before; at the same time, the development of paper-back originals meant that books not only looked more attractive to the ordinary
reader but could also be marketed in ways that had previously been impossible - in supermarkets and shopping malls, for instance. With an assured market came the emergence of super-bestsellers like the books of Kathleen Wodiwiss and Rosemary Rogers (the originators of the "bodice-rippers"), but the general increase in sales during this period - Mills & Boon increased their sales by 33% between 1972 and 1974, for instance, and Harlequin's sales increased from thirty to eighty million between 1974 and 1976 - meant that minor writers could expect sales which Scott himself might have envied.

The fact that women were the chief users of the new shopping malls and supermarkets, and were also affected by home selling techniques like book clubs, meant that romance (including historical romance) was one of the first genres to increase its sales in this dramatic way. Consumption of romance, however, is not confined to books which are bought. As Ken Worpole has noted, women have traditionally formed the predominant users of public and other libraries, and so public library shelves still carry large amounts of romantic fiction. Some publishers, such as Robert Hale, make a speciality of supplying this market. Issues might be quite small, but the readership of the books can be disproportionately large, as can be seen from a glance at the date slips in romantic and historical fiction. Historical romances may no longer be bestsellers, but there are large numbers on the library
shelves, and they are borrowed.

All this means that there have been noticeable changes in the readership of the genre since the beginning of the century. The change in access to the books has meant that the kind of book which once appealed to readers willing to pay comparatively large sums for a hardback is now bought by consumers who once read few books and bought fewer. Against such a background, the way in which the readership for historical romance has developed becomes comprehensible.

Cockburn assumed that the comparatively vast readership of bestsellers in the Edwardian and late Victorian periods was drawn largely from the "British Mandarinate" since this formed the "bulk" of the novel-buying and novel-borrowing public. Certainly, Stanley Weyman seemed to have had middle class readers in mind since, according to Altick, some of the periodicals in which his work was serialized catered particularly for this class during the period.

In specifying the "Mandarinate", however, Cockburn seems to have had upper-middle class readers in mind - he mentions judges, barristers, and upper civil servants. Altick, however, mentions the Cornhill Magazine in which Weyman had work serialized, as being a new kind of periodical introduced to fill a gap between the highbrow Athenaeum and the low-brow London Journal in the middle of the nineteenth century, which gives the impression of a
slightly lower class of reader for Weyman's books than Cockburn has surmised for his bestsellers. It retailed at a shilling, which meant that readers who had been unable to afford higher priced magazines such as Blackwood's could buy it. Though Altick felt that it lacked the lightness of touch which could maintain a mass circulation, its initial sales showed that there was a large class of readers waiting for just such a reasonably priced periodical. Leisure Hour, in which Weyman's work was also serialized, was a religious magazine whose contents were almost indistinguishable from "secular family papers" such as All the Year Round. The general picture is of a family readership, with fair but not large incomes, who enjoyed fiction of a more serious kind than the melodramas provided by, say, the London Journal - which gave its name to a genre of thrillers.

In publishing Weyman's work, the Cornhill was confirming an association with historical romance of the period which reinforces the idea that the readership of historical romance was similar to that described above. When Conan Doyle was trying to find a publisher for Micah Clarke, his first historical romance, the Editor, James Payn, warned him against "wasting his time and his wits" in an attempt to "mix history and fiction" but after the modest success of Micah Clarke, which was well reviewed, he accepted Doyle's next historical novel, The White Company. This was serialized a couple of years
before The New Rector, Weyman's second novel and the first to be published in the Cornhill.

Far from being a waste of time, it must be presumed that the romantic historical fiction of Doyle and Weyman proved to be to the taste of the readers of the Cornhill, since Smith, Elder and Co. who published the magazine also became for a time the dominant publishers of their romances in book form. When John Murray took over Smith, Elder's list, their "stable" of authors of "popular and standard works" included Weyman and Doyle along with A.E.W. Mason and "Henry Seton Merriman" 14. This suggests that they were aware of targeting a readership correctly in the Cornhill and that works by these and similar authors continued to appeal to it. This is especially true in the case of Weyman, whose books had a large and steady following: with Methuen, for example, Under the Red Robe was one of that publisher's earliest successes, to be mentioned in the same breath as well-known bestsellers such as those by "Anthony Hope" and Marie Corelli 15. Doyle's reputation rests on his detective fiction, but his historical books were still in print when Ivor Brown published his biographical and critical study of Doyle in 1972, which, the publisher argued, was evidence of a steady continuing interest. The original sales had been a moderate "success": "just enough", Brown says, for him to be able to "abandon his Southern practice and take a chance, still as a doctor, in London." 16.

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Though his success was less striking than that of Weyman, both novelists must have been liked by the Cornhill readers to produce such steady sales.

Both Doyle's novels and Weyman's demand a certain sophistication in the reader, as has been shown in chapter three. Weyman's in many ways provide easier reading since their historical content, though important, is integrated more completely into the fabric of the novel and the reader is more aware of reading a story of suspense. None the less, both novelists make demands which presuppose a fair standard of education, and this also narrows the possible field from which the readers of their romances were drawn. David Altick 17 has pointed out that by the end of the nineteenth century the literacy rate was "approximately 97 per cent", the ability to read having developed through the second half of the nineteenth century and spreading even among the children of the very poor after the Education Act of 1870. None the less, the amount of literacy can be misinterpreted: the findings relate to those who were married in 1900, and in any case are evidence of a very basic standard of reading ability. Raymond Williams 18 has said in The Long Revolution that it was a "meagre indication of capacity to read a book", adding that "there was no sudden opening of the floodgates of literacy as a result of the 1870 Education Act". Secondary Education, which was a fair guarantee of literacy, was the preserve of the upper and middle classes.
throughout the nineteenth century. Consequently, the readership for historical romance is more likely to be found among these classes than among the working class.

The cheapening of books which Altick notes in *The Common Reader* might have had more effect in spreading a taste for such fiction among the lower classes, but the effect of this should also not be exaggerated. A.E.W. Mason's work is a good example of the kind of appeal such cheaper editions made. *The Courtship of Morrice Buckler*, published in 1896, was one of Macmillan's six-shilling series. It was dramatised, enjoying, according to Roger Lancelyn Greene, a run of "notable" length and success. David Altick has pointed out that six-shilling editions, which represented at that time a cheapening of the hard-back editions of popular books, were very important in the 1890s and were published in much bigger issues than had been the practice before. The appearance of Mason's work in one of these editions, therefore, suggests a large readership, but one which could afford to pay a moderately substantial sum for its books; it was not at the bottom of the social scale, to which the reprints, from 2/6 to 1d, were addressed. This again argues a largely middle class readership, since, as Altick has shown, it was this class whose income was increasing so spectacularly between 1861 and 1890, when Doyle and Weyman were publishing their early romances. In a time of falling prices, the "average income of a lower middle class family rose from
£90 in 1851 to £110 in 1881", so that their real income rose, Altick estimates, "by 70 or 80 per cent". But he quotes evidence to show that "it was still the middle class, far more than the workers, who benefited from these prosperous times". As the reading public expanded in the latter part of the nineteenth century it was mainly the lower middle classes who swelled its ranks, therefore, since they were beginning to gain what Altick called the "three great requisites of a mass reading public - literacy, leisure and a little pocket-money" 24.

Both novels by Mason and Weyman were frequently published in sixpenny series as well, but even here J.A. Sutherland cautions against supposing that such cheap editions were necessarily bought by the working class readers for whom they were intended. The true market, he thought, comprised professional men like the young Anthony Trollope. "Trollope had been educated at Harrow, clearly had a literary bent yet was earning only about £1,000 a year in the early 1840s - about enough to buy a three-volume novel a week and a loaf of bread a day" 25.

Trollope was a representative of a new class which was increasing in importance during the nineteenth century: a class which, as Williams pointed out 26, was neither gentry nor bourgeoisie. Like the working class, they sold their labour for hire, but their labour was of a skilled kind. So, of course, was that of much of the working class, but while these received their training at
the workplace the new class received it within the
traditional educational system. This was the class of
public servants - clerks, of whom Trollope was perhaps an
unusually privileged example, and teachers, for instance.
It was a class which drew upon the traditional middle and
upper classes for its membership, but there were
opportunities for members of the lower middle classes to
join in too, through the grammar school system,
opportunities which grew with the expansion of the new
class.

David Thomson 27 has argued, very plausibly, that it
was these readers - and particularly those from the lower
middle class - who provided the taste for exotic adventure
which cloak-and-dagger novels, among others, helped to
fulfil. The way in which this class was multiplying during
these years, with the growth of such institutions as the
civil service (this was a time when the functions of
various boards were developing - the Local Government
Board in 1870, the Board of Agriculture in the 1890s, and
later, the Board of Education and the Ministry of Health)
and also of Local Government, with a concurrent growth of
local bureaucracy. The members of these public services,
together with the clerks and the shop assistants whose
numbers had been growing throughout the century, and who
were also frequently drawn from the ranks of the lower-
middle class, were newly influential through the sheer
size of their social group.
They commuted between the drab routine of their offices in town and the uniformity of their home lives in the suburbs, whose enormous growth was also an important feature of the time. To this class, Thomson says, imperialism made a particular appeal, bringing into drab lives a smattering of the exotic, of adventure and power. This explains the enormous popularity and influence of Rudyard Kipling, whose books and poems expressed the contrast between the adventurous though hard life of a soldier on the frontier, and their own unheroic life at home: "semi-gentility and conventional monotony; bank clerks and shop assistants, factory managers and lesser civil servants, armies of them just adjusting themselves to a pinched and colourless existence" 28.

One of the needs of this multitude, therefore, was a means of escape: they found it in adventure stories of all kinds. Stevenson, Kipling and Conrad offered adventure in faraway places; W.E. Henley wrote about courage, and there were scores of lesser writers to cater for the same taste. Wingfield Stratford described the nineties as a "decade ... of magazine heroes ... all alike in their strength and silence" 29.

Q.D. Leavis, appending a list of bestsellers to Fiction and the Reading Public 30, assumes a fairly homogeneous readership for them. The denigratory tone was caught by Alan Swingewood when he associated the Leavises with T.S. Eliot in thinking of a mass audience as having
"no moral centre, no universally accepted moral code" 31 led into maladjustment by "a habit of fantasying" bred by romance. The prices of Leavis's best-sellers in the thirties suggest that the buyers had remained middle-class, though no doubt they reached a wider readership by means of the public libraries and small circulating libraries in the corner shops.

Historical romances continued to appear on the lists, in particular those historical romances which, according to Cockburn, followed the new pattern set by Jeffrey Farnol: books which presented history not as reality but as "myth" 32. Cockburn felt that the particular "myth" presented was one reassuring to middle-class readers aware of rumours of war and economic decline. Subsequent best-sellers followed Farnol's lead, such as Warwick Deeping's Apples of Gold in 1920, or Hugh Walpole's Rogue Herries in 1930 - though by this time historical romance was growing out of favour with middlebrow readers, and Walpole's book is notably less romantic than those which preceded it. Other historical romances which contained similar elements reached the bestseller lists in the 1920s, such as Sabatini's Scaramouche, published in 1921.

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Georgette Heyer, whom Cockburn sees as following and modifying the Weyman/Farnol tradition, had a modest success with cloak-and-dagger stories from the publication of *The Black Moth* in 1921. This was popular enough to establish her as a novelist; her biographer, Jane Aiken Hodge calls it "a wildly romantic tale, and wildly readable," and adds that it still has a sale. Indeed, a few fans continued to prefer it to the later novels, which points to a continuation, however tenuous, of the audience for the melodramatic adventure story after Heyer's later work had found an audience which in many ways was a new one.

What established the novels as bestsellers, however, was a different kind of historical romance, which appealed to a different readership; one composed mainly of women. After *The Black Moth* she continued a moderately successful career, with contemporary novels and romances in a variety of styles. In 1925, over the publication of a medieval one in the Doyle tradition, called *Simon the Coldheart*, she met Frere, who was to be her chief publisher at Heinemann's. Hodge quotes him as remembering that when he met her she was depressed about her writing: "he remembers her as having been discouraged about her career ... feeling she was making no progress."  

Up to this point her work had diverged very little from the pattern of "swash-buckling" adventure romances with the insignificant exception of *Powder and Patch*. The
following year, however, saw the publication of *These Old Shades*, which marked a turning point in her career. The story, with its detail of fashionable life in Paris and London, centres upon the identity and experience of the heroine and has a hero - mature, experienced and cold, but ready to succumb to the right female - who seems designed to appeal to female readers.

These Old Shades was an instant success. It sold 190,000 copies in hardback, and, says Hodge, gave Georgette Heyer a constant "public" 36. Clearly it satisfied a need that the male-centred adventure story did not. This did not mean that she was never to write such an adventure story again. After publishing another blend of love story, romantic comedy, fashionable life and adventure in *The Masqueraders* in 1928, she produced a more traditional adventure story in *Beauvallet*, set in the reign of Elizabeth I. The story is connected with the earlier *Simon the Coldheart* - the hero, Nicholas Beauvallet, is one of Simon's descendants - and the adventures include sea-fights and a mission. The story is thus very much centred in the masculine world of battles and adventure, and the love-plot is routine - the kind of romance which could be found in the pages of Weyman or Sabatini. The book had a good sale of 86,000 copies, but this was not much more than half that of *These Old Shades* 37. This may suggest that some readers still enjoyed the swashbuckling romances, but not enough to rival the
readership of the new kind of romance Heyer was beginning to produce; or that Heyer's name seemed to promise another romance in the tradition of These Old Shades, and enough readers believed this to give a reasonable sale. What was clear was that the book was not as popular as the earlier romance.

On the other hand, The Masqueraders, which had sold more than Beauvallet, did not have the sales of These Old Shades either. It has many of the qualities of the earlier book and, like it, is set in the eighteenth century. The story is centred mainly on the female, and the hero is of a type which was later to become part of Heyer's stock-in-trade: what, according to Hodge, she was to call her "mark 2" hero, cool and unflappable. A reading of the book, however, shows him to be far from the charismatic heroes of either The Black Moth or These Old Shades, and the crucial question of his feelings for the heroine are settled early on. There is very little sense of conflict between them. The story certainly has many qualities which would make it appeal to the readers of These Old Shades, but it is understandable that it should not have been quite so popular. If in Beauvallet she was producing a book according to a well-tried and reasonably steady-selling formula, which, however, did not have the enormous appeal that These Old Shades had had, The Masqueraders is an intermediate text with some qualities of both kinds and suggests that the authoress was feeling
her way towards the formula that suited her readers best.

Heyer was a novelist with a keen sense of her readership and their tastes. Her experimentation with fictional forms shows that at this period of her career she had not achieved the certainty about her readers she was later to have. None the less, she was aware of the different appeals of the forms she was trying out and anxious to find one which sold well, even though it was not one she might have preferred. The fate of The Conqueror is instructive in this respect. This novel, published in the same year as Beauvallet, represents yet another experiment in historical fiction, since it belongs to the Bulwer tradition of fictionalized biography. It is the story of William I, and includes a good deal of warfare. Although she enjoyed writing about military strategy, this was, she said later, "not among my best-sellers". In fact, it was actually turned down by her American publishers and sold fewer copies in England than her romances: certainly fewer than The Masqueraders and less than half those of These Old Shades. Hodge comments: "She drew her own conclusions ... in 1931, planning ahead, she decided to channel her creative gift in a more prosperous direction". In other words, the direction suggested by These Old Shades was the one she must follow if she were to retain her public.

Her unusual awareness of where her readership lay, together with the openness with which she planned the most
profitable course for her career, makes her judgement good evidence for the change in nature of historical romance at this period. As far as she was concerned, the change of direction was a conscious one, an attempt to reach out to a market which she knew to be there but which could not be tapped by the provision of more cloak-and-dagger stories or more fictionalized biography. These could no longer expect the large sales which had characterized the market for historical romance at the turn of the century. However, she could provide an alternative formula which she knew could prove as successful.

That her judgement was correct was shown by the difference between the sales of books in which she moved away from *These Old Shades* formula and those in which she followed it. Among the former were a series of detective novels. She published the first in 1932, but by 1936 it had still only sold 16,000 copies. In general, her crime novels never achieved anything like the sales of her historical romances. "My thrillers are not my main source of income, and never will be", she said 40. The point is underlined by the success, in the same year, of *Devil's Cub*, a romance in the tradition of *These Old Shades* and *The Masqueraders*; in fact, the hero is the son of the Duke of Avon, the hero of the former, and characters from the earlier book appear in the novel. It sold 115,000 copies and confirmed her success 41.

Of course, detective stories were popular in this
period too; indeed, they had come to rival, if not supersede, historical fiction in their popularity. The point is not that detective fiction did not sell, but rather that Heyer was never successful in establishing herself as a popular thriller writer. It is possible that had she not already been a historical novelist, she might have exerted herself to find a more successful formula. As it was, however, the vast readership of her historical romances made it unnecessary for her to do so; she had found a market which was quite precise in its needs. Her readers were simply not interested in thrillers to any great extent, and abandoned her when she wrote them. This market was therefore one specific to historical romance, and did not include any large element of the thriller market.

What is more, her readers demanded a specific kind of historical romance from her, and many simply did not buy the books which did not fit into this category. Her previous experiments had begun to make this clear, and later experience was to confirm it. Between 1937 and 1940 she made a brief attempt to swing her career in the direction of more "serious" historical fiction with *An Infamous Army*, a story of Waterloo, *Royal Escape*, about Charles II after the battle of Worcester, and *The Spanish Bride*, which was about a real love story of the Peninsular War. Though all of these have a strong element of the kind of romance which had made her famous, they were based
closely on real events and were, according to Hodge, "solidly researched" in a spirit of "passionate accuracy" 42. An Infamous Army has, she adds, been used at Sandhurst to illustrate military tactics in the battle of Waterloo 43. Though this was the sort of success which pleased her, she returned in 1940 to the well-tried romantic formula and never abandoned it afterwards.

If she could have done so, she would. In 1948 she began what, according to her publishers, she called a "Real Book" 44, My Lord John - a serious biographical novel with a medieval setting, about John, Duke of Bedford. Though she returned to it hopefully from time to time, it was never finished. According to Hodge, Heyer's husband has pointed out that she needed to make as much money as possible from her books in order to pay her tax bills 45. That meant going back to a certain market; one which she had evidently not found with her other "real books". The implication is that she had tapped a new market, and a very large one: one which was not interested in traditional kinds of historical fiction, such as fictionalised biography or swash-buckling adventure. It was also a stable one; her books remained steady sellers. Hodge notes fifty-one titles still in print, and comments on the innumerable imitators.

The nature of the formula she discovered - one in which love rather than male-centred adventure is foregrounded, in the context of what is virtually a comedy

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of manners - has already been noted in chapter two. Hodge feels that it was in this direction that Heyer's talent really lay; however, it is clear that she herself was not happy with the formulaic nature of what she wrote, and of which she was well aware, as is suggested by her slighting references to "mark I" and "mark II" heroes. In a sense she became a prisoner of the market she found.

It was a market which contained some men - Hodge refers to dons and journalists, many of whom were male - but which was predominantly female. Hodge divides Heyer's readers into two groups, a smaller one which included the dons and journalists as well as "intelligent women everywhere", and the "great fan public", which was predominantly female and middle-class. This is evidenced by the fact that once her reputation had become established most of her books were serialized in Woman's Journal, a monthly publication retailing at an appreciably higher price than weeklies such as Woman and Woman's Own. It therefore tended to be bought by a middle-class, female readership. Advertisements were for "good" clothes, expensive without being so obviously fashionable as those in Vogue or Harper's Bazaar. The readership of the books themselves was not necessarily the same as that of Woman's Journal, but the editors of the magazine knew that the stories would make a strong appeal to their lady readers.

The popularity of the Heyer-type romance was further demonstrated by the imitators who began to write pseudo -
"Heyers" of their own. In 1950 a fan wrote to Georgette Heyer to inform her of a book clearly plagiarized from hers, though with its borrowings interspersed with "howlers" and anachronisms. Another was discovered in 1961; though, as Hodge suggests, it is sometimes difficult to draw the line between outright plagiarism and justifiable influence.

What is clear is that the market which had developed for Heyer was not satisfied with one woman's oeuvre. Other writers were beginning to follow Heyer's example and develop the Heyer vein: Jane Aiken Hodge and Joan Aiken have both written novels which show some traces of her influence. Other writers of women's romance were beginning to realise the potential of historical fiction for women, and in the case of Barbara Cartland massively extended the market for it, both in England and America. At a time when other historical fiction of more traditional kinds was beginning to lose its market, historical romance for women was thus not only retaining but extending its readership. It is clear that the genre had taken a radical new direction, and was directed at a market which was distinct from the old one.

What seems to have happened is that historical fiction of the Heyer type was gradually subsumed into the general field of women's romance. Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that Heyer became influential in creating a definitive formula for women's romance in

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general as it was produced from the 1920s onwards. The character of the hero, saturnine and abrasive, and his position of wealth and authority, for instance, are typical of the genre, as Ann Rosalind Jones points out. Though similar heroes had of course been found in romance since the hey-day of the Gothic novel in the eighteenth century, Heyer may indeed have been instrumental in providing the definitive ingredients for the formula. In this connection it is interesting to note that Heyer's first publishers were not Heinemann, but those quintessential publishers of women's romantic fiction, Mills & Boon. To them, Heyer is not so much a historical novelist as a "romantic fiction author." It seems, therefore, as though the market for Heyer-type romance was in many respects that for women's romantic fiction in general.

There were various reasons why this group should have provided a more stable readership at this time than that for more general historical fiction with a more masculine appeal. The effect of new genres such as the Western and the thriller have already been noted in chapter two; in many ways these found their market among the old readership for historical romance, that is, the general readership comprising both men and women, drawn largely from the middle classes. Although many of Heyer's readers were drawn from this group, as has been shown, it is evident from the surveys of women's romance readers to be
examined in this chapter that the readership for this genre, including modern historical romance, is drawn from the working class predominantly. At least some of Heyer's readers - those characterized by Hodge as enjoying the "hard core of realism" under the "syllabub" - may well have been uninterested in the work of plagiarists and successors whose work was geared specifically to the romantic market. On the whole, the work of Mills & Boon authors does not find its way into Woman's Journal or other middle class magazines, and neither does that of the Heyer imitations which crowd the library shelves. Modern historical romance has to a certain extent lost the "upper" layer of its readers, but there have always been enough to keep the sales of the genre healthy.

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Women readers continued to form a large proportion of the fiction-reading public during the years in which Heyer was developing her career, and beyond. Reading was an interest which suited their patterns of leisure well. For one thing, it was more accessible than other pursuits. They could find their books in the public library down the road, or from private libraries in their local corner shop, which may itself have been run by a woman and so
reflect her interests. The stories which ran private circulating libraries were ones much used by women — not so much W.H. Smith's as Boots and the big department stores.

What is more, fiction reading suited the pattern of a woman's life at that time. The women who had returned to their homes after the First World War returned to a pattern of life different in some ways from that of men. Their leisure came at odd moments rather than in a single block in the evenings or at weekends. Interests which would take them outside the home for long periods therefore did not really suit them, though visits to the cinema were possible. The cinema, as has been seen, had good as well as bad effects upon book sales. Women needed occupations which could be picked up for a short time and then put down again to fulfil other duties. Novels meet this requirement well. The leisure pursuits which in these years were growing rivals to reading — a drink at the local pub, an afternoon at a football match, or an evening at the dog-track — were chiefly masculine interests. Women were not particularly benefited by them.

The same is true even today. Often as is pointed out in All Work and no Play?, women's leisure time pursuits are actually carried out at the same time as their work, and their activities include a number, such as cooking and sewing, which may be considered as either work or leisure. In addition, women feel that to go outside the home at
night to seek leisure activities is to put themselves in
danger; even if the streets are not in fact more
dangerous for women than they are for (for instance) young
men, they are seen to be so, and this is an important
influence on women's choice of leisure activities. These
need to be capable of being taken up and given up as the
opportunity arises, and should not take women far from the
home and household tasks. Novel reading is ideally suited
to such a life-style; and in addition the historical
romance is very much a "readerly" text, in Barthes'
phrase, its strong story line and familiar situations and
characters providing an effortless and unchallenging read.

Since Georgette Heyer was "first launched as a
romantic fiction author" by Mills & Boon, historical
romance of the new type which she pioneered was associated
with this publisher of contemporary romantic fiction from
its very earliest days. Indeed, some of the
characteristics of Heyer's romantic fiction became part of
the formula for romantic novels: the character of the
hero, as has been noted, for example. Though similar
heroes had of course been found in romance since the hey-
day of the Gothic novel in the eighteenth century, Heyer
may indeed have been instrumental in providing the
definitive ingredients for the formula.

Mills & Boon themselves attribute the initial success
of their romantic fiction writers, of whom Heyer was one,
to the need for "escapism" during the Depression years 54,
though this view has been challenged 55. The company turned to paperback publishing after the success of their association with Harlequin, after 1960. In the early sixties they were publishing eight titles per month; in the 1980s they publish ten contemporary romances each month, together with two historical romances, three Doctor/Nurse romances, and three "Temptation" romances, which deal more explicitly with sexual encounters than the other titles do 56. In this list, the number of historical titles seems modest, but each title has a print-run of over 50,000; with 100,000 copies on the booksellers' shelves each month, it may be assumed that there is still a reasonably substantial market for this fiction, especially since, at £1.50, the books cost rather more than the contemporary titles.

This is not the whole readership for contemporary romance, however; according to John Chapman, chief librarian of Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Library, "the genre still has a following" 57. Though Georgette Heyer for older women, and Barbara Cartland for a wide range of ages, are the most popular of the authors, in general "There will always be a certain demand for historical romance", with particular authors moving in and out of fashion. Certainly hard-back publishers such as Robert Hale (especially) and Peter Davies think it worth their while to publish such authors, if only for the public libraries.

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Further evidence for the continuing popularity of the genre, even if at a modest level, is provided by the Euromonitor survey of 1983 which subdivided the total fiction reading of its respondents into twelve categories. Peter Mann comments on the results: "Amongst women 31% of all current reading, fiction or non-fiction, was accounted for by romance, the nearest being 'historical' with 13%." In a letter dated 24.12.1986, he adds "I rather suspect that some historical is really historical romance", and in view of the evidence for the overwhelming popularity of romance amongst women readers, it seems a safe assumption.

The general picture of the readership which is suggested by this evidence is of one which has declined to some extent from the days of Georgette Heyer, but which is still reasonably substantial when compared with that for other genres. The Euromonitor survey, as a comparison, shows a female readership of 11% for "Crime/thriller" and 10% for the modern novel, which Mann takes as indicating serious mainstream fiction; these are the only subcategories which in any way rival historical, once romance has been left out of account. It is, however, probably an ageing readership: John Chapman comments in a letter that "Women aged 30 and upwards seem to be the main readers of historical romance. Many of these readers probably read such novelists as Georgette Heyer, while she was still alive and read each new title as it was published". It
seems likely, therefore, that this is a group composed of
a large number of readers who are middle-aged or elderly,
replenished by a smaller number of younger ones.
Eventually, the readership may therefore grow very much
smaller, though John Chapman comments "as tastes and
fashion in reading changes, then so does the popularity of
novelists, but it is always likely that when books are
reprinted, after a number of years, interest will be
rekindled" 60. It is evident that here he is thinking
chiefly of older novelists, since he also remarks "new
authors now make a greater impact", and the library
shelves carry a large number of recent historical romances
whose labels show a reasonable borrowing rate.

It would be easy to make the assumption that the
readers of romance form a homogenous group who read
indiscriminately. To some extent this is true: a study by
Spiller showed readers as "browsing" along library shelves
and "far from specific in what they are looking for" 61.
"Many books are borrowed with little prior knowledge of
the author or the title", adds Mann. On the other hand,
the way in which women cluster round a few particular
genres shows they have a clear idea of the kind of book
they want to read; and Janice Radway claims that "romance
audiences read actively: they reject certain novels,
recommended others to each other, know how to find writers
and heroines who appeal to them " 62.

Nor are romance readers housewives escaping from
lives which offer no other fulfilment. Looking at the domestic status of respondents to a questionnaire undertaken under the auspices of Mills & Boon, Peter Mann says: "A third of all readers of romantic fiction are full-time housewives, 30% are housewives with either full or part-time jobs, and 22% are unmarried and have jobs. The remainder are either retired or are still in full-time education". This suggests a fairly even balance between housewives and career women and certainly destroys any picture of a readership of bored women with time on their hands. In terms of occupation, too, the picture is a varied one: over half of Mann's respondents had office or clerical jobs, and ten per cent had jobs at a professional or higher technical level, compared with 19 per cent who were factory workers. Romance readership, says Mann, comprises "a good cross section of the ordinary literate female population of the country". This is probably true in view of the variety of jobs mentioned, though probably also many of the readers, if assigned to social classes, would be identified as working class: elsewhere, Mann has said, on the basis of an analysis of the Euromonitor survey for 1983, "If we look at the profile for romantic fiction, the Euromonitor data shows it to be strongly skewed towards the working class with over two thirds of readers being in the C(2)DE group and only 8% in the AB group as compared with 67% of ABs who are reading a book at all. However, nearly a quarter of romance readers
are in the C(1) (white collar, lower middle class) group, so romantic fiction is by no means wholly restricted to working class readers" 65. Although the picture is thus of a predominantly working class readership, it is not overwhelmingly so, and it would still be true to say that a wide range of the female population reads romantic fiction.

What, then are the motives which draw such a wide cross-section of women to romantic fiction? Peter Mann says that "the romantic novel is unashamedly escapist" 66 and the quotations from respondents which he appends to the Mills & Boon survey seem to bear this out 67. "I think your books are an excellent vehicle for forgetting the strains of modern living" says a housewife with five children and a part-time job 68. In her case the source of those "strains" may not be far to seek, but others, perhaps more comfortably circumstanced, refer to the "relaxing", power of the romances or the way they can "take our minds off" discomfort 69. They are suitable for taking up in scattered free moments, which may well fit in with women's leisure patterns if they are running a home: "Even if I only have half an hour at night to read" 70 says one respondent, as though this is something to be expected.

The main reasons given for enjoying the romances, however, are threefold: they are not boring, their stories are far away from preoccupations of day-to-day
living while still being realistic enough to allow the reader to identify herself with the heroine, and they are "clean". "I like my heroines decent" says one midwife 71, and adds a complaint about books which contain "four-letter words". Another respondent, who calls the books "clean" 72, adds that they portray the feelings of "normal people", which may suggest either that normality is opposed to perversion of some kind, presumably pornographic, or that the characters are easy to identify with, or both. A comment on the same page that "It is so nice to read books that differ from the 'kitchen-sink' dramas so often seen on T.V." may also suggest either that what is being condemned is perceived as sordid, or that the power of the story to lift the reader's imagination momentarily from the circumstances of everyday life is particularly valued. An Israeli "English Literature major" complains that, in contrast to romances, "the classics can be very heavy reading" 73, and that fits in with the suggestion of Mann's in "Romantic fiction and its readership" that it is the strong story line which is important. "First of all, the romantic novel is a story.... This very fact sets it apart from many contemporary novels of the literary kind ... which may seem to have no development of story line" 74.

The picture which such comments give is of readers who cannot spend much time in reading but turn to it for relaxation. To fulfil this function, the books need to
have a strong story line, and to allow the reader to identify herself with the characters in circumstances which are far enough away from those of daily life to provide an escape from the stresses of contemporary living. These stresses include the disturbing power of any direct consideration of sexuality; the hint of promiscuity, indeed, is seen as abnormal and can prove a bar to identification. Since this picture is drawn from the comments of respondents it probably reflects accurately what the readers feel they enjoy; but it may be modified slightly by the findings of other commentators on romantic fiction, together with a consideration of what the books themselves may show. It may be added that insofar as the books do cater for such interests, the popular historical romances which appear on the library shelves or which are put out by Mills & Boon under the "Masquerade" imprint are as likely to fulfil them as any contemporary story.

Ann Rosalind Jones challenges the notion that romances provide merely an easy escape. She feels that David Margolies is wrong in condemning women romance readers for "sinking into feeling," pointing to Janice Radway's findings that women read such books, recommending, rejecting, and seeking out certain novels in the ways already quoted. She explains this by the fact that the romance deals with the one time in women's lives when their concerns are centre stage: "the novels focus
on the critical moment when the heroines' survival skills are put to the test, when their ability to negotiate the conflict between male desire and long-term commitment ... leads them to emotional triumph and economic security" 78. In other words, the novels address real needs arising from the social situation of the readers. Contemporary romances may, therefore, fulfil functions essentially similar to those of the late nineteenth century, though the needs addressed may be different.

Since the early years of the century, therefore, two major changes seem to have taken place in the readership of historical romance: first, the readership has changed from a general one, which was therefore at least as much male as female, to a female audience for the female-centred novels of Heyer and her followers, and, secondly, a change from predominantly middle class readership to one which is largely working class. As has been suggested earlier, this is partly because of the development of new genres, but these genres were successful because the "myths" they promulgated were more potent than the old, perhaps because of changing needs which could still be satisfied by the basic formulae of historical romance, and so the genre survived, though with changes which give useful information about the significance of these formulae to the readers. The nature of this significance becomes clearer when some of the texts by representative authors from the different phases of the genre's
development are examined: an examination which will be carried out in the next three chapters.
Chapter Six

Overt and Covert Attitudes in Three Authors of the 1890s

The nature of historical romance can be seen by looking at developments in the genre through time, and also by noting the structural characteristics which the novels have in common. For this purpose, a brief history of the genre followed by a study of the formal characteristics of the romances which owes a good deal to structuralist practice has been useful. An examination of the attitudes expressed in the texts and the ideology which lies behind them necessitates a different approach; a plurality of method which, as the introduction made clear, is a way of taking into account all the aspects in order to give a rounded picture of the whole, as a basis for further study. The use of a variety of perspectives resolves to some extent the tension between an empirical study which does justice to the amount and relative complexity of the material and a more theoretical account which, by interpreting the evidence, suggests a way of understanding its effect on the reader.

As was suggested in chapter one, the aim of analyzing a group of popular texts is not simply to produce a "content analysis" which matches the ideas presented in the text against an exterior "world vision". Such expressed world visions combine with fictional elements
such as narrative strategies to build an imagined world, and because this is imaginary (in the sense of unreal) its ideological nature is exposed through the contradictions and suppressions of the text. This exposure is one of the aims of the analysis.

The account of three of the most popular historical writers of the 1890s which follows owes something to Wolfgang Iser's view of a text, as offering cues which trigger the readers' responses and enable them to build a picture of the action in their own minds. This, however, is simply used as a starting point for an analysis which aims to uncover some of the assumptions on which the texts were based and so read some of the counter-messages which the books contain, alongside more overt expressions of attitude.

Such analyses depend upon the assumption that a text has more than one meaning, and that the overt meaning may be subverted by another, expressed in a characteristic use of vocabulary, or in the text's omissions and contradictions. As Catherine Belsey 1 says, through the "collisions between its divergent meanings the text implicitly criticises its own ideology".

"Collisions" may occur in romances when one set of assumptions may be seen to contradict another, or, more frequently, when the conventions of the plot, which in large part are characteristic of the genre, clash with the author's overtly stated theme. It is often at points of
the narrative where the author's attitudes are most obtrusively stated that such collisions may be observed. Here, a significant omission or contradiction, which may be in the form of an event or a symbolic device, can give an opposite implication to the one presumably intended (the "project", as Belsey calls it, borrowing a term from Macherey).

The "projects" of historical romance are often subverted in particular ways because of the kind of plot motif characteristic of them. Romantic writers use the past as an exotic setting to add to the "escape" value of their stories; but it also functions as a mirror for the present. On an explicit thematic level the past may be seen as the amniotic fluid in which the seeds of the present float: tendencies can be isolated in a historical period, which, however alien that time may seem, none the less prefigure characteristics of the contemporary world. The author's view of such characteristics is, however, conditioned by ideology. Paradoxically, it is ideology which also makes the reader value those sudden accesses of wealth which come from a discovery of a lost heir or an advantageous marriage - the stock motifs of the genre.

It is necessary, certainly, to know something of the situation and attitudes of readers at the turn of the century in order to understand how authors such as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Stanley Weyman or A.E.W. Mason addressed them in their books. It is also, however,
pertinent to note the ways in which solutions on one level in their stories are undermined by aspects of the text (such as the need for a happy ending) on another.

The attitudes and values of historical romance readers at this time can be inferred from a brief examination of the main events of the period and the climate of opinion they engendered. In general, it should have been a time of confidence, for the 1890s saw a period of economic growth and prosperity, sandwiched between two decades of depression. Nonetheless, both this decade and the one which followed were characterized by a certain violence and excitement, which showed itself in all aspects of social, economic and political life. Reactions to this are reflected in the historical novels of the period.

In the industrial sphere, for instance, there was continuing disquiet and unrest, the implications of which for future social stability were a matter of general concern. The nineteenth century ended with a series of strikes, beginning with that of the London dockers in 1889 and coming to a climax with the engineers' strike in 1897. George Dangerfield explains this sequence by reference to "a certain conscious security" which "was in question .... The workers did not want to be safe any more; they wanted to live ... they had been repressed too long". The suggestion is that the workers' previous quiescence, born of insecurity, had meant conniving to a certain extent

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with what was now seen as exploitation. Anger had succeeded the revelation. Fear of such a mood leading to revolt was very real and terrifying to those of the middle and upper classes (in general, as Cockburn pointed out, the reading classes) who remembered the upheavals which had resulted in the setting up of the Paris Commune in 1870.

Moreover, the defusing of such feeling did not prove to be easy. The British government attempted to divert the threat of revolution by advances in social security. There were to be a number of these in the next decade, but exploitation and poverty could not be banished so simply. For the readers of the 1890s, the existence of poverty was kept in front of the public attention by the publication during the decade of Booth's investigation into London pauperism.

The upper and middle classes themselves, however, shared some of the feeling which led to industrial unrest, for this was symptomatic of economic developments which indirectly affected everyone in the West - as were other forms of social upset. French syndicalism - giving rise to ideas such as those promulgated by Georges Sorel in *Reflections on Violence*, a significant title - was feared by many in England because of its possible influence upon British society. British Fabianism and guild socialism advocated gentler measures, such as industrial democracy and worker participation, but these could easily be seen
as steps on the road to much more extreme solutions. Yet all these ideas were responses to a general malaise affecting countries to which industrialization had come early. The newly federalized states of Germany and America, for example, were beginning to threaten Britain's steel industry: it was becoming evident through signs like these that the nation's economy was no longer a self-sufficient one, possible to keep under governmental control. Instead, it was at the mercy of international trade conditions in a world affected by vast economic changes. Such a situation could be experienced as bewildering, even humiliating, and promising little future comfort.

There were counter-balancing tendencies, however, which provided a new focus for national pride. A sense of economic interdependence was reinforced by changes in foreign policy. In the 1890s Britain went her own way, isolated from the webs of rival alliances which were beginning both to divide and to interconnect the countries of Europe. At the same time, she was taking part in a race for new colonies, with their promise of cheap raw materials and ready markets: a promise which had become increasingly important with the change in the economic balance of power.

As the number of colonies grew, so imperialism became increasingly important in Britain. Politics, as David Thomson comments, became more and more imbued with the
imperialist spirit during the long dominance of the Conservative party between 1895 and 1905. Britons could feel they were part of a great Empire, and so maintain a patriotic pride which otherwise would have been hard to sustain, since Britain was losing both its economic dominance and the independence in international relations symbolized by its isolationist policy. A new kind of national spirit was growing.

"Englishness", in the forms both of a nostalgic portrait of England in the past, and of a small nation whose greatness lay in imperial extension, was to become important in fiction, and so was the kind of adventurous spirit which was seen as helping to build the empire. If nothing else, "English" virtues were extolled. Historical romances were particularly notable for these elements, which in fact had been one strand in their appeal since the days of Bulwer Lytton. Now they became characteristic of the genre, in the hands of writers such as Doyle, "Merriman" and Weyman.

This was all the more true because there was little in England's foreign policy to satisfy the new kind of national feeling, which may be seen as having a feverish, hysterical quality based on insecurity. For instance, at the beginning of the twentieth century the Boer War provided a focus for national feeling and at the same time to a large degree failed to satisfy it. There were early reverses beyond Britain's expectation; and, at the same
time, the disapproval of Britain's neighbours made the country increasingly aware of the dangers of isolation. In the first decades of the century she began to align herself first with France and then with Russia in opposition to Germany and the Austrian empire. To the average Briton it must have seemed a safer but more inglorious position.

"Jing-oism" and its more hysterical expression on such occasions as Mafeking night may therefore be seen as a counter-balance to possible feelings of humiliation and being under threat: a state all the less bearable after a period of peace and economic dominance. The overemphasis on English virtues to be found in historical romance at this period may have been influenced by this kind of feeling, but there were those who feared it, too.

Thomson suggests it was feelings such as these which led to the "violence" and flux in the economic and social relationships which have already been mentioned. This quality could be seen in all aspects of social life: not only in relationships between the classes, but between the sexes too, for this period saw the start of the women's suffrage movement which grew in violence and aggressiveness during the following decade.

Violence on one side of the class or sex divide in turn increased the sense of threat felt on the other. The characteristics of that lower-middle class of clerks and minor government officials which seem likely to have made
up a large proportion of the readership for historical romance at this period have already been mentioned. Adventure stories relieved the drabness of their lives to some extent. But in addition to needing an escape to a more colourful world, it may be imagined that the clerks and others in the growing professional class valued what they had achieved in this one, the more because the gap between themselves and the working class was a narrow one. Consequently, they were of all sections of the population the ones to feel most threatened by egalitarian movements, or, indeed, by anything which seemed likely to upset the status quo. The notion that, in an idealized state, government could be the prerogative of a particular class - one not unlike their own in attitudes and values, but a little richer and higher in status - both gave the lie to such movements, and absolved the readers from feelings of personal responsibility for taking part in political activity.

It is not, perhaps, surprising that to become involved in politics came to have an aura of the disreputable, as though political action was per se confrontative and, perhaps, intellectually dishonest. Whatever stance an author might take on questions of class or sex roles - and though they might challenge current assumptions they were unlikely to be too radical in their attitudes - something of this feeling about politics can be seen reflected in many of the popular works of this
period.

Weyman, for instance, to some extent provided costume drama which was simply escapist. At the same time, he was continually presenting attitudes which reflected contemporary issues, and the corrupting effects of political action were among these. Concern about the spread of industrial democracy, growing union power, and the disruptiveness of strikes formed some of these issues, with French experience in the 1870s and contemporary syndicalist theory alike providing a warning of the possible dangers of these developments. If violence seemed characteristic of politics, with "even" women espousing it, political action itself could come to seem immoral in some ways: forcing participants into extreme positions, into a world of lies and evasions, and into a compromise of one's true nature. Weyman's novels were attractive because they were adventurous and escapist, but at the same time, through the mouths of his narrators, his authorial comments, and in the configuration of his plots, these concerns were reflected. The same is true, to a greater or lesser extent, of his contemporaries.

On the surface, an anodyne solution is presented, rough ends being smoothed into a happy ending. A closer examination of the texts of this period, however, shows that disturbing questions are sometimes raised, running counter to the major themes of the books, and these remain unanswered. Frequently, they arise from the conflict

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between the "escapist" romantic form and the attempt to present issues with contemporary relevance, but the effect is to suggest an uncertainty in the writer's own mind which may possibly have been reflected in his readers.

(ii)

Conan Doyle

Of the writers studied in this section, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was perhaps the most serious in intention; though his books clearly contain escapist elements, they also are testimony to a desire to educate readers about the past. Other writers of the period present events without lengthy analyses of causation or substantial reference to the historical context, focussing the reader's attention on the action. Consequently, their books are easy to read - a factor which no doubt contributed to their popularity. When Doyle turned to writing historical fiction, he did not see himself as writing popular works, and he makes few such concessions to readability.

In contrast to his contemporaries, he creates an extremely detailed historical setting for his stories, and in most cases the causes of the events are carefully explained. In the preface to John Murray's omnibus edition of his historical romances, his wife wrote that "he soaked
his brain with a knowledge of the period he intended to portray", adding that he had read over sixty books on various aspects of medieval life 5.

This preparatory reading spills out almost undigested on the pages of his novels. From the cues in his writing, it seems that he envisaged his reader as having sufficient knowledge of the period to pick up the more obvious references. For instance, he follows the convention of seeming to report the action through the eyes of a near contemporary writing for an acquaintance. The apparent ignorance of the reader has already been noted, however; Doyle seemed to feel a good deal of historical information was needed. To his annoyance, the books he wrote with such care were never as popular as his detective stories, which he considered superficial. As has been mentioned in chapter five, his historical books have always had a steady sale among readers of much the same social class as those of Weyman and Mason, though not the best sellers that Mason's and Weyman's were.

This description of Doyle's educative intention may have made it seem as though he were not writing historical romances at all; but the plots of his medieval books, The White Company and Sir Nigel, conform to the conventions of the genre in centring their actions round love and adventure. As the oldest of the writers studied in this chapter - he was already an established author in the 1890s when Weyman and Mason started writing, and his first
historical novel, *Micah Clarke*, had been published in the previous decade - he represents an older tradition of historical novel writing. His novels have something of the fullness of description characteristic of the Victorian novel, and his stories look back to the Stevenson of *Kidnapped* or Blackmore's *Lorna Doone*. What his books offered, in fact, was outdoor adventure of the kind supplied by Stevenson and Blackmore, together with an ethic which might have been recognised by Baden-Powell. This ethic links Doyle to a strong nineteenth century tradition of nostalgia for the middle ages, which found in the values of feudal chivalry a pattern for the Victorian gentleman. The medieval ethic provides for Doyle an answer to the contradictions which he found in society; but it is not a very satisfactory one.

Marc Girouard, discussing Doyle in *The Return to Camelot* 6, writes that "the code of chivalry took the place of religion for him"; a suggestion confirmed by Doyle's strongly critical attitude towards religious institutions. For Girouard, Doyle belonged to a line of writers of chivalric historical fiction which came down from Walter Scott through "the interminable novels of G.P.R. James" 7 and a host of minor writers such as Charlotte M. Yonge. Though Doyle was unusual among his immediate contemporaries in his focus on chivalry, he was far from unique within the context of the nineteenth century as a whole. Promotion of "chivalric" values had
already featured in books more overtly aimed at a popular audience, and they appealed to attitudes already noted among a lower-middle class readership. Doyle was old-fashioned; but because the chivalric code had been so important, and so connected with historical romance, the image of society presented through its means bears examination in considering the ideology of the historical romance at this period.

The ideals of conduct which derived from the concept of chivalry had associations with class and nationalistic attitudes, though seen through this perspective such topics may appear slightly differently to the way they are presented in the works of Doyle's contemporaries. The true nature of a gentleman (which Weyman also considers in Under the Red Robe) has implications for class relationships and, for nineteenth century Englishmen, for relationships with foreigners, too. Girouard traces the concept back to the beginnings of the nineteenth century, the point at which chivalrous ideals were first articulated by Kenelm Henry Digby in The Broadstone of Honour (1882):

The distinctive virtues of the chivalrous man, according to Digby, were belief and trust in God, generosity, high honour, independence, truthfulness, loyalty to friends and leaders, hardihood and contempt of luxury, courtesy, modesty, humanity and respect for women 8.
The relevance to Doyle's portrayal of his heroes is clear. At the end of the century, his Sir Nigel Loring notably exemplifies these qualities. Before riding out on his first adventure, he prays to "God and his saints" to keep his spirit high, and throughout his career, despite his antagonism towards the Abbey of Waverley, he is shown as behaving with a simple-hearted faith and love of God. As for generosity, his wife has to ask Alleyne, his squire, to restrain Sir Nigel's desire to give all he has to the needy who claim his charity, and "'Throw the man my purse, Edricson'" has to be quietly modified to "a single penny" 9. Above all, Sir Nigel loves honour. "'We go to France'", he tells his squire, '"in humble search of a field in which we may win ... some small share of glory'" 10. He will fight against all "'wrongs, tyrannies, infamies and wrongings of damsels'" 11. He seems like a concretization of Digby's abstract concepts, the only sign of the interval of time between the two books being a certain tongue-in-cheek quality in Doyle's account - in the incident of the purse, for instance.

This modification of tone - an effect which will be considered in more detail later - tends to call in question the values of chivalry; yet in general Doyle seems perfectly serious in promoting them. Sir Nigel is intended to be lovable, not laughable, as Doyle makes clear on his first introduction in Sir Nigel; and when one considers that all Doyle's characters show some degree
of suspicion for foreigners, Sir Nigel's respect for the brave and chivalrous in every nation is refreshing and worthy of being taken seriously. Moreover, Du Guesclin in The White Company and Beaumanoir in Sir Nigel are presented as favourably as are Sir John Chandos and the Black Prince, the English mirrors of chivalry. Doyle's respect for chivalry transcended his nationalism, and his feelings are reflected in those of his hero.

In general, it may be added that Doyle's own attitudes corresponded with those of earlier upholders of chivalric ideals: in showing honour to women, for instance. Girouard tells of his slapping the face of his son for calling a woman ugly: "'Just remember that no woman is ugly'" 12. Also, like Scott himself, or like Charles Tennyson, a later medievalizer, Doyle stressed the gentility of his family rather than its bourgeois elements. He "thought of himself not as the great-grandson of a Dublin silk-mercer, but as descended from the Norman Doyles who came to Ireland in the twelfth century" 13. Chivalric ideals are gentlemanly ideals; and at first sight, therefore, the chivalric romances appear to focus the reader's attention upon an aristocratic protagonist in a manner typical of historical romance.

This is true insofar that the "gentle" nature of both Alleyne and Nigel is stressed. The impression is given that gentlemen are more sensitive, yet more self-controlled, than the more animal lower-classes - a point
which is important in discussing attitudes towards social class in historical romance generally, which will be raised again later. Doyle is explicit: a gulf which "it seemed hopeless to bridge" lay between Nigel and Samkin Aylward, the franklin's son 14; where Nigel sees honour, Samkin sees only an opportunity for loot. Besides, "Cold and heat, hunger and thirst ... did not exist for the gentleman" 15: so that Nigel, flea-bitten in a sordid inn, must lie still while Samkin scratches vigorously. None the less, a strong bond unites the two men; and this echoes the beliefs of Digby's followers in "a sympathy of feeling and affection" between a gentleman and "the lower classes of society" 16. Thus, whatever their differences, Samkin and Nigel are united against the rich middle-class merchant who tries to make an unfair profit from Nigel in Guildford.

This incident is interesting, since it seems to imply a number of attitudes which were typical of the genre at this period. The only relationship between upper and lower classes which is presented by scenes like these is one of master and servant; individual affection and loyalty can exist, but only within this context. Lower class characters are presented as worthy of respect but only as long as they stay firmly within the role assigned them by a paternalistic aristocracy. Essentially, however, the virtues of the lower classes are of a different order from those of gentlemen and their natures are totally
opposed. This may be one of the factors in the portrayal of John of Hordle and the Abbot of Beaulieu in The White Company. John is a huge man, covered with red hair (like a fox?) and bursting out of his robe. The Abbot is an ectomorph, with white hands twisting nervously and an intellectual face. The attitudes behind this portrayal are more complex than the crudity of the contrast suggests, however, and class difference is only a small part of them.

Again, the denigration of the merchant, who seems to symbolize to Nigel a new world with which he has little in common, sounds like a rejection of many of the attitudes associated with Victorian industrialization. Mercantile values appear despicable, but this is not a rejection based on a reasoned consideration of capitalism and its effects. It is, rather, a nostalgia based on an over-simplified view of the past as a fairly-tale world: a homogenous society united by bonds of loyalty and common purpose - a society which never existed in fact. It is a picture familiar enough from the work of the nineteenth century writers, from Charlotte M. Yonge to William Morris, and it goes far towards building a picture of an ideal "England" which makes a strong appeal to the reader's subconscious nationalistic feeling.

Undoubtedly, this is a real effect, based on cues which exist in the romances. But it is not the sole, or even the dominant effect, in Doyle's work. The very
fulness of his writing militates against this. The fact is, that though the gentleman-hero is one focus of the reader's attention, Doyle presents him within a context which is almost equally important. In constructing this, Doyle gives other classes and their inter-relationships due weight and importance, taking almost ludicrous care to impress upon the reader the immense diversity of life in medieval England.

To a greater degree than later romantic writers, he is concerned to analyze the broad social and economic picture of his chosen period. As early as *Micah Clarke* his description of the gathering of Monmouth's army at Taunton exemplifies this. If the picture is contrasted with a similar scene from the work of one of his younger contemporaries, the gathering of the Jacobites at Preston in A.E.W. Mason's *Lawrence Clavering*, the difference between older and younger is striking. Charles Edward's army seems to contain no private soldiers except for a handful of shepherds and a few untrustworthy Highlanders, who in any case have refused to leave Scotland. Doyle, however, takes a whole chapter to describe the "muster of the men of the west", and shows an army comprising fishers and coastmen from the Devon coast, lacemakers from Honiton, free men from "sad and sordid dwellings" in the Athelney marshes, the poachers of Exmoor and the Mendip miners. Some idea is given of the life of a countryside, with its variety of trades and life-styles,
suggesting, too, a peacetime dimension to the army who are presented for the most part as ordinary people caught up in an extraordinary event. The description is typical of the method he was to follow in his romances of the 1890s and 1900s, drawing aside from the action for a few pages in order to remind the reader of the context in which it was taking place. Typical, too, is the sympathy which lies behind the representation: "It is a pity that there is not some Western Homer who could record the names of these brave peasants and artisans, and recount what each did or suffered in upholding a noble though disastrous cause." 18.

The causes of social unrest, attitudes towards religion, and the contrast between an active, adventurous life and the life of the mind are all themes which, implicitly or explicitly, were touched upon by a number of romantic writers in this period: they are certainly themes to be found in the work of Weyman and Mason. Doyle is interested in them too, though his approach is in many ways an individual one. Whereas Mason, for instance, frequently considers the claims of a life of action, feeling its attractions intensely yet aware of its pitfalls, Doyle has no such reservations.

In particular - and here he differs from both Mason and Weyman - he saw nothing corrupting about action in a public cause: far from it, indeed. Even the Monmouth rebellion, that "disastrous cause", is presented as a forerunner of the Glorious Revolution, an outburst of
popular feeling coming a little before its time. This is very different from Mason's treatment of the rebellion in *The Courtship of Morrice Buckler* where the rebellion is not described, its disastrous consequences are stressed, and the only comment on the motivation of its participants is that of the hero, who considers them merely traitors.

In Doyle's chivalrous romances the knights may seek private adventure for honour's sake, but it is always within the framework of some greater public enterprise, such as the Black Prince's campaign in Gascony and Spain. This difference from later attitudes can be attributed in part, at least, to the idiosyncrasies of Doyle's own character. He was a man of causes; and though many of these were in the private sphere, attempts to bring justice to individuals, others were more public. He wrote in favour of reforming the divorce laws; helped to expose the atrocities of the Congo; and championed the cause of women workers in a Brighton hotel when their pay was reduced. A man willing to spend as much time and energy as he did in such activities was unlikely to denigrate public action in his books. His heroes act with similar purpose: on behalf of King and country, in defence of ancient liberties, or to protect the weak.

The causes he himself engaged in were liberal in tendency and showed a willingness to question contemporary assumptions - about the benefits of imperialism to subject races, for instance, or the rights of women. His heroes
are given more paternalistic views. If there is a certain ambiguity in his attitudes - combining concern with the rights of oppressed groups with a sense that the upper class is the natural protector of such groups (even when they are part of the oppressive structure) - it, too, springs from his individual political stance.

He was himself a Liberal Unionist and on that platform stood for Parliament, unsuccessfully. Ivor Brown notes that "this title was not, as in so many instances, a cloak for Conservative politics. Doyle was a bona fide Liberal on many issues, particularly social and economic ones, and broke with Gladstone only on the question of the devolution of power in Ireland" 19. The constituency for which he stood (Central Edinburgh) was one with a strongly Radical tradition; and Doyle was a radical in many ways, for all his chivalric medievalism - perhaps even because of it. Brown sums him up as "a chivalrous ... fighter against ... injustice" 20 in his public life, and thus his political ancestry, like his authorial one, may go back ultimately to those medievalizing radicals of the early nineteenth century such as Brougham or Charles Tennyson who, as Girouard said, "Combined belief in the need for a land-owning upper class with support of advanced political causes" 21.

Certainly, politics (including to some extent the support of popular causes) was not to him a sphere of corruption but one in which honour might be found. While
the picture of society is notably more complex than that presented by many of his contemporaries, the portrayal of his heroes is simpler. For instance, in contrast with an ambiguous and self-divided figure such as de Berault, the hero of Weyman's Under the Red Robe, Sir Nigel and Alleyne Edricson appear throughout as simple-hearted fighters for the truth. Weyman's hero has been corrupted partly because the gentlemanly code of the period has given him a false concept of honour (whereas Sir Nigel's, though it may have its ludicrous aspect, is portrayed as fundamentally sound) and partly because the cause for which he works is headed by Richelieu, a man himself corrupted by love of power. Though Richelieu's triumph is shown to be beneficent in its effect and perhaps inevitable, de Berault is a better man when he is out of the Cardinal's power. In Doyle's books causes and their leaders are carefully separated, in none more than in Micah Clarke, where the weaknesses of Monmouth do not detract from the essential worth of the cause. Sir Nigel and Alleyne, however, are completely at one with their leaders and their cause. They are untroubled by those doubts about the effects of political action which beset other heroes, for example those of A. E. W. Mason. As his story progresses, Alleyne learns the value of public action and the dangers of too retired a life.

Indeed, in his books Doyle's own political beliefs are manifest. The attitudes expressed in them are significantly more radical than those expressed by Mason or Weyman. He is sympathetic towards popular movements;
in some ways his portrayal of women runs counter to accepted stereotypes; and, unlike, for example, the partisan Weyman, he shows tolerance of different religious beliefs while at the same time expressing strong criticism of almost every aspect of institutionalized religion. None the less, his books contain modifying factors which mean that their dominant impressions is of supporting the status quo. For example, they are very far from being revolutionary tracts. Popular action can be seen as justified, and economic and social change is presented as an inevitable consequence of class tensions and of contradictions within society; but these attitudes remain contingent, the books as a whole promoting a different message and one more supportive of the hegemony of the governing classes.

There are a number of reasons for this. First, Doyle's political attitudes were progressive, but within a framework of belief which contained a strongly conservative element. Secondly, the assumptions implicit in the narrative sometimes contradict the attitudes expressed by Doyle when he is commenting upon the action. And, thirdly, the conventions of the genre itself make the expression of radical attitudes difficult. These modifying factors tend to counteract the impression of radical democracy which might otherwise be given by his books; thus the risk of losing readers by challenging their attitudes too strongly was reduced.

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Some of these factors arose from those very chivalric attitudes which gave birth to the radicalism in the first place; thus, women may be seen as capable of action on their own account, but the chivalric ideals of respect and protectiveness towards the sex means that they also have to be shown as weak and in need of such protection. Politically, too, his sympathy for popular movements is limited by the paternalism inherent in his chivalric ideals, so that while his portrayal of a peasant's revolt may present causes and outcomes more sympathetically than they would be shown in the work of many contemporary authors, the conclusions to be drawn are not ultimately dissimilar to theirs.

His historical sense, too, tended to modify his attitude: he was aware that a medieval knight, though in many ways no doubt a pattern for the Victorian gentleman, would not in fact have shared all his attitudes. For example, under the influence of contemporary scientific theory, Doyle himself had given up his Catholicism by the time he wrote The White Company, but this does not hinder his portrayal of Sir Nigel's and Alleyne's piety, which is presented sympathetically. Their faith is left unquestioned and criticism is directed at church institutions which were in any case alien to a Victorian audience. Doyle here seems to be making an attempt at historical accuracy, but his portrait of Sir Nigel's religion gives the impression that it was a very personal
matter. Sir Nigel goes to church when he can, as a good gentleman should, but when the church tries to interfere in matters of social status and land tenure, as it does in the beginning of Sir Nigel, he protests. The impression is given that the church should keep its activities within carefully defined bounds, and not interfere with the gentry. As far as religion was concerned, Sir Nigel must have seemed to Doyle's readers like a Victorian gentleman in the dress of a medieval knight. Accurate historicism was important to Doyle, but in practice his work tends to confirm the assumptions and attitudes of his readers, just as that of other writers such as Weyman did.

In other ways, as has been noted, Doyle seems to have tried to present an alternative to stereotyped situations and characters. His portrayal of Lady Mary in Sir Nigel is a case in point. This attempt to present a heroine with "active" attributes fails in large part because as a story of masculine adventure, Lady Mary is a peripheral character; in stressing her unimportance in the world of masculine affairs Doyle in fact reinforces rather than destroying the stereotype.

In addition, Doyle's more unorthodox attitudes co-exist with ones which his readers might well have found more acceptable, and these are expressed with at least equal strength. In particular, there is a strongly chauvinistic element in the books - which lies behind the embryo empire building of Edward III for example. This
was well-suited to readers who had learned, perhaps, to

turn to imperial dreams as compensation for a loss of

economic competitiveness as other industrial powers arose.

Such attitudes outweigh in their effects ones which are

less easy to assimilate, and a key impression is given by

the flourish of the phrase "planted the cross of St.

George before the gates of Paris" 22, which occurs on only

the second page of The White Company. The reader expects

from this a book full of patriotic feeling, and in many

ways it is.

Doyle's attitudes might, therefore, seem challenging

on the surface, but they tend to be undercut by

contradictory cues to the concretization of the narrative

arising from the nature of a genre better suited to

presenting a reassuringly fantastic world than a

thoughtful presentation of reality. In addition, they

were, like those of contemporary writers, a part of

contemporary ideology which rationalizes as "normal"

contradictions within society which threaten the status

quo. Whatever their surface differences, Doyle's values

had more in common with those of his audience than might

at first appear, and this is evident from a study of the

contradictions in the presentation of such themes as

class, religion, and the role of women.

Of these, the class theme is perhaps the most

striking in its presentation. The picture Doyle draws of

fifteenth century England is of a country divided against
itself, its social fabric half-decayed and falling into ruin. But in the end it will rise again in a better and more lasting construction; so that what social criticism there is in the portrayal is safely located in the past.

None the less, the picture is a vivid one. In The White Company he writes that the commons were "heart-weary" of a chivalry maintained "at their expense". Such an expense had seemed justifiable when the commons could feel that they needed the protection of the knights. Now, however, they have begun to feel their own power: at Crecy and Poictiers a disciplined army of "English yeomen and Welsh stabbers" had proved superior to the force of armed knights. "Power had changed hands", and this meant that "the whole fabric of the feudal system was tottering to a fall". Statements such as these, which suggest that the change of power was not only inevitable but right, seem to be preparing the reader for a sympathetic portrayal of popular action.

Certainly they are backed up by the narrative presentation. A picture is given of institutions corrupted or destroyed. Law and order, for instance, has not broken down in The White Company, but Doyle shows Alleyne meeting a good deal of violence and disorder on the highroad, as soon as he leaves the Abbey of Beaulieu. A beggar shies stones at him; an old woman is attacked, and when he tries to intervene, he is himself set upon and nearly killed. The murderers are prevented by the forces of law.
Yet justice, though swift, still has a lawless air and is almost more violent than the criminal attack. The outlaws who have attacked Alleyne are caught by a posse headed by the bailiff of Southampton and summarily executed. "'I am the law'" says the bailiff in extenuation, as Alleyne turns sick at the sight. The man is an unattractive figure in his velvet and gilt ornaments, fat, arrogant and superstitious, so that the reader's sympathies veer to some extent towards the criminals; but it is his lack of respect for the forms of law which prompts Alleyne to ask "which were the more to be dreaded", the thief or the lawman?

The more positive side of the picture is that as one social and economic system decays, another and better is seen to be developing to take its place. General economic changes are beginning to alter the social balance. At the "Pied Merlin" in Alleyne overhears a conversation in which the Black Death is given paradoxical praise: it has led to rising prosperity for the labourers because as their numbers have thinned they could "pick and choose" employers and wage levels. It is a view expressed also in Sir Nigel, and this time in the author's voice: the commons could "name their own price, work where and for whom they would". Hence, "the labourer would be a slave no longer".

It is true that such comments show a belief in the "hidden hand" of the market to act for the benefit of
society which could have been held by a follower of Adam Smith at the beginning of the century. On the other hand, the reader can understand more clearly what motivates the peasants when they challenge upper-class power. As the economic power of the labourers grows, they become less tolerant of the abuses of feudalism, and the presentation of these leads the reader to share their feelings.

Thus the picture of the bailiff suggests that he is a cause of the very crime he scourges so fiercely: he flaunts his wealth in rich and vulgarly bright velvets, and his corpulence speaks of greed. He is a man who invites envy: the outlawed black, stealing the old woman's red petticoat to wind round his head, seems to be making a pathetic attempt to emulate the bailiff's rich purples and gold. Even the King may be thought guilty of such provocation, in hunting through the territory of the masterless serf and his kind dressed in "his silken tunic powdered with golden fleurs-de-lis" and fur on his mantle. In the confrontation which follows between the serf and Brocas, the king's mouthpiece, even Alleyne who condemns the vindictiveness of the serf's reaction, has to admit that Brocas has been brutal and overbearing, his behaviour fit "to stir the blood and loose the tongue of the most peaceful."

Alienation between lords and commons is exacerbated by lack of communication between them. Doyle draws a similar picture to that given by Scott in Ivanhoe, of a
Saxon commons and Norman nobles, linked by a hero who is Saxon but aristocratic. This has its effect on the reader, who is likely to feel his or her sympathies lie with the Saxons, and so with the commons: popular historians of the period such as John Richard Green tended to stress the Saxon heritage as being the foundation of English democratic rights. Language is one of the symbols of a basically alien rule. The King cannot speak to his subjects because he is ignorant of their language, and they of his.

The lords fail to learn the language of their subjects not through laziness but because they would be ashamed to speak it. Again, Doyle leaves the reader in no doubt as to where his sympathies should lie. Upper class confronts lower in the first episode of The White Company. Hordle John, attractively portrayed as a man impatient with the trivial restrictions of convent life, naturally kind-hearted and brave, is proud of speaking English, "the speech of my fathers". The monks, "looking sideways with scared faces", seem much less attractive and are presented as men who have sold out to an alien system. Timidly conventional, they accept without question the rule of the Norman-French abbot to use "the Anglo-French dialect used in religious houses".

They are subdued to a point at which they feel shocked by John's "broad West Saxon drawl". Since they are "English to a man", the accent of Hampshire is
"homely" to their ears; life at the abbey, however, has made it unfamiliar. The reader might infer from their consternation that here lies the beginning of a link between social class and the valuation of different speech varieties in England, with the corollary that there is something poor-spirited and un-English about such differentiation; at the very least, his or her sympathies will lie with the "homely" accents of John.

In general, therefore, the reader's sympathies are engaged for the Saxons, and language is shown as an important element in the subduing of the English. Other institutions, more briefly described, show the same oppressive relationship between Normans and English, and reinforce the impression. "Anglo-Normans" have power in all areas of society - the forests, the army, and religion, for instance - and they maintain it with savage laws, such as the loss of eyes for shooting a deer, or of ears for misleading the hunt. Even the keep of Twynham castle, under the beneficent rule of the Lorings, is described as "frowning" as though to emphasise its role in curbing the power of the commons.

Consequently, not only are the commons portrayed as discontented, and with reason; Doyle further enlists the reader's sympathy on their behalf by appealing to patriotism, an important element in the book as a whole. "The commons" are English, the knights, though chivalrous, part of an international overclass. The same kind of
patriotic feeling is appealed to to justify the French commons in an equal if not greater discontent; it is clear that Doyle intends to make a general point about the relationships between peasants and their overlords, and is not pleading a special case for the English. The rule of Anglo-Norman knights, anglicized through many generations, can be beneficent, as is that of the Lorings. In France, matters are much worse. Samkin Aylward, in *The White Company*, is fond of making this point with grim relish, as though it were a proof of French inferiority.

There, the abuses of the feudal system are more evident, particularly in the marginal zone between Aquitaine and France proper: a debatable land where war has exacerbated tensions. Here, the company of Sir Nigel, together with Bertrand du Guesclin and his wife, lodge with Sir Tristram, the seneschal of Villefranche. The host unintentionally betrays attitudes towards the peasantry which the English knight cannot condone, and the reader also is plainly expected to condemn. He speaks of the commons as "canaille" and blames them for not paying their taxes or contributing to his ransom. He speaks of himself as their "feudal father", but the term has an unpleasantly ironic sound. In fact, it is clear that the peasants have been tortured ("three twists of a rack, or the thumbkins for an hour") to extract a "voluntary" contribution from them.
The contradictions of his attitude are clearly laid bare by Doyle. Sir Tristram believes that every tenant has a stocking full of gold pieces. Sir Nigel enquires "'Why do they not buy food, then? ... it seemed to me that their bones were breaking through their skin'" 34. The attitude of Lady Rochefort, Sir Tristram's wife, in reply to this, betrays an even grimmer logic than that of her husband: to her, the thinness of her tenants is an ugliness natural to the lower classes, rather than the result of hardship. They are all "Ugly ... without hair, without teeth, all twisted and bent" 35. For the reader, of course, the impression of cruelty is reinforced. Yet it must be admitted that the idea of an essential difference between the classes, even though the assumption is the basis for a sympathetic lower-class portrait in the case of John of Hordle, can be found in Doyle's own comments.

In Sir Tristram's case, however, Doyle is careful to ensure that the reader's sympathies lie with the victim, spelling out the absurdities of the aristocratic attitude through heavy ironies. Sir Tristram takes his attitudes to a ludicrous extreme. A servant is always sent with lady Rochefort when she ventures forth, to clear her path, as though peasants could be driven like swine, and their neighbourhood could contaminate her. When the chaplain suggests that the commons may have souls, Sir Tristram responds by postulating a class-ridden heaven: "'there is
little fear that we shall find ourselves mixed up with base roturiers and swineherds". Hard discipline is what the commons like: "'If you pummel Jaques Bonhomme he will pat you, but if you pat him he will pummel you'". The difference here between English and French attitudes is made evident. Sir Nigel thinks of Samkin Aylward and Hordle John: "he who pummelled them would come by such a pat as he would be likely to remember". Nigel sounds respectful of their independent spirit, but to Sir Tristram this would be "the insolence of the base-born" and to accept it would be, for a knight, contemptible.

It is Aylward, however, who sums up the position in France for Alleyne most explicitly: "their common folk are so crushed down with gabelle, and poll-tax, and every manner of cursed tallage" that they cannot fight as well as English peasants. There is both patriotic contempt and class sympathy in the words; the stressing of taxation's negative aspect may be a symptom of Doyle's liberalism, but it sounds natural enough in Aylward's mouth. Also, it is made clear that the abuses of taxation favour the upper class at the expense of the lower, with the inequality being perpetuated by the existence of unfair and savage laws. The law in France upholds the rights of the nobles, its function being to make "'the poor man poorer'" and enrich the wealthy. For Hordle John, Aylward glosses French high, middle and low justice: "'The low justice means that you may fleece him [Jaques
Bonhomme] and the middle that you may torture him, and the high that you may slay him" 40.

Any notion that the commons may have rights disgusts Sir Tristram; he is concerned that his chaplain, with his talk of souls, might be putting unseemly ideas of equality into the heads of the peasants. The church has no business meddling with politics; "'I think you were better employed in saying your mass'"41. The sympathetically portrayed du Guesclin comments that the chaplain is "a worthy man" 42 in case Doyle's ironies had gone unremarked. It is in fact clear that the chaplain's attitude is commendable to Doyle - the sort of social concern a churchman should have, unlike the social withdrawal of most of them. Political action can be good when its object is to redress inequality, and Sir Tristram is shown, by contrast, to lack even the vestiges of a Christian spirit. The implication is that the chaplain is correct in saying that the peasants have some rights, and in the circumstances in which they live it is understandable that they may wish to defend them.

Certainly, such harsh treatment can help the reader sympathise with the peasants when they revolt. Rebellion may be not only natural but right, given particular circumstances. Even the peaceable Alleyne implicitly endorses the serf's hostility to Brocas, even though it shocks him. Hordle John points out that the commons of England are protected by law - by "charter, liberties,
franchises, usuages, privileges, customs and the like. If such rights are ignored, "it is time to buy arrowheads". The lack of authorial comment here seems to endorse his remark.

Doyle's own comment on the tensions between classes to be found in England is that the indications of social unrest that Alleyne met with in his journey through Hampshire could be paralleled "in any other English country from the Channel to the Marches of Scotland". They were symptoms of "a general discontent" which would lead eventually to Wat Tyler's rising.

Its causes are presented as not simply - or even mainly - those abuses of privilege which appeal most to our sympathies, but as to be found also within those economic and social factors mentioned at the "Pied Merlin". The paradox of a beneficent plague has already been mentioned; and even factors which seem at first sight to work to their detriment are claimed to be ultimately beneficial to the commons. Thus, when arable land is turned over to sheep runs, men lose their jobs: but "'the sheep give many folk their living ... the shearer and brander ... the dresser, the curer, the dyer, the fuller, the webster, the merchant and a score of others". This view of new industries peacefully replacing the old, and by implication swelling the ranks of an embryo bourgeoisie, goes uncontested by the company, so the effect on the reader is to affirm its correctness.
In the beginning of *Sir Nigel*, Doyle puts such views in the context of a historical development which may be violent but which is, on the whole, happy in its outcome. The feudal laws are here described as "oppressive" and the Black Death (called "the Black Commoner", as though it were working on the peasants' behalf) heralds a "new dawn" for the peasants because it "cleared the way" for the great rising thirty years later which left the English peasant the freest of his kind in Europe". Revolution is thus condoned: "in no way save by a great upheaval and change could the nation break away from that iron feudal system which held her limbs". If revolt had evil aspects, good may come of it, "here as ever".

Does this mean that rebellion would have the same desirable outcome in later periods of history ("ever")? In *Micah Clarke*, Doyle had shown the commons of the West rising to "relieve" the country of an "insupportable yoke" for the sake of "liberty of conscience" and though the outcome was disastrous, the rising paved the way for the most successful one a few years later, described in terms which were to find an echo in *Sir Nigel*: it "tore the fetters from her [England's] free limbs". Logically it could be inferred that the same actions would be justifiable against any threat to English liberties at any time (say, the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries).

But Conan Doyle's romances are no revolutionary
handbook. When the brushwood men in The White Company revolt, the reader can sympathize with them, half-starved as they are, because it is apparent from Sir Tristram's conversation that they have been driven to it. But in the end it is the horror of their revenge which remains in the memory: a horror all the more ghastly because it falls on innocent and guilty alike. The face of Sir Nigel's squire, Ford, amiable and chivalrous, hanging dreadfully distorted outside Alleyne's window is the key image of the revolt, since it is through this picture that Alleyne becomes aware of what has been happening. Before the end of the fight, all within the castle from the harsh Sir Tristram to the "worthy" chaplain are dead, except for du Guesclin, Sir Nigel and their immediate followers. The message seems to be that revolt is dreadful and should be avoided; the way to necessary reform should be for the upper classes to change their ways, not for the lower classes to take matters into their own hands.

Also, however justifiable a popular movement might seem, its leaders are suspect. Alleyne's brother, the Socman, is shown as being violent and brutal. When Alleyne meets him he is bullying Lady Maude Loring, possibly with rape in mind. His reaction to his brother is aggressive ("young cub"), despising his courtesy as a "slavish manner" and he offers to set the dogs on him. The army he gathers to storm Twynham seems at first to comprise a disaffected populace, but it is described to Sir Nigel as
being composed of "outlaws, villeins and masterless men" 50, which sounds very different; in such a context even the neutral "villein" is made to seem disreputable. "Outlaws" include the runaway serf, an ambiguous figure: the reader may pity him because his defection was forced upon him when he was being sold like a chattel with his master's land, but Alleyne has had cause to wince at the virulence of his malignity against the upper classes. In any case, the fact that these rebels have waited till Sir Nigel is away to attack his wife and daughter is enough to keep the reader from sympathizing wholly with them.

Even if rebellion is seen as a necessary evil, its contemporary relevance is doubtful. It has done its work: the English commons are free ("the freest .... in Europe") 51, their liberties have been maintained, and contemporary revolt is unnecessary. Doyle is a good example of those "bourgeois humanists" Lukacs describes in The Historical Novel: "while they comprehend the necessity of revolutions in the past, and see in them the foundation for all that is reasonable and worthy of affirmation in the present, nevertheless they interpret future development in terms of a henceforth peaceful evolution on the basis of these achievements 52. Such a message must have seemed challenging to its readers in forcing them to re-evaluate historical events, but such re-evaluation was in line with familiar historical analyses, and since it lacked contemporary reference, was ultimately
unthreatening.

The cues which help to show rebellion as evil more than counterbalance those which show its necessity; they are more vivid and memorable. Doyle makes no use of materials which might have helped to give his portrayal of class tensions more universal application. For instance, we are invited to condemn Sir Tristram but to find Sir Nigel lovable. The latter is positively portrayed as showing respect for the commons in the spirit of chivalry. Doyle seems to have thought of a regenerated aristocracy as being the natural leaders of the peasantry, and Sir Nigel's attitudes are symptomatic of that regeneration. Yet his very chivalry makes him feel, when talking to Aylward, that Aylward is divided from him by such a gulf that he seems almost a creature of a different species.

Chivalry also leads him into overseas warfare which brings him personal honour; but in seeking this he lays waste the country in which he is fighting and neglects his own estates. From Lady Loring's comments it is clear that, as a feudal lord to his tenants, he is a failure, since he is an almost perpetual absentee; and his attitudes, though more courteously expressed, are not in fact so different from those in Sir Tristram. Yet these similarities are never pressed; when Sir Nigel is told of Lady Tiphane's vision of rebellion at Twynham, it is the danger to the women and admiration for their bravery that we feel, not the inevitability of revolt, as in the case
of the brushwood men; and this is more striking, since, as the incident comes just before the description of the brushwood men's revolt, parallels could easily have been drawn. The material for an even more condemnatory account of feudalism is there, but Doyle makes no use of it.

He does make some attempt to show a middle class emerging as feudalism declines, but his attitudes to this remain unclear. On the one hand, in *The White Company*, he suggests that it is one of the beneficial aspects of economic change; on the other, in *Sir Nigel*, he shows the mercantile spirit in an unpleasant light. The cues are minimal in either case; but here as in other aspects of Doyle's presentation, his historical analysis is in many ways negated by his strong feeling for the attractions of chivalry and his consequent nostalgia for the feudal system which gave it birth. The reader is likely to remember the nostalgic picture and forget the analysis, since it is the nostalgia which suffuses the action; on the whole the analysis is confined to authorial comment.

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If his picture of class tensions is a complex and confusing one, however, his treatment of religion is simpler and strikes the reader with much more impact.
Curiously - since he was brought up a Catholic - he associates the values of personal liberty and independence of thought (concepts normally connected in his books with "Englishness", which he presents positively) with Protestantism in both *Micah Clarke* and *The Refugees*. (In the latter case, of course, "Englishness" should more properly be termed "American-ness"). This favourable view of Protestantism might seem to align him with Stanley Weyman, who was a great partisan of the Protestant cause. In his chivalric romances, however, Doyle presents a different view. Alleyne is church-bred, Sir Nigel is a knight of his time. Neither is particularly touched with Lollardry, and both are shown as holding a conventional but pious Catholicism, in deference to Doyle's precise historical sense.

Their piety is connected both with the chivalric code and associated patriotic values. On the one hand, its practical outcome is courteous, generous behaviour and respect for the rights of others; on the other, the personal, anti-institutional nature of their religion might associate it to some extent with the values attributed by other writers to Protestantism. In contrast to this personal religious sense, the portrayal of institutionalized Christianity is very unfavourable. Doyle was wary both of fanaticism in religion and of its more conventional manifestations. For instance, he describes monasteries as great economic units whose main *raison*
d'etre lies in their farming and crafts rather than in religion. This is not presented as bad in itself: indeed, it seems the least harmful aspect of monastic life. As far as religious experience is concerned, the monks seem through time to have lost all sense of proportion, so that they value trivial and inessential rules more than the essential spirit of Christianity itself. More importantly, however, the monasteries encouraged passivity and isolated the monks from the problems of life: and this, Doyle thought, meant that any virtue which they might attain was of an inferior kind.

This is what Alleyne discovers at Twynham as he learns the arts of chivalry. The world is "a very different place" from his first impressions of it through monk-bred eyes. Man can be cruel, true: but the cruelties of the outside world are balanced by "robust, positive virtues which did not shrink from temptation". Monastic virtues seem "colourless" by comparison: Alleyne begins to wonder if in many cases they do not spring from "an inability to sin". Fighting men may be "rough-tongued, fierce and quarrelsome" but in comparison with the monks in their "narrow, stagnant circle" they are "of deeper nature and more service in the world". In comparison with the Abbot of Beaulieu, Sir Nigel can at least hold his own in goodness, since he "lived as simple a life" and held "as lofty and inflexible an ideal of duty" but he is kindly as well, which the Abbot is
not.

Alleyne has discovered something which has already been made clear to the reader. The unfavourable cues come early in the narrative, and place the monks in contrast, with more admirable men of action. True, the first chapter of *The White Company* shows the Abbey of Beaulieu in a pleasant light, with the manifold sights and sounds of "the busy widespread life which centred in the old monastery". As the monks came in to confer about the fate of Hordle John, they are spotted with grape-juice or burdened with axes and spades - which seems to suggest they are men of action. Later, the Abbot praises Alleyne's education, which has given him not merely book-learning but a knowledge of crafts such as carving and painting. All this is to the credit of the monastery: it is no ivory tower, and in the economic life of the area it forms a useful centre.

Once the perspective shortens to focus on the human actors, Hordle John and his accusers, the picture changes, however. The monks are presented as twisted in logic and deficient in sense and feeling. John's offences - eating more than his fair share, swearing (good-naturedly) at the sacrist, playing a trick on a brother novice and talking to a woman - seem petty, even absurd. It is clear that John's accuser is motivated chiefly by spite. In the final case, John was merely having a friendly chat with a neighbour's daughter and helping her across a stream - an
act of simple good-nature. In comparison, the monks' condemnation of it (women being "radix malorum" and even to look at them being a sin) is made to seem harsh and unnatural.

Even John's appearance is used to emphasise this contrast of attitudes. He is presented as a natural human being in contrast with monkish artificiality. He is big and colourful, with his red hair, and an animal quality is suggested by the thick, muscular arms covered with reddish down. Even clothes seem too confining: he wears his cowl thrown back and the gown unfastened, its skirts looped up to allow his legs free play and his arms "protruded" from the sleeve. His independence and good nature are suggested by his "Half-humorous, half-defiant" expression.

His accuser, a novice much approved by the monks ("holy and devout" to the Abbot; a "light" to Brother Jerome) is made to appear contemptible to the reader. He is pale of face, with a "low and quavering voice" which may suggest cowardice, or a life spent far away from the healthful and natural open air. As for his lauded goodness, it seems to consist in doing everything "according to the rule", though this results in a pomposity which makes even the other monks smile.

So, as an opposing pole of value, Brother Ambrose is too frail an object. It is the more powerful, and in some ways attractive, figure of the Abbot who forms the most significant contrast, and gives a key to the nature of the
religious life. Where John is aggressively natural, the Abbot is all repression. There is much in him that, given an outlet, could have made him what John calls him - a true man. He comes of "fighting stock" and it has bequeathed him characteristics which, freely expressed, could have brought him honour: his twin brother (himself as he might have been) had carried the cross of St. George to the gates of Paris. But in "crushing ... passions" he had "crushed himself", wrote Doyle; his "long white nervous hands" and "thin thought-worn features" suggesting that the long repression of his natural instincts had wasted him physically 60.

The cumulative effect is to suggest that the monastery, with all its virtues, distorts human nature rather than enhancing it. There is energy here, but it is misplaced and has run to waste. If this is true of the monastery, it is more so of those manifestations of religion which can be found outside the Abbey walls. If monks are repressed, the fanatics who infest the high roads are grotesque. The begging friar - with a mutton-bone sticking out of his pouch to give his claims of hunger the lie - is a hypocrite who frightens Alleyne with his "dreadful execrations" 61. Two Dominicans pass, their lips patterning prayers, blind to all that is going on about them. A minorite "with a good paunch on him" has clearly given up any claims to asceticism and his life is spent in travelling from one good meal to another 62.

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Most unnatural of all are the "Beating Friars" who strike each other till the blood runs for the sins of the world: a "dreary task", Doyle comments 63.

Also unnatural is monkish celibacy - fortunately for the story, since this is, after all, a romance. When Alleyne sees, and is attracted by, Maude Loring, "Nature ... draws to her bosom the most errant of her children" 64. Maude is contrasted with objects of religious devotion: it is clear that Doyle thought her very imperfections made her a more appropriate object for Alleyne's attention than the "radiant and stainless spirit" he used to dream of. In turning from icon to reality, he is joining those who no longer "slighted and miscalled" the "Good ... mother Nature".

The effect is to reinforce belief in the virtues of family life which, of course, was very acceptable to the Victorian reader. At the end of The White Company, when Alleyne and John have returned to Hampshire, they meet a hermit on the road whose "clay-coloured face, dull eyes and long withered hands" 65 are reminiscent of the blanched and wasted bodies of the monks of Beaulieu, suggesting that the hermit has moved even further from the natural life. His cell, "comfortless, profitless and sordid", makes a less attractive picture than the peasant, "ruddy and yellow-haired" (not unlike John himself) working in his garden nearby, surrounded by the "gambols" of his children, and with the "ripple of a happy woman's
laughter" coming from the cottage behind 66. Alleyne is quick to point the moral: the scene is "the image of our past and of our future", for it is immeasurably better to "have happy faces round one's knee" than "to sit moaning over one's soul". Family life is natural and happy; there is something inhuman about the hermit. And in almost the last episode of the book, Alleyne saves Maude from the convent at Romsey, physically barring the way as she is about to take her vows and carrying her off to start a "natural" happy life of her own.

Doyle is certainly aware of this comparison of the impression he wished to produce. The main positive which he opposes to religion is not, however, family life, but warfare. In describing this, however, Doyle seems to be less aware of creating a significant impression. He is less anxious to point the moral, and many assumptions about the value of warfare are left unstated, and so unexplored.

Thus, when Alleyne and Samkin pass the flagellants, Samkin compares such purposeless bloodletting (as he sees it) to the bloodletting of war - by implication more "useful" and necessary. There is no suggestion that the amount of blood shed by the flagellants must have been minute compared to the damage done by war. Indeed, throughout the book the horrors of warfare are down-played - in contrast, for example, with those of revolution - and favourable soldierly qualities such as bravery, love of

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honour, protection of the weak and respect for brave enemies are stressed. Where such values come into conflict with family life, the latter must be sacrificed. "'Consider, my sweet lord, that ... we have seen but little of each other'" 67, pleads Lady Loring, realising she is to be left on her own again for another stretch of years to guard the castle; but Sir Nigel brushes this aside. Warfare, not the peaceful life of a chatelain, is "a man's work" 68. The tone of both books seems to endorse this; in Sir Nigel the hero, unable to go to war, "wasted the weary days" 69 at Tilford.

War seems, in fact, to be valuable for its own sake. The causes of war between England and France are never discussed, and with Doyle, who discussed everything else at such length, the omission is significant. Only Maude puts the case against war, commenting on the muster of soldiers: "'to think how many of them and how few are likely to find their way back'" 70. The comment is a brief one, however, and is not allowed to disturb the mood, which on the whole is one of happy expectation. Even Maude is almost immediately wishing that she, too, could go to war: "'I am of no more use of value than that broken bow-stave'" - a comment which reinforces the impression that human beings are only really fulfilled when fighting each other. Looking after the Loring tenants and lands in the absence of their lord does not even count.

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This exalting of war fits in with the strongly nationalistic, even chauvinist, attitude characteristic of the two books, and may to some extent explain their popularity. All the positive virtues attributable to soldiers are associated naturally with the English, who "flew to their arms as to the birthright". War indeed is England's "trade", "her exports archers and her imports prisoners", and to feel that the English have been successful in it might well have been tempting when other forms of trade had come to seem less naturally their "birthright" than formerly. Certainly there is no suggestion that other kinds of trade might have been preferable. Rather, the marches of Picardy and Normandy having been laid waste, the notion of breaking through to new territory (and wasting that, presumably) "was a golden prospect for a race of warriors".

If this makes the English sound like less than welcome visitors on foreign soil, the view is rarely expressed in the book. Du Guescin, it is true, mentions the wastage of the countryside, but the point is not stressed as a disadvantage of war. Even du Guescin's resentment is tempered by respect for English fighting skills: he admires them as soldiers and as upholders of chivalric values. He will fight against "a true
Englishman" but not against one of the Gascon lords who fight under the English banner. (It goes without saying that such a fight would be considered a treat and an honour). The effect is to suggest that though other nations (such as the French) may contain a few chivalrous knights like du Guesclin himself, the true home of chivalry is in England. Certainly, both Gascons and foreign princes show up badly beside the English at the Black Prince's court. The Gascons are "chaffering for terms like so many hucksters". The King of Navarre wants to delay fulfilling his commitment to Prince Edward: "'He sets his kingdom up to the highest bidder'", comments the Prince. The derisive "huckster" is a reminder that trade is ungentlemanly, and therefore unchivalrous: is this more compensatory denigration?

If the French, or nearly French, have the souls of traders, the representatives of other nations are worse. Don Pedro, the Spanish pretender, would be a liability at any court. He takes advantage of the Prince's generosity and politeness to borrow more and more money from him. Despite the Prince's objection that "'things are not ordered this way in Aquitaine'" he insists on sending for any girl who takes his fancy, rather as one might send for sandwiches or a bottle of beer. He thinks the Prince's objections mean: he would not be so grudging a host to the Prince. Respect for women and monogamy is something such a foreigner cannot understand. The spread
of such chivalric attitudes, with their associations with Victorian family life, can presumably be seen as an advantage to outweigh the wasting of the land and the dubious value of a campaign aimed at placing the appalling Pedro on the throne of hapless Spain.

Such hostility towards foreigners was a notable aspect of British attitudes at the time: commenting on reports of the last hours of the Titanic, Girouard remarks: "The almost unanimous tendency of Anglo-Saxon witnesses to assume that anyone who behaved badly was an Italian or some other form of foreigner needs to be treated with caution." 76. It may be associated with the drive towards imperialism which, as has been noted, was beginning to play a major role in the national consciousness as Britain began to enter a post-industrial phase and to be overtaken in supplying world markets by other countries. Doyle, an Irishman, may have been more aware of the causes of this attitude than his English contemporaries. It may be significant that at the end of Micah Clarke (written as early as 1885, at a time of economic expansion) he remarks of America, one of England's chief rivals as an economic power: "God grant that they may never let their hearts harden to the little isle of the sea" 77.

Doyle was himself very much a patriot on behalf of his adopted country; Ivor Brown suggests that there is evidence to show that he was concerned by the growing
economic threat posed by other countries, in particular Germany. He believed war was the answer to such threats. Thus he was unlike his fellow liberals who shared many of his political views in not being pro-Boer, and he thought that Britain should be taking precautions against German aggression. To this end, he encouraged rifle clubs, wanted to make England self-sufficient in food, and advocated the building of super-submarines for the safe transport of cargo in time of war.

Such views, which, adapted to the medieval period, can be seen reflected in his novels, were probably ahead of general public attitudes when he was writing. However, they were certainly in line with what a majority of English people felt at the time, and their expression in his novels goes no further than his readers could very happily accept.

Thus, if some common contemporary attitudes, such as those concerned with popular rebellion, were to some extent challenged, such challenges were more than counterbalanced by the expression of other, more congenial attitudes alongside them. The expression of patriotic attitudes, for instance, was far more clearly articulated than the more complex statements being made about class and class warfare.

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This complexity of effect can be seen also in Doyle's treatment of the role of women. At first sight, he seems to be challenging orthodox conceptions of women very strongly. At the very beginning of The White Company the impression is given that he views men and women as equal human beings. The Abbot's theological view of women as "radix malorum" is by implication ridiculed.

Ambiguity appears in the presentation of the heroine, however. She has some of the attributes of any spirited heroine of romance, and indeed Doyle takes pains to show her as active and capable beyond what is usual in such heroines. She is conventionally heroine-like in being "beautiful and graceful" and if she shows her temper to a man who tries to master her, this is still within the conventions of the genre. The Socman, in fact, is amused by her anger at his love-making ("'my proud Maude'")) and seems to think it adds to her attractions ("'The best rose has ever the longest thorns!'"'). He does not take her high spirit seriously: it does not stop him talking to her as though she were a child, calling her "Little one" and "Little wench". Elsewhere, she is shown as irrational in her reactions and changeable in her mood, especially towards Alleyne. Her behaviour is thus reminiscent of the romantic heroines in the work of contemporaries: Dorothy Curwen, for instance, in Mason's Clavering. The effect is to show women as lovable but lacking in serious opinions and purpose.
Yet Doyle goes out of his way to suggest that Maude is also active and skilled, and can be aggressive— all "masculine" traits. The Socman, for instance, changes his patronizing style when she frees herself from his grasp by biting his hand till the blood runs. When she runs away she takes Alleyne with her. Alleyne is supposed to be acting as her protector, but it is she who guides him through the wood, telling him not to concern himself about her: "I can run as fast as you" 80. And, to his chagrin, so indeed she can. It is her idea, too, to throw the Socman's dogs off the scent by wading through the stream—a stratagem based on her experience as a huntswoman. Once in the stream her athleticism allows her to avoid the overhanging branches "With lightness and ease" so that she actually begins to outpace Alleyne.

In many other ways, Doyle suggests that Maude had a boy's interests rather than those normally associated with a girl. She reads romances, it is true—but chivalric ones, which would tell her as much of adventure as of love. She hates needlework, disobeys orders and gets her clothes dirty. But, like the tom-boy heroines already becoming popular in fiction for girls (Jo in Little Women, for instance)—she can be tamed through love. When Alleyne reprimands her bloodthirstiness in vowing revenge on the Socman, she is first angry, then repentant; and this is a pattern for their later relationship. It is assumed that she will make a comformable wife and that her
role as mistress of a castle, finding food for a few hundred mean at arms, will keep her too busy for further hankerings after a wider role. As a heroine she thus conforms to the romantic pattern in spite of - to a certain extent, indeed, because of - her tomboyishness. If she differs from the spirited heroines who were to become commonplace in the work of Georgette Heyer and her followers, it is in being more capable and at the same time more dreamy: but she is cut after the same pattern.

In describing Maude's mother, Lady Mary, Doyle made a more thorough-going attempt to break the conventional mould of femininity while at the same time creating a sympathetic and credible character. It was not easy to do this in a genre so dependent on stereotypes, and Doyle proved only partially successful. Lady Mary Loring, like her daughter, has many masculine characteristics, in her case even in her appearance. Doyle comments that she looks much more like "the bold warrior ... loved by the roughest soldiery in Europe" than Sir Nigel does, with her strong square face, bushy eyebrows, and eyes "accustomed to rule". She is taller and broader than Nigel, too.

Her role is a responsible one. When Nigel is away - which is most of the time - she acts as seneschal of Twynham. The Montacutes, whose castle it is, trust her completely, as Nigel himself does. They have good reason to do so; later in The White Company she has to organize the defence of her castle against the Socman and his
company, and even spends the battle on the walls among the
archers, heartening them and directing the fighting, till
the Socman's death puts an end to it.

Doyle is careful to stress that Lady Mary was no
aberrant individual, but typical of her age. "It was an
age of martial women" 82, he writes, and he goes on to
give a number of instances of women "as warlike as their
mates" who kept their castles "with prudence and
discipline of veteran seneschals".

Yet the presentation has its absurdities, which Doyle
seems well aware of. Lady Mary is something of a joke,
especially when she is thought of as little Nigel's
inspiration and object of devotion. The stress on her size
makes her look awkward; and then, when a bear escapes
near her she is picked up by Hordle John "as though she
had been a feather" 83 so that she is sadly "ruffled in
her dignity" 84. In short, the Lady Mary of The White
Company may have useful capabilities, but we are invited
to laugh at her. It is impossible, therefore, to take her
"manlike" qualities too seriously. In Sir Nigel Doyle
tried to redress the balance by describing her more
romantically - as a "tall, slender, dark woman" 85 with a
"deep soul shining in her dark questioning eyes", but it
is difficult to put the portraits in the two books
together to make a satisfactory whole. The Lady Mary of
Sir Nigel has regressed to the stereotype; it is
noticeable that she takes little active part in this
novel. Her part is to wait until Nigel wins her; her experience and that of Maude as females, rather than as occasional actors in a man's world, is left out completely. Nor is it easy to see how Doyle could have done otherwise in a book of manly adventure.

Maude, more conventional as a portrait, is a more convincing one than that of her mother. But here again the needs of the genre conflict with those of challenging the attitudes of the reader. Maude hunts, shows courage and initiative and can run faster than Alleyne; yet if Alleyne is to be accepted as the hero, he has to be shown to be protecting and rescuing her. So Maude, having freed herself without apparent difficulty from the Soemanp, runs to Alleyne, where she is described as "cowering ... like the trembling leveret." This device of modifying a heroine's courage and capability by juxtaposing instances with quite different behaviour has been noted as very typical of the genre and will be discussed in more detail later.

On the other hand, it must be admitted that Alleyne is not presented as a conventional hero. He is timid and unaggressive, preferring to talk his way out of a situation rather than to fight. His delicate features and golden curls give his appearance a certain effeminacy, and if he gains mastery over Maude it is through his quiet steadfastness rather than more domineering qualities, perhaps more to be expected in a hero. As his "manly"
skills in fighting develop, however, he becomes braver: he stands up to the bullying squire in Bordeaux and holds his own in a fight with him, takes his part in the adventures of the company at Roncevalles by his heroic ride for help.

In this way, he can be seen to mature out of his "feminine" qualities, something to be discarded with youth and inexperience; the value of "masculine" ones like bravery and fighting have been reaffirmed, and Alleyne can sweep Maude away from Romsey in a heroic manner like the young Lochinvar claiming his bride. By contrast, Maude and Mary have little part to play in the story: no feminine activities are described. In line with Doyle's attempt to move away from stereotyping they engage a number of "masculine" ones like fighting, but their experience is related by means of letters and visions: there it is thus safely placed as contingent and the focus of the reader's attention remains on the men.

Despite his care to create the opposite impression, therefore, Doyle describes a conventional picture of the world of action as a man's sphere in which a woman's function is to inspire men to their best endeavours, to maintain a home for them when they are absent, and to be rescued by them when they are in danger. It may be that a critical reader from time to time has been made aware of the waste of their qualities by the manifest contrast between their capabilities and their role in the story;
but for contemporary readers, such a contrast must rarely have been noticed, since the picture created fitted in with the generally chivalrous tone of the books. Essentially, the world of chivalry had no room for "martial" women, however historically accurate Doyle may have been in depicting them.

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Curiously, even the portrayal of chivalry is not without its ambiguities. This may have been because Doyle came late in the tradition of chivalrous writers. Often, he seems to be inviting the reader to observe the absurdities of the tradition. Thus, like his Mary, Nigel often is made to seem ridiculous, especially in his attempts to fight everyone he encounters as a means of gaining honour. The picture of his joust at Tilford, in armour so much too big for him that he has to talk through a slit in the mail shirt and perch an empty helmet on top, makes even King Edward laugh, and his attempt to fight the lord of Pons, which leaves him in his undershirt and drawers trying vainly to attract his antagonist's attention, has all the qualities of farce. None the less, it is clear from the respect which the King and Chandos show to Nigel that he is in fact no figure of fun but a

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worthy representative of chivalry.

Nor does the apparent conflict between "chivalry" as a system under which the poor are oppressed and "chivalry" as the search for knightly honour seems intended to denigrate the latter. The "game of chivalry" may have been played at the expense" of the commons, but is is the only source of positive values in the book. Besides, though the suffering of the commons is referred to, it is not shown through the concrete experience of individuals and so remains bloodless, disembodied: the commons no doubt deserve protection, but there is no sense that the chivalry is in any way dependent upon their labour. Like that of women, the experience of the commons is contingent.

Perhaps the ultimate effect of the portrayal of chivalry is nostalgic: Nigel seems absurd because he is an anachronism, having learned outdated ideals from his grandmother and putting them into practice in a world where already the feudal system which gave them birth is "tottering to a fall". In that world, Nigel stands as a reaffirmation of gentlemanly ideals. Doyle recognises that where class tensions exist, change must come, but he cannot imagine a world without gentlemen. Thus the scope of any social change he may envisage is limited. In any case, as has been noted, there are signs in the books that he feels the necessary changes have already happened and there is no need for further radical alterations in the
Thus, although Doyle goes much further in challenging the assumptions of his age than many of his contemporaries, his attachment to the notion of chivalry limits the effect of such a challenge. What the reader is likely to remember from his books are the attitudes most vividly expressed through the actions and beliefs of the characters: and these are patriotism, and a glorification of war which must have seemed to validate the imperial ideals of the time. In some ways, paradoxically, Doyle's books probably left current attitudes more intact than some of his contemporaries, such as Weyman, did.

In general, therefore, it may be said that although Doyle was passionately concerned with the injustices of society, he finds no acceptable solutions to the questions he raises, even though his stories appear to bring resolution. He seems to have seen chivalry as a mediating force in a basically unfair society. The very need for such a concept suggests a belief in Hobbesian competitiveness in the "real" world which makes social injustice seem "natural". The laws of chivalry, as laid down in The Broadstone of Honour were supposed to provide a balancing force in society, protecting the weak against the wicked and strong. For Doyle and his contemporaries, the notion of chivalry still survived as a kind of apologia for those inequalities within society which nearly a hundred years of social reform had not yet
managed to stamp out.

Yet in his books, the relationships in which the notion was made concrete - between men and women, between enemies (a courteous one, in which violence was so controlled as to seem almost sportive) and between lord and tenant in the feudal bond - are shown as having gone sadly awry. Thus Alleyne fails to protect Maude against his brother because although he is stronger than Maude he is weaker than the Socman. Fortunately, Maude is brave and capable enough to save herself; though this is departing from the "chivalrous" stereotype, it marks her as one of the first in a long line of spirited romantic heroines whose danger is brought about by their testing of the rules which limited their role. As in later fiction, such testing has the effect of emphasising the limitations of the feminine role in a world where masculine savagery and lust are to some extent licensed. Chivalry is necessary, but ineffective.

Courtesy to enemies is laughable in an unchivalric age: Sir Nigel is lovable but also ridiculous, taking his chivalric attitudes to extremes. Indeed, the fact that chivalry is presented as already oldfashioned (in a supposed age of chivalry) suggests its illusory quality, like those Sabine virtues the Romans used to look for in their own past. It cannot be located anywhere in time, being always in the time just gone; and this casts doubts on its very existence, except in the minds of the few. As
for feudal bonds of protection and dependence, the episode of the brushwood men makes nonsense of it. Over half a century since the Victorian notion of neo-chivalry was first propounded as a way of life for a nineteenth century gentleman, Doyle seems to find it a shabby and perhaps non-existent cloak to cover the deformities of society.
Stanley Weyman

Stanley Weyman began writing historical romances in 1888, and a number of his best-known works were produced in the two decades which followed. Some were published in serial form: The New Rector in the Cornhill magazine, for instance, and one contribution at least to the Religious Tract Society's Leisure Hour. According to David Altick

88, these periodicals catered for the middle class, whose reading also included The Family Herald and Punch, so that it may be assumed that Weyman had some such readership in mind when he wrote.

Weyman has been described as dominating the market for historical romance at the end of the century. Cockburn, in Bestseller 89, suggests that the readers of the 1890s relished a particular kind of historical novel, of a sort which Weyman was expert at supplying. While they enjoyed an escape to an unreal world of the past, once there, they liked the assurance of some verisimilitude provided by accurate historical detail. Weyman provided book after book on this model, which Cockburn characterizes as partial romance. His work marks a departure from the realistic tradition of Doyle, romantic as that was in many ways. He presented a picture of a period in the past - France in the sixteenth century, for instance, or Europe in the early nineteenth - which never

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existed in fact, but which was presented convincingly enough to make it credible that it might have done so - a point which differentiates him from later writers such as Farnol, whose stories were set in what was more obviously a never-never world.

Weyman, in fact, provided a kind of ideal model of society for his own time, one which, for all the struggles and divisions noted in the story, is essentially reassuring. This model, however, is undermined just as Doyle's picture of a chivalrous society was - frequently by those very elements which made the books appealing. The actual message of the text is much less secure and confident than appears on the surface. By comparison, Doyle seems more aware of his effects, but sometimes conquered by the intractability of his material.

In comparison with Doyle, Weyman wrote stories which focus more on action than on history. His plots are swifter moving and less episodic, so that the reader's attention is drawn on through the book: as has been noted, the heuristic code, though less dominant than in a book by, say, Cartland, is very important. By contrast, there is surprisingly little historical detail. Under the Red Robe, perhaps his best-known book, provides a good example. The hero's mission, which is the back-bone of the plot, arises from the aftermath of an abortive revolt against the growing power of Richelieu, but the reader learns little of its nature. It was a Protestant
uprising, which is enough, with Weyman, to guarantee a sympathetic presentation, and there is some hint that it was a symptom of regional resistance to a centralizing tendency in government, but it is a hint neither developed nor explicitly expressed. Other details are left vague. It is possible that its leader was the Duke of Orleans; it may have been he who appears in a minor role at the end of the book, as the masked stranger whose life is spared by the hero: but this remains hazy and out of focus as though it simply did not matter.

If the historical background is sketchy, there is a corresponding increase of emphasis on the romantic elements. Weyman's books are rich in the kind of motif described in chapter three. Doyle, as has been seen, uses some romantically stereotyped situations and characters (like the meeting of an ingenu hero and spirited heroine through an escape from a planned abduction, in The White Company), but on the whole his characters are more individual, and many of them are real historical figures. Most of the characters active in Weyman's plots are invented: real ones, such as Richelieu or the nameless Huguenot leader of Under the Red Robe, are peripheral.

Because Doyle uses so many actual historical characters and situations (the black Prince's campaign in support of Pedro of Castile in The White Company, for instance) there is less space in which to deploy his invented characters in fictional adventures: this in part
explains the episodic nature of the books. Characteristically, the hero of a Weyman novel is given a mission which takes him far from the centre of political activity for the whole, or a large part of, the story. This allows Weyman more freedom for invention.

It is the invented situations which are drawn from the common romantic stock. The hero's mission usually involves disguise; his encounters with the heroine are often initially antagonistic. Rescues - of the heroine by the hero and vice-versa - are common, and sometimes, as A Gentleman of France, the hero must be nursed by the heroine. In his books set in the Regency and early Victorian periods, The Castle Inn and Starvecrow Farm, he makes free use of abductions, elopements, and disputed inheritance.

The romantic nature of the stories is intensified by their emphasis on individual action. Doyle's adventures are episodes in a campaign, his heroes often acting in a group - with soldiers under their command, or superior officers. Weyman's act alone and in secrecy, and though their missions are usually on behalf of the state, they are sent on them by a single man - Henry IV or Richelieu, for example. When they are involved in actual campaigns, as in My Lady Rothe, it is by accident and their main aim is to try to escape.

Moreover, Doyle's hero's, even when temporarily on their own, are usually accompanied by a friend or servant.
Hordle John in *The White Company*, or Samkin Aylward in *Sir Nigel* function as a kind of Sancho Panza to the hero. Their characters and fates are of as much importance as those of the gently-born heroes. Weyman's heroes seem not to need a retinue; if they are accompanied, as de Marsac is on his mission in *A Gentleman of France*, it is by villains who are soon lost to the story. Lower-class characters in general are of much less importance in the work of Weyman than they are in Doyle's books. Doyle spends almost as much time describing their actions and conversations as he does on those of the hero and his friends; in *Micah Clarke* the hero himself is the son of a blacksmith. Weyman writes of lower-class characters too, but they rarely assume such importance and few take an active part in the story. There are exceptions: the Radicals of *Starvecrow Farm*, for instance, or Martin, the loyal steward who narrates *My Lady Rotha*.

On the whole, however, the stories concern the upper classes, and their romantic nature makes this seem quite natural. This seems to confirm the nature of Weyman's work as transitional, neither entirely romantic nor seriously historical. On the one hand, he was concerned to show the effects of historical events on the whole of society - just as Doyle was. On the other, lower class characters would have seemed incongruous in the stereotypically romantic situations he depicts. Thus there are important lower-class groups in the stories, like the Crocans in *The*
Abbess of Vlaye, but they remain for the most part peripheral to the story. In thus putting the focus of the action so firmly among the upper classes he was moving away from the traditional Victorian mainstream, for plot-lines in earlier nineteenth century novels like those of Ainsworth usually included important lower-class roles. Some, like Scott's Heart of Midlothian, were centred on lower-class activity within a total social framework.

The attitudes which Weyman's novels reveal, and which his large readership presumably found attractive and reassuring, bear some likeness to those of Doyle, though from a different political perspective. Doyle was a liberal radical, an attitude which is clearly demonstrated in his historical novels (though less so in his Sherlock Holmes stories); Weyman was more fundamentally conservative, and, lacking Doyle's slightly eccentric individuality, was perhaps closer to the attitudes of his audience. None the less, Weyman challenged contemporary attitudes, too, a challenge which was clearly intentional. His clear expression of social attitudes brings him closer in some ways to Doyle than to his younger contemporaries such as Mason or Farnol, whose views for the most part are expressed less explicitly. On the surface, Mason and Farnol provide imagined worlds into which the reader could escape from social problems. Weyman shares Doyle's social concern, though the specific solution proposed may be different. In this, as in the structure of his novels, he
may be seen as a transition between novelists who use history seriously despite romantic plot elements and the extreme romantics.

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This "partial romance" (to adopt Cockburn's term) and social concern may be seen in the way he deals with politics in his novels. Both Doyle and Weyman were bourgeois writers, constructing imaginary societies in which control is vested ultimately in the nobility or in the upper middle class to which they both belonged. The abuses of the system may be revealed, and popular movements described sympathetically, but essentially the rightness of the system is re-affirmed. For all its abuses, it can be seen to work equitably when operated by men of good will; and the heroes of these romances are seen as just such men, whose influence is paramount at the end of the book, and who can therefore be viewed as seeds of the future. There are, however, significant differences in the way this outcome is achieved in the work of Doyle and of Weyman.

If Doyle's heroes act according to the chivalric code as understood by the Victorians, with responsibilities as well as privileges, Weyman's are more likely to be the
agents of a centralizing state, intent upon imposing justice and equality before the law. They have become servants of an impersonal force - an agent of the revolutionary tendencies within society. Doyle recognised these too, but this does not mean to say that his heroes acted on their behalf; on the contrary, Nigel and Samkin combine to oppose that epitome of progress, the Guildford merchant. Weyman's heroes may be exemplified by Hugo of Leuchtenstein in *My Lady Rotha*. Though he is deeply in love with Rotha, and distraught through the loss of his son, he will not allow these feelings to interfere with his duty. He thus remains unaware that his son has been found, and Rotha remains in suspense about his feelings until Hugo has done his duty in settling the business of Tzerclaes and his spies. His qualities, though presented as unglamorous, are contrasted favourably with the more romantic qualities of the villainous Tzerclaes or the irresponsible and unstable Rupert.

Von Leuchtenstein's character is typical of one type of Weyman hero. It is very similar to that of Captain Clyne, the hero of *Starvecrow Farm* 90. This hero is not, on his first appearance, a sympathetic character. He is oppressive, both as a magistrate (who can "transport a man for seven years for poaching a hare") and as a naval captain who is suspected of "flogging a man to death ... On his ship in Plymouth Harbour" 91. Such punishments belonged to the beginning of the previous century; in
1905, when the book was published, the readers must have found them barbaric. It may be assumed, therefore, that the reader is not expected to approve of Clyne, at least initially.

This, however, is a story which features a gang of radicals, little better than terrorists, who kidnap a child to further their cause. One device by which the readers' responses are controlled is by using Clyne as a contrast to the gang. As the radicals become more sinister, so Clyne is made to appear a more attractive figure. His major faults arise from a lack of understanding which is almost childlike, and which he has to a large extent outgrown by the end of the story. The book is a chronicle of his development, just as it is of that of the heroine, Henrietta.

At the beginning of the novel the unregenerate Clyne treats people as things. Before Henrietta's elopement he has thought of her simply as a convenient addition to his household, rather than as someone with a mind and desires of her own. As the story develops his characteristics, though not changing completely, are presented in an increasingly attractive light. His beliefs might be extreme, but they are sincere, and he means well. "It was his honest belief that a little severity - in other words, a whiff of the grape-shot - would have nipped the French Revolution in the bud" 92. The inadequacy of such phrases as "a whiff of grape-shot" and "nipped ... in the
"bud" in this context suggest that Clyne is being mocked, but quite gently. If the ideas are naive, they are pleasantly so.

A new light is thus cast on the more sinister aspects of his reputation. Certainly he is harsh; but his "flogging a man to death", if true (we never discover whether it is or not), no doubt appeared to him as the "little severity" which must be shown to the lower orders if law and order was to be maintained. To flog one thus benefited the many. And in this, of course, he may not have been thinking solely of his own class interests. Despite the rumour that he gave the order to the troopers to attack the demonstrators at Peterloo, it is possible to see him by the end of the book as someone who has the welfare of the whole society at heart. His words ("his honest belief"; "a whiff of grape-shot") suggest that he believed a stable society was beneficial to everyone, and it was up to men like him - simple but honourable souls - to be its guardians. Though Weyman's original readers might not have approved of the application of such beliefs, they may none the less have accepted the principles, seeing men like Clyne as standing between them and anarchy.

Although des Ageaux, in The Abbess of Vlaye, is a more likeable hero, he has similarities with the ambiguous Clyne. He is presented as being not so much harsh as dull. In the first description his unromantic qualities are
stressed - his lack of interest in "the favour of the ladies" 93, for instance, with whom he is "no favourite". To men, "he passed for a man more useful than most" 94, and the connotations of that "useful" reinforce the subfusc impression the reader builds up from the first part of the text. He lacks the glamour of fine clothes and a splendid retinue: "no man who ever came to court went with less splendour in the streets of Paris, or with a smaller following" 95. In the council described in the first chapter he appears as something of a Cinderella figure, placed "near the bottom of the board" 96.

He has more heroic qualities also; he can fight, as evidenced by his appeal to "the right of a soldier, who has fought for France" 97. The words suggest patriotism, as well, and an uncomplicated pride in doing his justice which is "part of his nature, part of his passion" 98, and this is a major thread in the story, more durable than those more brilliantly coloured ones represented by the whimsies of the Duke of Joyeuse, his dubious ally, or the anarchy of his antagonist, the Captain of Vlaye. The picture we are left with at the end of the book is that of des Ageaux, raising the king's standard in Vlaye: after the fear of death and the enticements of love, turning "without more ado to the work of restoring order, of ... enforcing the King's peace" 99.

Des Ageaux is in a way an echo of the king whose peace he guards. At the council described in the first
chapter, des Ageaux is separated from his master by the whole of the table; yet of all those there he is the most like Henry IV, the king in question, and one of Weyman's favourite characters. Des Ageaux "featured Henry himself" 100, and physical likeness is symptomatic of a mental likeness. Both care for their people in their own way. Des Ageaux's unglamorous lack of state comes partly from poverty (the king keeps him perennially short of money) but, more significantly, from a refusal to levy too high a tax on his region. Henry "broods over his papers" knowing that he cannot answer his people's cry: "Give us peace, give us law!" 101. Their sense of responsibility is not found among the great lords who make up the rest of the council. They "whispered, or played tric-trac"; one has not even bothered to come, but has sent an agent instead, who speaks "with thinly veiled impudence" 102. If des Ageaux is something of a Cinderella, so is Henry; but these two alone care for the people of France and suffer when "the law was paralysed, the great committed outrage, the poor suffered wrong" 103.

An opposition is thus set up at the beginning of the book, therefore, between Henry and des Ageaux on the one hand, and the great nobles on the other. If Henry and des Ageaux represent law, the nobles are not quite lawless. They keep order in their territory after a fashion: "there is no finer wags in my country unless I will it" 104, says the Constable. But they are responsible to no
higher power, acting essentially in their own interests, and they are corrupt. They fear des Ageaux since he sets a standard of scrupulousness which could ruin them if it became generally enforced: "And if he don't go, we shall have to mend our manners ... and get our governments into order, too!". These nobles may be seen as belonging to an older world, laxer and more self-indulgent.

Typical is the Duke of Joyeuse, who follows des Ageaux on his mission, and provides a second centre of interest. He appears on the surface to be a more conventional romantic hero: he is a lapsed saint, a man whose preaching could fire a mob, and yet a womaniser. With his faintly dissolute appearance, "pale with excess", his sense of personal honour and his pride of race, he is clearly intended to appear intriguingly complex. His whims - following des Ageaux because he feels he has let him down, plunging into the adventure on his own and in disguise, getting into a fight, and later endangering des Ageaux's whole enterprise, first by falling in love with the villainous Abbess of Vlaye and then by saving the life of a man whose life had been promised to the revolutionary Crocans - are to some extent endearing, but potentially catastrophic. His individualism, as well as his glamour, make him a foil to des Ageaux, a man who will never put his own interests first.

The clearest opposition of all, however, is between des Ageaux and the book's villain, the Captain of Vlaye.
Where the other nobles are corrupt, he is lawless; he extorts money from the peasants and treats them so brutally that they have revolted against all authority. He has (possibly) seduced Odette de Villeneuve, the Abbess of Vlaye, but he means to abduct and marry by force a much richer prize, the young Countess of Rochecouart. His bullying soldiers terrorize the Villeneuves and try to trick and imprison Joyeuse. He — and to a lesser extent the nobles who allow his like to flourish — stand for the abuse of power and the danger of using it for one's own ends without a sense of public responsibility.

The defeat of the Captain of Vlaye is the climactic episode of the book. The authority of des Ageaux, the king's representative, has triumphed; the unfurling of Henry's standard is the first step in bringing about the peace and law which Henry longed to give his people. The Abbess of Vlaye shows the reader a new kind of world emerging, less appealing in some ways than the old, but more stable and equitable. The power of the great nobles is breaking into anarchy, and in its place rises the centralized power of the State, vested in the King. His servant, a disinterested man who owes what power he has to the King (Henry tells des Ageaux in anger that he could break him as he had made him), serves as a mediator between King and people. For him and, if he is typical, for others of the King's ministers, the supreme virtues are duty and justice: duty to the King, who can assure
justice, justice for the people, who are otherwise utterly vulnerable to the caprices of their masters.

Such a view of the evolution of government implies an attitude to political power which values law and order, seen as necessarily imposed by the agents of the state. These agents are men of the new middle class, low enough in the social scale to be disinterested, high enough to be an order of natural leaders. This picture fits in well with Swingewood's picture of the bourgeois hegemony: "the bourgeoisie must subjugate the proletariat to its authority... through the repressive apparatus of a strong centralised state; but equally ... seeks to dominate society through its own institutions ... and ... achieves legitimation not through force but by consent" 106. The picture of society painted by Weyman suggests that such a process is a natural and desirable development as society matures. Other forms of government are less satisfactory for the populace.

Though this development is seen as a happy process of maturation, there were obviously times in history when the state, for one reason and another, did not fit this pattern. At such times, men of good will must choose between the life of public affairs, which may be corrupt, and a more private but honourable one. The choice which is often made - to retire into private life - provided a model for later writers, and so is worth examining in some detail.
One of the symptoms of an increasing "privatization" of politics is that, when engaged in public affairs, Weyman's heroes are often motivated chiefly by personal loyalty rather than care for the whole community. In this, to some extent, they differ from the heroes of Doyle: Sir Nigel and Alleyne felt no particular loyalty to Edward III, though admiring the Black Prince, and though they fought in France from motives of personal honour, they were none the less conscious of fighting on England's behalf. Even des Ageaux, however, for all his abstract passion for justice, was personally loyal to Henry; he had fought on his side in his Huguenot days, and Henry, as has been seen, considered him very much his creature. De Marsac's career, in A Gentleman of France, is one of personal service, first to the Prince of Conde and then to Henry of Navarre, as he was at the time. De Berault acts on behalf of Cardinal Richelieu in Under the Red Robe, not with enthusiasm, it is true; but in the end he makes the decision to keep faith with him. The very title suggests the relationship.

Connected with this portrayal of a personal relationship between officer and master is the second symptom of the personalization of the public realm. Notions of loyalty and of honour are linked very closely in a number of Weyman's books with the personal development of the characters - a development closer to romantic individualism than the activities of such a hero.

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as des Ageaux might at first imply. This is true of *A Gentleman of France*, *Under the Red Robe*, and also *Count Hannibal*, where, however, it is the heroine's honour which is in question. Through the exploration of the concept of honour, in particular, Weyman shows not only the qualities to be desired in the individual, but also, perhaps more importantly, placed them in contrast with a sense of the corruption of public affairs and places. In order to retain his honour the hero must withdraw from their taint. It is a theme striking enough to warrant detailed investigation.

Thus, true and false ideas of honour are contrasted in *Under the Red Robe* and *A Gentleman of France*. In the latter, the reader is supposed implicitly to share the feeling of shame natural to a gentleman who is as poor as the hero, de Marsac, is. "I did not know at this time", he writes at the beginning of his narrative, "I may confess it today without shame - whither to turn for a gold crown or a new scabbard" 107. Words such as "confess" and "shame" are a little surprising in the context, since de Marsac is no spendthrift; he has given good service to his leader, as is shown by the respect shown him by Henry's agent, M. du Plessis-Morny. It is only Conde's death and his consequent loss of a patron which has left him so poor: the system, rather than any fault in himself. The very fact that he finds it shameful to be without such things as a new scabbard in the first place
suggests a scale of values gone somewhat awry.

For Weyman makes his narrator reveal quite clearly though unconsciously that he has many qualities which are actually worthy of respect. Most important of these, in Henry of Navarre's eyes, is, not unnaturally, personal loyalty. When he questions de Marsac about his family, he notes their motto, "Bonne foi": "It has played its part", he comments 108. However, he is at least aware of the shame of poverty: when he visits de Marsac in his room, he affects to ignore the shifts to which poverty has reduced him. At his court, the courtiers, less delicate, shout "Old Clothes" after de Marsac, while the heroine is disgusted and scornful. De Marsac himself is at least aware of the other values. "There are viler things in the world ... than a poor gentleman" 109, he tells the heroine.

The implication of this whole episode is that it is the courtiers who should be ashamed of themselves. As for the heroine, she is even more the prisoner of false values than de Marsac is. Pride, and contempt for poverty, leads her to act outrageously. She wishes to defect from the party of Henry's rival for the leadership of the Huguenot party, Vicomte Turenne, whose ward she is. It is de Marsac's job to help her to escape and bring her to Henry's right-hand man, the Baron de Rosny, in Blois. De Rosny, however, has left Blois by the time de Marsac and the girl arrive, so that de Marsac is forced to offer her
his mother's hospitality for the night. De Marsac's poverty in part arises from the fact that he has been sending his mother money (another sidelight on the shame of poverty). Both deceive the other into thinking they are comfortably circumstanced (in fact, de Marsac's mother, who is being blackmailed by a rascally priest, is near starvation), and the absurdity of this situation is a testimony both to the falsity of their money-based pride and to their selflessness and delicacy of feeling in their dealings together.

The heroine, who is all false pride without such redeeming qualities, walks out of the lodging in disgust, and into a trap set by her enemies. The trouble thus brought upon de Marsac makes it clear to the reader, if it were not so already, that the values which both hero and heroine accept as natural are intolerable. The point is underlined by the fact that the story up to this point has followed very closely the lines of another tale based on false pride, the story of the "Fair Unknown" type, which would have been well-known to a nineteenth century reader as the story of Sir Gareth either as told by Malory or Tennyson, or as retold in one of the numerous versions for children. The moral is consequently easily recognisable, and the rest of the novel shows the gradual realisation by the heroine that the man she has despised for his poverty is in fact a brave and selfless man.

The climax of this process comes when, after nursing
his great enemy as he dies from the plague, de Marsac himself suffers from it and leaves the girl in safety to go off and die on his own. She shows her own conversion by following him and nursing him, in a setting which, significantly, is no court or grand palace but the forest. Difference of wealth means nothing in these natural conditions: the heroine is "scarce better dressed than a sutler's wife" and her character is the better for it. "Forest life and the duties of the nurse" give her a "patient gentleness" which remind the hero of the peace he found at his mother's bedside.

The theme of the book is therefore to be found in the opposition between the values of the court, which are based on wealth and show, and another, more acceptable set, based on respect for others, bravery, loyalty, selflessness and courtesy. The very circumstances which both hero and heroine contemplate with shame are in fact the outward signs of a truly honourable character; the significance of the title, A GENTLEman of France presumably lies here, and shows the importance of the theme. Honour is thus presented as a personal and inward quality, and one best displayed in simple surroundings - the mother's bare garret, or the forest - than in the centre of affairs at court, which is where de Marsac had originally, but mistakenly, longed to be.

The theme of Under the Red Robe is strikingly similar, though the hero is a very different character.
At the beginning of the story, de Berault is a bully, a coward and a cheat. Touchily insistent on his pride as a gentleman (he reminds his companion de Pombal that the de Beraults had borne the "de" as long as his family), he none the less lives precariously on his winnings at cards and is not averse to looking at his opponent's if he is given the chance. In order to retain the entry to Zaton's, where he plays, he feels he must "kill a man a day". The first episode shows him running through a likeable young man, of whom he takes a mean advantage. His behaviour disgusts every bystander ("at his trade again" one remarks); yet when his only real friend, his landlord, a tailor, comes to support him he refuses to recognise him. Rather than admit to knowing a tradesman, he pretends that he is a dun; to owe money to a tailor is socially acceptable. The context makes the falsity of his values clear.

Like de Marsac, this hero too becomes involved in public affairs out of necessity; Richelieu sends him to arrest one of his opponents, hiding after an abortive revolt in south-west France. Whereas de Marsac could feel proud of his involvement, however, since Henry's cause is a worthy one and Henry has chosen him because of his good qualities, Richelieu seems more interested in establishing his personal power than in promoting the welfare of France, and he uses de Berault because a mean tool is fittest for his purpose. The difference between
the two situations may be seen in the way Henry is first presented in the books in which he appears - worrying over his people's condition in The Abbess of Vlaye, delicately ignoring the signs of de Marsac's poverty in A Gentleman of France - and the first picture of Richelieu, standing alone in the great hotel which is being built for him. Though it is not yet habitable, the outlines of its magnificence are beginning to take shape. With the carpenters working round him, he appears to the reader as someone whose position is as yet untenable, but in the process of being settled for ever. In other words, he is shown as being concerned primarily with his own state and magnificence.

The mission itself has a correspondingly selfish, even mean quality about it. De Berault must carry out his arrest stealthily, to rob the opposition of one of its chief ring-leaders without alarming the country. There is no suggestion that France, as opposed to Richelieu, will be the better for the destruction of the opposition; in fact, as the rebellion was a Protestant one, Weyman, a strong partisan of the Protestant cause, might have expected his readers to be sympathetic to it. Richelieu gives the impression that, far from having the people's welfare at heart, he is engaged in controlling them, whatever the cost. He speaks of having "humbled" the Duke of Orleans, and he has never attempted to win the consent of the people: "under the surface a hundred plots
... sought his life" 113. Political life in France seems to have reached its nadir.

A mean hero with a mean mission, therefore. But there are signs, even in the first disgraceful episode, that de Berault has better feelings: he is not so much evil as corrupted by the life he leads. He feels a "strange reluctance" 114 to fight his young and innocent opponent, and later feels "admiration" for his bravery. Once away from Paris, in Bearn where the peace and beauty of the countryside ("silence ... clear brooks ... glades still green") 115 have their effect on his mood, taking him back to the days of his innocence, these feelings become dominant. He begins to feel his part to be an inglorious one, in sad contrast with his surroundings: "not a gentleman's work" he complains, and confesses to being "hipped". A new idea of the honour of a gentleman is thus beginning to grow in his mind.

It is one which is developed during the rest of the story. When first he meets the Cocheforets, loyal to their cause and too noble to suspect his own duplicity (as he thinks), he feels "a miserable meanness weigh me down" 116; he feels vulnerable before these "helpless women" because of their "trust" and "pure faith" 117. He responds to them and to the "loneliness" of the country by reconsidering his whole life, comparing Bearn with the "Quartier Marais" and "Zaton's", and concluding that there he had "lived like a pig". He continues to feel the
attractions at first of Paris: "power, pleasure, life everything worth winning" are only to be found in "the great city", he thinks. But almost immediately the ladies' meal makes him "dream" again, with its "spotless linen and quaint old plate, the fresh balmy air ... scent of herbs" 118. Memories of "the gaming house ... Zaton's" seem far away.

"Power" and "pleasure" are here equated with "life", and on this scale of values they are to be "won", suggesting the competitiveness of the world of affairs. De Berault begins to think he can only find true happiness in opting out of the competition, and living by a different scale of values altogether. It is a feeling so strong that even the discovery that the Cochforets have tricked him - they have always suspected his true mission and hidden M. de Cocheforet from him - his "revenge" is to try to prove them wrong and show that he is in fact worthy of trust. It is a "revenge" worthy of an honourable man, and shows how close he was to rejecting the values of the world of power and pleasure. Yet he does not turn aside from his mission: indeed it would be difficult for him to do so. Even were he to sacrifice his chance of returning to Paris for ever, he would continue to be in danger, and could scarcely have lived the life of an honourable man in hiding. He would, after all, have betrayed the Cardinal, to whom he was beholden for his life.

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The dilemma continues through the rest of the story, which continually brings before de Berault difficult choices and places him in situations which increase his sense of meanness. When he protects the women from the King's men who are also searching for de Cocheforet, is it for their sake or because he wants de Cocheforet for himself? Even he cannot be sure. When he succeeds at last in taking his prisoner, he does so by saving him from the soldiers at considerable risk to his own life; again, without quite knowing for whose sake he is doing this. Moreover, this very action troubles him because it involves once again tricking Mddle. de Cocheforet, with whom by this time he is in love. He trades upon de Cocheforet's own honour unscrupulously, making him give his parole not to escape for the sake of the women and then leading him to his destruction in Paris. Yet he shows mercy to a wounded Huguenot leader whom they meet on the way, enabling him to escape. "I seem to see in you two men", says de Cocheforet: "... one, the man who captured me; the other, the man who let my friend go"

De Berault's comments on his dilemmas have, meanwhile, left the reader in no doubt about the values he should live by; the suspense lies in seeing if he can succeed, in apparently impossible circumstances, in doing so. He does so by letting de Cocheforet go free and giving himself up to die in his place. "There is one
course still open to me by which I may redeem my honour" 120 he says; and again, as he takes his leave: "I take my own honour" 121. Paradoxically, this affords him the opportunity to act loyally towards the Cardinal, in the very centre of the world of power and pleasure; he alone stands by him at a time when the Cardinal is temporarily out of favour. Once returned to power, the Cardinal shows gratitude by listening to Mlle. de Cocheforet's pleading on her lover's behalf, and he is sent off to Bearn, rewarded with his life, a home, and the hand of the woman he loves.

In both Under the Red Robe and A Gentleman of France the concept of honour is of an internal quality comprising loyalty, and care for others. Opposed to it are the more worldly values of respect for wealth and power, which may lead to a totally mistaken conception of honour based on pride. Thus, the gentlemanly code, which should lead to right action both in the personal and in the public spheres, is corrupted. Richelieu's desire for power at all costs leads to the plots which seek his life: the search for personal power is therefore seen as an aspect of a competitive world which is morally sick. In such a world, the concept of government represented by Henry and his lieutenants runs the risk of being stifled before it has had time to develop. One may presume that in Weyman's opinion the Henrician view did in fact prevail in Europe, since Clyne seems to be fulfilling the same role of
disinterested servant of a mainly beneficent state in the 
England of the Regency (Starvecrow Farm), and von 
Leuchtenstein seems to be officiating at the birth of a 
similar concept of public life in the Germany of My Lady 
Rotha.

The general impression given by Weyman's books as a 
whole is that such disinterested government evolves 
naturally through time despite set-backs; but that it 
rests on the moral qualities of the individual, whether 
private man or public servant. Thus its best protection is 
in individual honour, which takes all but the most 
disinterested out of the world of power and politics 
altogether. Even the trustworthy Hannibal in Count 
Hannibal, a man at the very centre of affairs, to whom the 
political power struggle is a natural part of life, 
escapes from a political world grown hopelessly corrupt 
after the massacre of Saint Bartholomew into a world of 
private relationships: "the only kingdom he ever wanted: 
the kingdom of a woman's heart" 122.

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This impression is reinforced by the way in which 
popular movements are presented in his books. Like Doyle, 
Weyman presents revolutionaries with some sympathy: but
his attitudes are harder, and violence in popular politics is more vehemently rejected the nearer it is to the writer's own time, as can be seen in a comparison of attitudes expressed in The Abbess of Vlaye and Starvecrow Farm.

In the first of these, the "Crocans" are presented as people provoked, understandably, into rebellion by the harsh injustice of the Captain of Vlaye. Des Ageaux allies himself with them in trying to break the Captain's power. Those who despise the Crocans - like the Abbess - are portrayed as arrogant and blind because they fail to recognise a potential human resource. Des Ageaux also pities them, for the injustice they have suffered.

At the same time, it is never suggested that des Ageaux should ally himself with the Crocans on their terms. They must first submit themselves to the king's justice and return home quietly; those who refuse will be outlaws, to be hanged if caught.

As des Ageaux is a wise and skilful leader of men, the reader is presumably intended to sympathize with his attitude. Charles de Villeneuve, who commits himself to the Crocan cause without reserve, is on the contrary portrayed much less sympathetically. To throw in his lot with a popular movement is made to seem an aberration, motivated by discontent and envy. Charles is not shown as a wicked man, but the impulse which brings him to the Crocans is portrayed as springing from qualities which are
far from admirable.

The Crocans themselves are pitiable creatures, ragged and often deformed by their sufferings. However, the viewpoint through which the reader sees them is that of the aristocratic Villeneuves and des Ageaux. Consequently, we are made aware not only of their pitiable condition, but also of their terrifying aspect. They seem little better than animals. It is true that they have a camp and some notion of ordering it, but before they become an effective fighting force they need the discipline supplied by des Ageaux and his friends. Actually to sleep among them, away from the safety of her noble friends' company, is an unthinkable horror to the Countess of Rochecouart.

The implication is that a popular rebellion may be justifiable against oppression of an obvious and even criminal nature, but is wrong when directed against the laws and institutions of modern society, then beginning to develop under Henry IV. Nicholas Rance 123 refers to the positivism of Spencer in discussing the "moral evolution of society" discussed in George Eliot's Romola: "Social Statics ... ascribed the whole sum of human misery to the process of adaptation from primitive individualism to the social state, a hypothetical entity where social altruism ... prevailed" 124. Weyman may or may not have known Spencer's work, but it was influential and such ideas must have been familiar enough by the 1890s and 1900s. The Abbess is almost as much a Spencerian parable as Rance
describes Romola as being, and the Crocans seem to be the victims of the adaptation process. Their animal qualities have been produced by the society in which they live, and so they deserve our sympathy. None the less, theirs are destructive qualities: so that the only hope of the mob is to submit to the new order of society as it moves towards the "social state" prefigured by des Ageaux's passion for law and order.

The picture Weyman presented was one familiar to Victorian readers. Popular revolt can be understood as a symptom of an ill-adjusted society, but a mob loses the human attributes of its individual components and becomes a maddened, animal-like entity, dangerous to the stability of society. Reform is necessary, but the initiative should come from the upper classes, the natural leaders of society if only their attitudes can be purified from egotistical class and self interest. Though the great mass of Weyman's readers can have had little hope of ever becoming leaders of society, natural or otherwise, and so taking part in reform, this view of it was reassuring in a period in which renewed concern about trade union power and possible working class violence was growing.

Starvecrow Farm was published in 1905, a year after The Abbess, but set more threateningly nearer in time. Hence the picture presented in the text is an even grimmer one than that presented in the earlier book. The political conflict is between the popular movements and the state in
the aftermath of Peterloo. At first, the motivation of the radicals is presented sympathetically through the mouth of Walterson, a leader of the popular movement who looks like becoming the hero, since he is seen eloping with the heroine in the first episode.

He speaks with passion of the Manchester men, and the reader must approve his feeling: "a hundred thousand men out of work - starving, seeing their children starve" 125. His hatred of the middle class tendency to de-humanize the working class also seems reasonable, and has almost the status of a commonplace, with its echo of Burns: "A man is no man to them unless he is of ... our class!" He stands in contrast to Clyne, who was one of those who gave the troopers the order to fire at Peterloo. At this time, Clyne is presented in an unsympathetic light. However, Walterson himself soon appears less sympathetic, and this casts doubt on the rightness of the cause he represents.

From the beginning there are signs that he is not to be taken at face value. He goes under the assumed name of Stewart, and his fear of pursuit at the beginning not only seems cowardly but selfish, since he might be expected to be worried on behalf of Henrietta, the heroine, rather than himself. The language in which his words are described gives the reader the signal to distrust them: Weyman speaks of his "passion and eloquence - some called it vapouring - which made him a hero where thousands
listened" 126. The derogatory "vapouring" punctures any favourable impression his sympathetic reference to the victims of Peterloo might have given, and the limited context of his heroism is significant. It is evident he is no hero in a coach with only one girl for company. The impression of a demagogic rabble-rouser without the courage to abide the consequences of his words is thus given.

The reader is thus prepared for the disclosure that he is wanted by the Bow-Street runners, not for fomenting revolt, but for shooting "a poor inoffensive gentleman in a shop" 127. Despite his democratic principles he is not above posing as a gentleman when he is really "a little apothecary's" 128 son; he is a would-be bigamist; and he deserts the heroine as soon as danger threatens.

It is true that to discredit a popular leader is not the same as discrediting his cause, but there are signs that Weyman disapproves of both. One feels, for instance, that the "thousands" who have made a hero of such a man are gullible - not fit for the power he would give them. Not only Walterson, however, but all the Radicals who appear in the story are presented as villainous, unscrupulous and cruel. Between them, they form a range of criminal types.

Of these, the most attractive is Bess Hinkson, Walterson's mistress. She has courage and some sympathy,
but she can be cruel and violent. She would like to send the upper classes to the Guillotine, imagining herself knitting and counting as the heads fall. Thistlewood, the leader of those sought for their part in the Cato Street conspiracy, is a fanatic, but a gentleman - which seems to give him automatically qualities of leadership and a moral fastidiousness which makes him superior to the other, plebeian, radicals. He has moral scruples about the kidnapping of Clyne's son, for instance. He, too, however, has moments of violence - he would, for example, slit Castlereagh's throat like a "calf's". The other men in the party are both "low" and "brutish": one of them later attempts to rape Henrietta.

It is, however, one of the features of Weyman's work that he makes an obtrusive show of presenting a "balanced" picture. Thus, if the lower-class radicals are brutes so, too, are some of the unthinking gentry. Henrietta's "virtue" is as much in danger from the lecherous and insolent, if unfortunately named, Cumberland magistrate Hornyold, as from the "brutish" Lunt - Clyne's chaplain has to rescue her from both of them on different occasions. The other local professional, the apothecary and farmer Tyson, is a cold-hearted womanizer who neglects his wife. The officers of the law are scarcely more savoury. Nadin, the Manchester man, is himself rough and brutal in manner, and constantly misinterprets actions in a discreditable way. Bishop, the Bow-Street runner, is a
man of some delicacy, but he never questions the rightness of the institutions he protects, even when their operation leads to manifest and undeserved suffering. And, of course, there is the ambiguity of the hero himself, Clyne, which has already been described.

By the end of the novel, however, it is the radicals who appear to be the enemy, since they have kidnapped Clyne's son, and endanger Henrietta when she tries to save him. It is they, too, who think of the dreadful expedient of hiding both their prisoners in the "smugglers' oven", barely large enough to hide a single person for a short time. Their cruelty in keeping the two there for days on end, with scarcely anything to eat and drink, makes even Hornyold seem kindly. The association of such men with a radical movement is enough to discredit it, especially since there is no attempt at any point to separate the men from their cause. Their radical thinking seems to be a part of their cruelty.

There is, of course, no suggestion that all supporters of popular movements are villains, and Clyne's chaplain, a reasonably sympathetic character, becomes something of a radical at the end of the story. However, there is enough evidence to suggest a picture, familiar enough to readers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, of the radicals as being either fanatics or insincere demagogues. The presentation of the lower class radicals as brutes seems especially damaging. As has been
noted, there are few working class characters in Weyman's books: what there are tend to fall into two categories. There are the loyal servants and tenants, like those in Under the Red Robe, who seem almost sinister in their devotion to the Cocheforet interests; and there are the revolutionaries and mobs. The reader may be invited to sympathize with the Crocans and the victims of Peterloo, but it is clear that for these to take matters into their own hands is dangerous. The worse elements of the radical party - and it seems as though radicalism attracts some very unattractive characters - gain control, or all control is lost, and an uncontrolled mob results. Nothing is gained, and horrible suffering ensues. Memories of past political upset - the Paris Commune, for instance, was still within living memory when Weyman was writing - could well combine with fears of present violence to make this picture seem a credible one.

Yet, clearly, the imperfections of the ruling classes could make radical feeling understandable. This left people of good will in a dilemma. Should they acquiesce in injustice and suffering, or should they join the radicals to oppose these, with consequences which would almost certainly be worse? In Starvecrow Farm a third way is suggested: Mrs. Gilson, the landlady of the inn where Henrietta takes refuge on Lake Windermere is presented as a character whose shrewdness and common sense might provide an answer. On the one hand she shows herself aware
of the injustices of the law - she is unsurprised at the outrageous way in which Henrietta is treated by Nadin and Hornyold - but on the other she is aware of the shortcomings of the radical characters, in particular Bess and Walterson. She is shown as a shrewish, powerful but warm-hearted woman, with common sense and a good deal of wisdom deriving from her knowledge of human beings. She cares little for politics, mocking Tyson's radicalism and more concerned with the affair with Bess Hinkson which makes him neglect his wife.

The implication of her attitude is that political action is too abstract and general ever to be truly worthwhile; good can only come out of actions on the personal level. The action of the book seems to bear this out, and to justify the heroine's early boredom with politics, which at the beginning seems like immature lack of responsibility. Henrietta is conservative in attitude, and given to parroting Tory sentiments without really believing them (she assents as readily to Walterson's radical views), but Weyman stresses her basic lack of interest: "The only liberty in which he [Walterson] had been able to interest her in had been her own!" 131. Her concern throughout the book is with relationships between individuals, in particular, her own with Clyne and Walterson, and later, with Clyne's little boy. Events show her to be right: her heroic action in saving the boy is a positive good, unlike the ambiguous results of
political actions.

Thus, these two characters, from different social levels, epitomize that retreat from politics into the domain of the private and personal which has been noted as an important feature of Weyman's books. Though it is clear in other novels, it is, perhaps most clearly stated in this book, in which political action of any kind seems to have such deleterious effect on the personality. Only the Massacre of St. Bartholomew in Count Hannibal has a comparable effect.

A distaste for politics was, as has been seen, one of the attitudes common at the time. It is one found increasingly in literature as the nineteenth century drew on. In the 1840s, Disraeli could show political leadership as heroic in Coningsby and Sybil, despite the satiric portrayal of some aspects of party politics. Nicholas Rance, however, claims that in the 1860s George Eliot made Felix Holt a radical who would "turn out to be a conservative" because she was "intent on decrying a resort to politics" 132, notwithstanding her mockery of the rich, who claimed "they never meddled with politics themselves" 133. By the 1890s, therefore, it is not surprising to find this suspicion of "a resort to politics" expressed in popular literature.

The idea that politics are somehow discreditable, to be "meddled with" rather than taken up seriously, seems to spring from a sense of individual helplessness before the
complexities of society, and intimation that although there are social evils, intervention will bring worse evils in its train. That such a feeling existed at the time when *Starvecrow Farm* was being written is confirmed by Thomson 134, who points to the slowing down of Britain's economic expansion to explain it. The fact that this check was due to the industrialization of Germany and America than to any internal cause meant that "the Englishman was now nakedly at the mercy of vast economic changes beyond the control of his own government". Ironically, this was also a time when, according to Ensor, he had "witnessed the conversion of English government into a democracy" 135. If the government he had helped to elect proved powerless, "what was the vote worth?" 136.

In *Starvecrow Farm* the withdrawal from politics seems to imply a tacit acquiescence in the status quo. If the only characters who show real selflessness and goodwill — as Mrs. Gilson does and as Henrietta comes to do — will do nothing, there is nothing to prevent the perpetuation of violent confrontation between the classes, in which the anarchic violence of the mob is held in check by the equally cruel but "necessary" violence of the upper classes. One remembers the threat by des Ageaux to execute Crocans who will not submit; and he actually does hang one of the Captain of Vlaye's men who had kidnapped Charles de Villeneuve. The importance of this upper-class hegemony is presented as such that it transcends the
individual faults of so many of its members: we can feel that the story has had a happy outcome when Henrietta is saved from the radicals to marry Clyne, though Clyne remains unredeemed. The vision of society is therefore a gloomy one, but perhaps it offered some comfort to the fearful.

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Such an image of society necessarily had effects on other social attitudes besides the narrowly political, or the existence of class tensions. General fears of increasing violence during the period when Weyman was writing included fears of militant women, stepping outside their traditional role to take a direct and sometime physically violent part in politics: for, as has been noted, this was the period when suffragette activity was increasing. Weyman's work reflects such fears, too, though the way in which he has presented his alternative "private" values affects the picture he gives of femininity and the female role.

Many of the "private" qualities he commends are linked closely with femininity. This is true, for instance, of the peace and innocence of Bearn which have such an effect on de Berault in Under the Red Robe. When
he first meets the women he believes to be Mme de Cocheforet, he gives, "By impulse", his mother's name — presumably because his own would have sounded despicable in her innocent ears. His mother was a Huguenot, so he had good reason to choose her name to give colour to his assumed identity, but also the choice links him with the world which surrounds him, the femininity of which is stressed. Despite de Cocheforet's lurking in the neighbourhood, the women, with their careful table setting for dinner and pretty gardens, are dominant. Later, when the king's soldiers from Auch take over the house, de Berault feels a sense of outrage at this intrusion of rude masculinity.

In the same way, Mrs. Gilson and Henrietta in Starvecrow Farm, with their feminine interest in the personal, are seen to have a healthier attitude in many ways than the men with their political interests. Clothilde, in Count Hannibal, is steadfast in following a private loyalty as opposed to acting on behalf of her co-religionists. The heroine of A Gentleman of France is all the better for learning gentler qualities which remind the hero of his mother. De Marsac's own behaviour is often "feminine" in nature — when he is courteous and peaceable, and most of all when he nurses first his mother and then his greatest enemy — and it is then that he seems most admirable. In general, women's preference for the personal and concrete, as Weyman sees it, is preferable to
the masculine world, which may be a wider one but which is often brutal, competitive and based on a false sense of honour.

Consequently, the "private" and gentle feminine qualities need to be protected, and this need is reflected in the way women are presented in the novels. The role of women is foregrounded in a number of Weyman's novels, including *The Abbess of Vlaye*, *My Lady Rothe* and *Starvecrow Farm*. In each of these, a trio of women is presented, each embodying a different concept of the female role. The way in which the reader is invited to view each character differs considerably, and a strongly defined picture of what is acceptable and what is unacceptable in femininity emerges. The characters who are presented for the reader's approval may show some masculine qualities such as courage, but only under particular circumstances, which reinforce their traditional role. Otherwise, "strong" women who show courage and initiative on their own account, or develop their minds beyond what is proper for a woman, are to be disapproved of.

In *Starvecrow Farm* the role of women is the chief focus of attention as embodied in the fate of Henrietta, the protagonist. The situation at the beginning of the novel seems designed to bring home to the reader the vulnerability of women once they step outside the circle of their narrow social world. In the first chapter
Henrietta begins to realise that she has lost the "natural" support provided by her family. Instead, she is now dependent upon "Stewart" (Walterson). "For suddenly she recognised ... her complete dependence on him ... she had flung from her every stay but his ... he was become, after all, her world" 137. The language suggests, on the one hand, a positive action - "flung" - but at the same time "stay" suggests the need for support, reinforced by "complete dependence". Her husband-to-be is her whole world: she fears him, not because she thinks he is lying to her (though he is), but because she wonders if he can be trusted "to be kind to her, to be good to her, to be generous to her". All these suggest a relationship of superior to inferior in which Henrietta automatically accepts the inferior role.

More important, perhaps, is the image of danger and helplessness which is portrayed when Henrietta starts to act on her own. Love of Walterson is not her main preoccupation, whatever the appearance of the case. What she had been seeking was personal liberty 138. Once she has made her bid for this, it is clear that she has stepped outside the circle of protection which surrounds middle-class women (working class women having to fend for themselves, as the experience of Bess Hinkson shows). At first she does not understand the implications of this, but it is soon apparent that she has crossed the divide which separates one kind of woman - a lady, to be treated
by men with respect and protected - from another: one who is freer to act according to her own judgement, but in return lays herself open to every kind of insult and ill treatment. The first sign of this is when the magistrate questions her about Walterson's whereabouts. He uses a "familiar tone" 139 which no-one has ever used to her before, calls her patronizingly "my girl" and thinks her "no better than the imprudent wenches the overseers were continually bringing before him" as though imprudence were not only socially levelling but, more to the point, morally dubious and perhaps actually criminal as well.

Impressions of vulnerability are strongly reinforced. Henrietta is cast off by her family and feels she is a "disgrace" 140 to them. Hornyold makes a pass at her as she walks along a footpath, believing a woman in her position must be "no better than she should be" 141. Clyne tries to marry her off to his chaplain, on the offensive grounds that he "is willing ... to give you the shelter of his name" so that "the honour of the family can be preserved" 142. All that Henrietta has actually done to damage her family's honour and need the cover of marriage for her stained reputation is to take a trip across Morcambe Bay alone with a man, and stay alone in an inn on Lake Windermere afterwards.

The very harmlessness of her behaviour - she actually takes the precaution of putting herself under the landlady's protection when she reaches the inn, so there
can be no question of sexual immorality - is stressed as much as her punishment; so that the book appears to warn all women against the imprudence of independence. The world is unfair to women, but for this reason women should be careful not to go against social laws. It is thus important to recognise that if Henrietta is imprudent, she is guilty of nothing worse. The offensiveness of the magistrate, the law officers and, to a lesser extent, Clyne and her own family, are based on misconceptions, and this is the basis of her later imprisonment for her refusal to say where Walterson is (in fact, she does not know). The point is made, however, that this is what can happen once a young woman steps outside what is normally expected of her. She does not need to be immoral to be persecuted: to be female, and alone, is enough. An emblem of her helplessness can be seen in her inability to lock her cell door in the prison: she must be locked in by the gaoler or not at all. In her own life, she no sooner tries to take control of her fate than she comes to grief.

Weyman presents her, therefore, as a girl who is not bad in herself, but who is ill-advised in trying to combat the inevitable limitations of being a woman, since the forces of society are too strong for her - or rather, as a woman, she is too weak to resist them. In any case, they are there for her protection in a brutish world.

There is in the figure of Henrietta a certain paradox which throws light on Weyman's ideal of femininity. For
all the condemnation of her desire for independence, as a character, she is sympathetically presented. The reader can understand her impetuous acceptance of Walterson's offer of a runaway marriage when he or she learns more of her circumstances: she comes from a "cold house" with an "unfeeling sister-in-law" and a brother who, when not "hunting, was tipsy" 143. Though she has "much folly" 144, she is never described as "cold" or "unfeeling", and when she attacks Clyne for wanting to marry her as a mere convenience, the reader must feel that although she is young and impetuous she has a wisdom of the heart and a high spirit which set her above the meaner-spirited of the characters such as Walterson or Tyson.

Later, her loyalty is not telling the magistrates anything about Walterson, despite his treatment of her, confirms this good impression, and she achieves true heroine status when she decides to find Clyne's kidnapped child herself, out of sheer pity for both Clyne and the child. She is brave enough to confront the kidnappers and to undergo the ordeal of the "smuggler's oven", the tiny cavity into which they thrust her with the child; she is also clever enough to escape when opportunity offers. Such bravery may seem unfeminine, but the fact that it was on behalf of her lover and his son, a surrogate child for Henrietta, licences her conduct: "unfeminine" behaviour is acceptable in this particularly feminine situation. The general impression given by this presentation of
Henrietta is that, as a woman, Henrietta has a right to individual self development and a need for recognition as a person. In seeking these, however, she must accept a narrow role to preserve her valuable femininity, which freedom and activity might destroy.

Her story may be compared with that of Bonne de Villeneuve in *The Abbess of Vlaye* who, as has already been mentioned, is brave on behalf of her lover when held hostage among the Crocans. First, she eagerly takes the place of the Countess de Rochecouart as a voluntary hostage in order to be near the man she loves: then, she cuts des Ageaux's bonds when they are both bound to the back of a horse. Her courage and endurance are made possible by love. In her, too, "masculine" behaviour is condoned by feminine feeling; normally she is timid, passive and gentle, as she shows in her relationship with her father.

The difference between the truly feminine Bonne, who is a heroine, and her sister Odette, makes manifest the qualities a Weyman reader might be expected to admire in a woman. Odette, the Abbess of Vlaye, is proud, a lover of power, and intelligent. This she shows in her plan to save the Captain of Vlaye by seducing the Duke of Joyeuse, and using him as a tool. The plan requires nerve, a good deal of psychological insight, and acting ability. She is brilliantly successful. When the Captain tries to marry the Countess of Rochecouart, she takes her place at the
marriage ceremony, persuades the Captain to accept her as his wife, and claims an equal part in his schemes. Later, when the Duke kills her husband, she is quite unafraid: she tries to stab him, and, being stronger than he, would have succeeded if her foot had not slipped.

Despite all these qualities, the descriptions of her are always qualified by derogatory comment. Over-powerful and self-seeking women, in fact, always carry a strong weight of Weyman's disapproval. The Countess of Rochecouart, too timid to sleep alone among the Crocans, cannot compare with Bonne for bravery. To that extent she is Bonne's inferior, but she is much more sympathetically treated than Odette. Her character is shown at its best - and at its most feminine - when she is kind and sympathetic to the crippled Roger de Villeneuve.

Other examples reinforce the impression of femininity presented in Weyman's work. My Lady Rotha, for example, contains a similar triad of ladies. Rotha herself is lively but capricious, as many of Weyman's heroines are. Love is a game to her; she plays with the affections of Rupert and Tzerclaes without ever realising the dangers of her behaviour. When she first has to fight for Rupert's life she becomes more mature; at this point she begins to gain an insight into her own heart, and turns to the man she really loves. This in turn is symbolized by her return to her lover of his kidnapped son. Exactly the same motif occurs in Starvecrow Farm. Henrietta, too, loses her
frivolity as she matures, and she, too, at the end of the story returns Clyne's son to him. It is as though maturity brings a graceful move into the role of potential mother as well as wife.

Marie, the peasant girl who marries the steward, Martin, has many of Bonne's qualities. In rescuing and looking after Hugo von Leuchtenstein's son, she shows bravery and kindness, despite a womanly fragility - "And she so small! So frail, I almost feared to press her to me" 145. Her main role is to look after the sick - "Always helpful, ready, tireless", as her lover comments. Earlier, he had noted significantly "What is there which so becomes a woman as tending the sick?" 146. (One remembers the heroine of A Gentleman of France learning to be womanly in the forest as she tends de Marsac). Yet Marie, like Bonne, can achieve "masculine" feats when it is a matter of bringing soldiers to save her lover; then she swings herself, Tarzan-like, from a window to a neighbouring roof at the end of a rope and clambers over the rooftop.

Contrasted with her is Fraulein Anna, Rotha's tutor, who denies "the inferiority of women to men" 147. She is learned ("I never miss my Voetius") 148 and "always with a big book" 149, but lacks common sense: she is easily gulled into telling secrets which endanger Rotha and her friends. Passionately fond of Rotha, with a suggestion of Lesbian feeling, she easily becomes jealous of anyone to
whom Rotha pays attention: first Rupert, then Marie. Jealousy brings out a petty spite in her nature, so that she becomes a dangerous character. Throughout the book, her learning is described in such a way as to make it seem ridiculous, she herself seems unnatural and her stupidity and spite are constantly emphasised. The reader may easily pick up the impression that these unpleasant characteristics are a direct consequence of her belief in sex equality and her unwomanly interest in books.

It seems, therefore, that "masculine" qualities, such as intelligence, learning, self-confidence and courage are on the whole to be deprecated in women, unless they are acting in the role of lover or mother. In particular, those who reject or seem to slight the woman's role as mothers-to-be are presented as little better than villainesses. This is true of Anna; it is also true of Bess Hinkson in Starvecrow Farm. An independent vindictive and violently radical young woman, she is described by Weyman as "one of those women who love no child but their own, and sometimes do not love their own" 150. Her lack of feeling for Clyne's son is contrasted with the feelings of Henrietta, whose concern for the boy is shown by her hallucinations about his suffering while she is in gaol. Bess's role is clearly that of villainess as she bullies Henrietta and helps to imprison her and the boy in the smugglers' oven.

Bess is a powerful woman, like Odette de Villeneuve:
both are villainesses, and by implication condemned. A more acceptable form of feminine power is presented in the portrait of Mrs. Gilson in *Starvecrow Farm*. She can be aggressive, but only in defence of the weak, and her quick tongue hides a tender heart. She is a friend to Henrietta, even though she takes a sharp tone with her, because she pities the girl's helpless position. Besides, her knowledge of human nature, which is emphasised, tells her that though Henrietta is foolish and has broken the social code, the foolishness springs from her youth. Girls are silly, and this is perfectly natural, seems to be the implication. She disapproves of Henrietta's independence, however, and even more of Bess's. She is a woman who accepts the limitations laid by society upon the female role. Her power is of a different order, not competing with that of men, but lying more in her activities as mediator and helper. Guests may fear her sharp tongue, and speculate that she leads her husband a cat-and-dog life, but he smiles as though knowing otherwise; presumably she is submissive in private and allows him to be master in fact. Meanwhile, her generosity and helpfulness make her an important figure in the neighbourhood, and when she dies, all those who have been helped by her flock to her funeral.

Weyman's comments place her in a favourable light, and it seems she provides a role model for the heroine, Henrietta. Certainly, Henrietta is portrayed as growing
more like her as she matures. In some ways she grows more independent - attacking Clyne for his neglect of her, and refusing to betray Walterson, for instance. She also becomes more acceptant, however: though hurt by the fact that Clyne has had her committed to gaol, she makes the best of it. She is kind to the gaoler's daughter, sweeps out the prison yard, and wins the gaoler's wife over by her courtesy. Finally, she shows her growing selflessness in the care she takes of Clyne's child in the smugglers's oven. At the end of the story, children have "tamed her pride" 151. She bids fair to be another Mrs. Gilson, earning the respect of the neighbourhood through kindness.

What happens to Henrietta allows us to see clearly the kind of qualities Weyman valued in a woman. She could show courage - but on other's behalf. She could stand up for her rights, but only if they were consistent with what was honourable and fair, and she should be more concerned with the rights of other people. She might not be learned, but she was rich in feminine wisdom. She should not chafe at the limitations imposed by society on her actions, because these limitations are there for her protection in an overmasculine world; but she could become powerful and respected by the display of "motherly" qualities. She can be queen of a kingdom of private relationships, since in this area she is far more knowledgeable than men are. By implication, men who lack such qualities are her inferiors: Anna was mistaken in trying to compete with
men on their own grounds. In many ways, feminine qualities are better than masculine ones: men like de Marsac, who blend feminine tenderness and concern with masculine strength are presented particularly favourably. Women are men's inferiors in strength of mind and body, and should therefore allow the men their mastery; however, these strengths are not necessarily to be desired. Masculine strength leads to aggressiveness, and a world in which masculine qualities dominate is over-competitive. Women's strengths are therefore important, because a world built on them is far better than the cut-throat and sometimes brutal one of masculine affairs - just as Bearn is preferable to Zaton's. For women to move out of their role endangers the worlds they build; and in fact, men's strength and aggressiveness, far from needing to be emulated, is best curbed and used for the protection of femininity.

Heroines, therefore, are often shown as maturing into the role of wife and mother. Acts of selflessness and courage, especially on behalf of a lover or connected in some way with the protection of a child form a rite of passage by which a girl - silly, unstable and flirtatious - becomes a true woman. Once having shown they are ready for it, young women can take to themselves a specifically feminine power. At the same time, they must learn not to hanker after a masculine role, and to submit to masculine authority. Such submission is not a limitation; some
heroines seem to feel it as a positive pleasure. Henrietta begins to love Clyne when he tries to bully her; or, at any rate, her feelings towards him begin to change when "he had seized her wrist, gripping it cruelly" 152. Initially she feels this to be a "humiliation", but it is apparent when they talk later that she has pleasurable memories of the episode. It seems that after marriage, Clyne will dominate and Henrietta will enjoy it. The heroine of A Gentleman of France takes de Marsac seriously when he leaves off his forbearance and courtesy and shows himself in the more conventionally masculine role of protector. She responds to this show of violence on her behalf as though she were obtaining an almost orgasmic pleasure from the sight: "her eyes sparkled with a fierce light, her lips red beyond the ordinary, and her hair, loosened and thrown into disorder through her exertions, fell in thick masses" 153.

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The world which Weyman puts forward as an ideal possibility is, therefore, one in which feminine qualities are dominant in private, and public affairs are run by disinterested men who have internalized feminine tenderness as well as masculine strength. Such a picture
leaves conventional roles intact, while ensuring a more just and equal society. It is one infused with what are presented as the values of the Protestant religion, of which Weyman was an enthusiastic supporter. He was himself much involved with the Church of Wales in his later life, which suggests an Anglican who cared neither for non-conformism (this being a period when there was a good deal of agitation to disestablish his church in Wales) nor Roman Catholicism. Religious differences provide a fruitful source of conflict and grounds for adventure in his novels: especially conflict between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. The reader might be forgiven for inferring that religious attitudes are dominant in them.

It must be admitted, however, that to a degree such first impressions would be misleading. "Catholic" and "Protestant" are used as labels in the novels, denoting a particular set of characteristics: ones which are appropriate either to the unregenerate world which is rejected, or the ideal one which, it is hoped will come into being. There is almost no description of actual religious beliefs, but, on the whole, Catholics are seen as part of an over-masculine, competitive and anarchic world, whereas Protestantism is associated with femininity, honour and disinterestedness.

Thus, in Count Hannibal, the Catholic courtiers who play cards and enjoy the womanizing of their leaders on the eve of St. Bartholomew, laughing and joking with
pleasant anticipation about what they are going to do, are contrasted with the Protestant de la Rochefoucauld, who is too courageous and trusting to avoid his lodgings and who is too generous to neglect a sick friend. His magnanimous qualities are to bring him to his death at the hands of the blind and drunken louts who cannot even see him as fit to live, let alone appreciate his good qualities. It is a Catholic priest who ruthlessly blackmails the mother of the hero in A Gentleman of France; Catholic leaders, like Charles IX in Count Hannibal or Henry III in A Gentleman of France, are unstable, degenerate and cowardly; whereas domesticity, loyalty and a haven from political life are associated with Huguenot homes in Count Hannibal, A Gentleman of France, and Under the Red Robe. In Count Hannibal we may deplore the cowardliness and untrustworthiness of the Protestant de Tignonville, or the fanaticism of his ally La Tribe, but both are better than their Catholic counterparts; La Tribe, for example, is a basically honourable man, and compares well with the bloodthirsty Catholic fanatic Father Pezelay, whose part is to urge the Catholics on to more and more atrocities.

Occasionally, Catholic characters are favourably presented; Marie Wort, for instance, shows a courage and gentleness which shows to advantage against the mindless fanaticism of the Protestant townspeople in My Lady Rothay, and the Catholic Hannibal draws aside from distaste from the atrocities perpetrated by his co-religionists in Count.
Hannibal. Such characters are in any case exceptional; but also it may be said that they are showing attitudes normally associated with Protestants. Marie's bravery and loyalty can be matched by that of Clothilde in Count Hannibal, or by Mddle. de Cocheforet in Under the Red Robe; while Hannibal's distaste for the massacre springs from a sense of personal honour which allies him to de la Rochefoucauld. It is noticeable, for instance, that he will not openly oppose his master, Charles IX, because of a strong sense of personal loyalty; he will never the less do what he can in a covert way to protect those Protestants whom he meets from Catholic fury. Thus, he warns de la Rochefoucauld, however cryptically, of his danger; and, as he rides through the streets, it is his "clumsiness" in handling his horse which allows a Protestant in flight from the mob to get away.

Loyalty, personal honour, and selfless behaviour are the major characteristics of Protestant heroes. Des Ageaux, a supporter of Henry IV in his Protestant days, is presumably a Protestant himself and is typical of the selfless hero who values honour and justice. Henry, as King of France, is still essentially the same man as Henry of Navarre the Protestant leader whose delicacy and generosity drew men like Marsac to him: his care for his people may therefore be seen as Protestant, as opposed to the individualistic power-grabbing of his Catholic lords. De Marsac, who may seem ridiculous at times but whose
gentlemanly qualities are favourably presented, is a Protestant, and even the unpleasant Catholic de Berault has had a Protestant mother, and the memory of the upbringing she gave him awakens his conscience and lost sense of honour.

The association of Protestant honour with memories of a mother suggest a link between Protestantism and the world of the true woman described above. The home of the Cocheforets, whose values make such an impression on de Berault, is a Protestant one as well as a feminine one. The private kingdom into which Clothilde inducts Hannibal has its physical representation in her isolated but Protestant land and castle. The privacy and isolation of such homes is in fact often noticeable - Rothen's town was a little enclave in a Catholic area of Germany, for instance - and so Protestantism is also linked with the withdrawal from public affairs into a world of personal concerns which has also been noted. It is an appropriate religion for such a world, since it may be seen as stressing internal moral qualities (a true sense of honour, and selflessness, for example) rather than outward shows of religion.

The values which are promoted in Weyman's books, therefore, form a coherent system which shows the seeds of a model society in the past. The implication is that it is the task of a present generation to allow them to mature. It is a task made more palatable by the fact that in many
ways the values promoted by Weyman's books were those of the nineteenth and early twentieth century middle classes. Domesticity and family life could be seen as of primary importance, together with trustworthiness and a decent, but perhaps rather secular, respect for religion. The development of inner qualities as opposed to making a striking figure on the stage of public affairs, was also in line with middle class values, looking back to the stress on self-development which was an important aspect of the romantic movement that accompanied bourgeois rise to power as industrialization gained impetus at the beginning of the nineteenth century. In admitting to a sympathy with some of the aspirations of the lower classes and of women, and in emphasising the importance of fairness and justice, the books expressed attitudes in line with the values by which the middle and upper classes in a bourgeois state sought to sustain their hegemony.

For the readers of Weyman's novels, such a picture of society promised solutions to inequality which could make life fairer without the violence and uncertainty which had come to seem endemic in political life. Thus social consciences could be appeased without fear for hard-won status and property. Unfortunately the idealizing nature of such solutions is evident in the contradictions which flaw the coherence of the picture Weyman presents.

Most obviously, when public affairs are so corrupt and competitive, and only in the private realm can honour
be found, where are the disinterested men who are going to run a just system? Des Ageaux and von Leuchtenstein are attempts to portray them, but it must be admitted that they are thin and bloodless: there is a touch of the inhuman about both of them. Always ready to put public duty before their private concerns, they can at times seem cold; des Ageaux, in particular, whose "love" for Bonne is at first no more than a calculation that she will make a good mother for his sons, has to learn through facing death that she is more precious to him than that. Clyne, too, has to learn that a wife is more than a kind of upper servant who will give good service if properly looked after. Such insights may well change them from the disinterested servants of the state who were willing to give dissidents a whiff of grape-shot or string them up from the nearest tree. In developing the personal virtues which Weyman promotes, they are liable to lose the necessary public qualities which are in many ways in conflict with them. It is noticeable that there is some fudging of this issue in Starvecrow Farm; as a public figure, Clyne is originally presented as a brutal man, for example, flogging a man to death. This is a matter of report, and the reader never learns the truth of it; as Clyne is seen to gain in emotional insight, the detail simply drops out of the picture and is never referred to again.

Even the withdrawal from politics which is seen as so
desirable on one level is presented by means of cues which suggest that it has its disadvantages as well as its advantages. In *Count Hannibal* the hero is said to be content with the kingdom of a woman's heart, but the context in which the comment is made - Hannibal is ill and almost a prisoner in a small Protestant enclave - emphasises the narrowness of the lot he has chosen rather than its pleasures. In *Under the Red Robe* the hero is sent back to Bearn and marriage to the woman he loves, but it is explicitly as a prisoner. What he has undertaken is a life-sentence.

The image of the prison, too, occurs strikingly in the presentation of the lot of Henrietta, the ideal mature and womanly woman, at the end of *Starvecrow Farm*. Throughout the book the heroine, in search of a wider freedom, has moved from one prison to another as she breaks the social shibboleths. From being locked into her room at the inn, she is taken to the Kendal gaol, and in the climactic episode of the novel endures the claustrophobic horror of the smuggler's oven. Though escape supposedly brings her freedom, it is physical freedom only; the prison is seen as internalized in phrases such as "caged her wildness and tamed her pride" - which is the result of a happy marriage and motherhood.

There are conflicts, too, between the image of society presented by the stories and the attitudes to
which the romantic motifs make their appeal. In some ways these may well have been stronger and more deeply rooted than the attitudes which the overt themes addressed, since they are often born of those very inequalities and injustices which the utopian elements of the books attempted to confront. Distanced from the forces which shaped their lives, their individuality swamped by life in featureless suburbs, the clerks, government servants, shopkeepers and skilled workmen who made up a good proportion of the readership of books such as Weyman's were naturally fascinated by individual power and wealth, by a world of colourful anarchy where the most aggressive, rather than the best, man could win the kind of prize of which they could only dream wistfully. Weyman's romances appealed to these Kippses and Mr. Pollys by satisfying such dreams at the same time as they were apparently proving how valueless they were.

Thus in *A Gentleman of France*, the hero does not spend long in the forest, admiring the gentleness of the heroine and remembering his mother. The happy ending sees him once more in the centre of affairs, rushing to let Henry of Navarre know of Henry III's death; his reward is to be given the governorship of the Armagnac and funds to keep up his state there. And in *The Abbess of Vlaye*, it is not the grey des Ageaux who succeeds in destroying the villain, but the Duke of Joyeuse, who represents all that is alien to the just society pictured in the book.
Colourful, over-emotional, a womanizer and a religious fanatic, whimsical and unstable, he succeeds by tricks and bribery while des Ageaux lies helpless in gaol. The very qualities which make him so useless as a leader make him an excellent romantic hero - endangering himself by going into danger alone, melodramatically disguised in cloak and mask, escaping from danger through his courage, ingenuity and superb swordsmanship, nearly ruining the whole enterprise through his curious mixture of sensuality and devotion, and yet, in the end, able to find within himself the resources which bring the whole story to a triumphant conclusion. It is his activities, as much if not more than those of des Ageaux, which provide the interest of the book.

In the portrayal of female happiness, too, much of Weyman's work is undone by his inability to show the conventional happy ending of romance as being necessarily fulfilling to the heroine. This has already been shown in the case of Henrietta; the situation is emphasised by the contrast of heroine with villainess in Starvecrow Farm. The "tamed" and "caged" Henrietta can be seen to regret her lost independence to some degree, even if a good deal of suffering went with it. Bess Hinkson, however, whose "wit and courage" are at last praised at the end of the book, goes to live the wandering life of her choice. Both women have tried to make a break from homes which were cruel and constricting; and though both, it is
implied, are successful to some degree, one is "tamed" and the other remains, if not entirely happy, at least free.

Happy endings, therefore, tended to show the heroes rewarded with lives of wealth and glamour even after they had turned their backs on such things, while heroines were forced to accept security in exchange for freedom, and supremacy in a world of personal relationships and contented retirement which ultimately Weyman failed to make enticing. Perhaps their share of the rewards available to the hero made their fates more satisfying. Certainly the books, for all the uncertainty of some of their effects, offered an easy escape from drab lives to those of either sex who were more interested in an effortless and reassuring reading than in confronting their problems.

Weyman attempted to answer the problems posed by social injustice and inequality more completely than Doyle did. His evolved state and privatized society have something in common with Doyle's chivalry, but as they are only embryonically evident in the past, to come to fruition in the future, whereas "chivalry" was supposed to have had a location in the past, they are more utopian. The clash between ideal and reality is thus more evident, and is exacerbated by the fact that Weyman's books fulfil more than one function.

On the one hand, the ideal society is an answer to the problems of which his readers were aware: on the
other, the romantic nature of his novels makes them appeal to readers looking for an escape from social problems. The conflict between the two functions leads to a further undermining of the ideal picture, since romance contains such a significant element of wish-fulfilment, which implies taking advantage of social inequalities and injustice rather than destroying them. The conflict grew even more evident in the work of Weyman's younger contemporaries, in which the ideal elements were less modified by realistic historical detail: a process which can be seen in embryo in the books of one of his closest contemporaries, A.E.W. Mason.

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A.E.W. Mason

In Weyman's work, then, the reader is aware of ambiguities. In general, he paints a reassuring picture of the world, but as he does so contemporary issues familiar to his middle- and lower middle-class readership are confronted and, to a certain extent, explored. Though the focus of the reader's attention is the adventurous plot, the situations chosen are of general historical interest, and Weyman attempts to some extent (but less than Doyle does) to give a picture of the whole of society. Such matters of serious concern as are raised, however, are sometimes contradicted, because either the implied solutions or the romantic nature of the plot conflicts with reality. Perhaps it was this very mixture of romance and social concern, however, which accounted for Weyman's widespread popularity; for when A.E.W. Mason began to write historical romances in the late eighteen-nineties, Weyman's reputation already dominated the field.

In contrast to Weyman, Mason dealt with few issues of contemporary concern. Readers would find little in his work to contradict current attitudes or call them into question. More than even Weyman's books did, his novels offered an escape from the drab realities of late Victorian suburban life into a more colourful and heroic
world. Some of his attitudes were similar to Weyman's - the questionable nature of political activity, for example, and the exalting of personal concerns above public ones. Other matters of concern - class, religion and gender roles, for example - which are explored in Weyman's work are scarcely touched upon by Mason, though the attitudes he expressed by implication are perhaps no less interesting because they are taken for granted instead of being made explicit.

Instead, Mason allowed the reader a chance to identify with an individual hero who confounded authority by succeeding in tasks which everyone believed impossible. Often, those who by virtue of their rank or profession might have been expected to take action are quite helpless, and it is left to the untrained, and often despised, hero to take their place. It is easy to see what kind of satisfaction such a story might have offered to a reader who had very little opportunity for individual achievement in his or her own life. His books offered a contrast between an adventurous, if difficult, life and an unheroic existence in an office or at the end of a tram route.

Other kinds of appeal were sacrificed to provide this. Action, danger and exotic locations are emphasised, as they are in the works of one of the most popular authors of Mason's day, Rudyard Kipling. Thomson has remarked that his popularity came from the escape his
stories offered from his readers' "pinched and colourless existence" 157. Though much of such interest much have been simply compensatory, it was a pleasure which could safely be recommended to boys and young men since, in the days of an expanding empire, it was an enticement to seek out similar adventures in faraway places for themselves.

Mason took particular care to give his adventures an air of verisimilitude by painstaking research: he trekked through the Sudan himself with a few camels to provide an accurate setting for The Four Feathers, and India, the setting for another contemporary adventure, was known to him through his explorations of the seas around Ceylon in a sailing boat 158. Lord Curzon himself praised the accuracy of his description. Yet no-one would turn to The Four Feathers, for instance, for information about the Sudan: the aim of such painstaking research is rather to give a more convincing imaginative experience, so that the reader can share the adventure with the characters.

The historical setting in Mason's historical romances seems to have the same function. He makes no attempt to give a picture of a range of social classes, as Weyman does in portraying the Crocans side by side with their aristocratic masters, or the villagers and servants of Cocheforet together with the ladies of the chateau in Under the Red Robe. His landscapes are stretches of road along which the hero must gallop to achieve his goal, interspersed with inns which threaten danger. Inn-keepers
and servants are almost the only lower-class characters described.

There is little attempt, either - even less than in Weyman's novels and certainly nothing on the scale to be found in Doyle's - to give verisimilitude by explaining the historical causes of events; past crises are used merely to provide suitable occasions for adventure, and there is little comment on motivation and causality, except in purely personal terms. Thus, in Clementina, the grounds of the royal marriage which occasions the adventure are dismissed in a couple of sentences: "It was to be the first step of the pedestal in the building of a throne. It was to establish in Europe a party for James Stuart as strong as the party of Hanover" 159. It is assumed that we recognise the identity of "James Stuart": his claims to the British throne and the hero's motives in supporting them are nowhere discussed. Similarly, the action in The Courtship of Morrice Buckler occurs as a result of the Monmouth rebellion, but this is neither explained nor described; unlike its use by Doyle in Micah Clarke, it provides the trigger for a purely personal adventure.

This paucity of information means that the reader's attention is focussed on the hero's individual concerns, to a much greater extent than in Doyle's books or even in Weyman's; on the other hand, the adventure still occurs within a context of "state" service, of a kind. The
marriage in Clementina is an affair of state, but the interest lies not in the marriage itself, but in the hero's attempts to promote it, and in his love for the heroine. Lawrence Clavering's task, in the book of that name, is to prepare the Cumbrian Jacobites for rebellion, and he even takes part in the battle of Preston, but this gives the impression of being a parenthesis in the main action, which concerns his attempt to save a man he thinks he has wronged - a situation incidental to his work as a spy.

In each case, the historical context seems to be included mainly in order to place the hero in a dangerous situation. The sword-fighting (upon the inn-stairs in Clementina, in Castle Lukstein in The Courtship of Morrice Buckler) the constant rides in coach or on horse-back, racing against time or the enemy, the fashionable life of Restoration London or the Polish court, all these provide the sense of the exotic which is appropriate for romance and allow the reader to escape from the hum-drum and everyday. The novels give an impression of having moved a stage further along the road away from realism and towards pure romance: compared with the work of Weyman, Mason's novels are not necessarily richer in romantic motifs, but the historical context - though no doubt accurate enough - is of a different order. Magnificent settings are preferred to domestic ones; if the hero's lodging cannot be grand, it is likely to be an inn or on the open
moorland - somewhere hinting of journeys, and perhaps even the excitement of exploration. Normality has disappeared, to be replaced by novelty and adventure. The sense that the hero is on his own, frequently against all the forces of the law or the state, contributes to this, adding a feeling of danger which keeps the nerves on the stretch and the tension high.

Mason, then, was writing stories in which the adventure, rather than the setting, was the focus of interest. His books do not show, as Doyle's and, to a lesser extent, Weyman's do, any attempt either to show society at a time of critical change, or to confront explicitly those political and social issues which most concerned his age. Far from it: the appeal of his books was probably to escape from such concerns rather than to examine them. Attitudes expressed in the novels are expressed indirectly through the assumptions of the characters and the configuration of events. If the readers are to feel that they are escaping from worrying social concerns, however, social and political attitudes need to be of a kind which can pass unnoticed; in other words, they are likely to be ones which the reader takes for granted.

One of these is the sympathy with individual enterprise which is implicit in the presentation of the hero as a man on his own, fighting against powerful adversaries. There is also, allied to this and no doubt
springing from the same impulse, a feeling that political and public action is not the concern of the individual. This is the same attitude which is evident in Weyman's work, the stories of both writers suggesting that there is something corrupting, even evil, about any public enterprise. In Weyman's work, as has been noted, this is tempered by an evolutionary view of society which admits the existence of a disinterested class of public servants whose aim is to govern all classes fairly and justly; a view which tended to confirm as "natural" the power of the upper middle class. Mason's work, however, lacks even such modification. The public enterprises which engage his heroes might at first sight seem romantic and exciting, but in reality they are worthless and doomed to fail. The heroes would have been happier if they had never become involved with them. Only in their private and personal affairs do they seem to be successful.

Thus, in Clementina, Wogan rescues Princess Clementina Sobieska to make a state alliance for the Chevalier de St. George, the "Old Pretender", sacrificing their mutual love and that of James for Maria Vittoria de Caprara. All parties would have been more successful if they had followed their instincts rather than what they conceived to be their political duty. The state marriage is a failure: "within so short a time" 160, James and Clementina are separated. Clementina, exiled to a convent, never fulfils the public destiny Wogan dreamed of for her.
when he renounced their love while James "was fallen upon a deeper melancholy, and diminished hopes" - a mood which reinforces the natural passivity which makes it difficult for him to act. While Clementina is thus "wasted". Wogan himself is scarcely happier, living as "an exile alone in his white patio" in La Mancha. The suggestion of quixotry is surely intentional; Wogan should have followed his heart rather than gone tilting against political windmills.

Moreover, the reader is throughout led to question the worth of the cause Wogan serves. James Stuart is not portrayed as a potential king, a worthy exchange for the Hanoverian. Instead, his apathy, melancholy and lack of courage and initiative are insisted upon. There is even an appearance of underhandedness about his behaviour; because he lacks the moral courage to admit to Wogan that he does not want to marry Clementina because he has fallen in love with someone else, he allows Wogan to go on what he considers a wild goose chase at the risk of his life, hoping he will fail. When he learns of Wogan's success, he goes off to Spain on a quite unnecessary mission and skulks there, presumably hoping that Clementina will go away. No suggestion that life would be better in England if James were its king is made to balance the sense of his worthlessness as an individual.

Lawrence Clavering's spying is successful in giving information about the disposition of the Jacobite gentry
in Cumberland, but he is involved in the defeat at Preston in the '15, and none of the other Jacobites in the book recommend the cause: they are either dreamers or villains. Mr. Curwen must be protected against his own impractical soft-heartedness by his daughter and servant, and Jervas Rookley is "marking time with king George and stepping forward with King James" 161, while betraying anyone who may prevent his doing this. Clavering himself ends as an exile from his own country; and though in the opening paragraph he denies any nostalgia for Blackladies, the house he inhabited for a short time in England, it is clear from his language ("the only home I ever knew in England ... and the brown hills above it") that he does feel it, to the point at which visions of it are reflected, in his fancy, in the Rhone, and he is "touched for the moment to a foolish melancholy" by the sight 162. His sense of exile in "a country of tourelles" is as real as Wogan's at La Mancha. Like Wogan though with less calamitous effects, Clavering has been harmed for ever by his involvement with a political cause, and, as in Clementina, this is presented as ultimately valueless. And if Morrice Buckler escapes at the end of his adventure to a life of moderate happiness, it may be noted that he acts throughout as a private individual, avoiding involvement in the Monmouth rebellion, which is presented as not only a failure but as disastrous for its participants as well.

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The pattern is therefore clear: these early romances of Mason's show individuals acting heroically, but in lost causes; nor does the author attempt to make the reader feel that these causes had any intrinsic value in themselves. Why, then, should such apparently pessimistic works have been read with such pleasure, as appears from their sales? Clearly, the cause in itself is unimportant; the danger and excitement are an end in themselves, to be experienced by the reader as a sort of super-holiday. This attitude probably explains a good deal of the popularity of adventure stories; in its purest form it can be seen in John Buchan's John McNab, where the three heroes create their own dangers to lighten the ennui of too secure a life. Miss Trant, in J.B. Priestley's The Good Companions, enjoys the danger of Scott's adventures vicariously to lighten the dullness of her own restricted existence before she takes to adventuring herself; and the creation of so many secure but powerless and in some ways unsatisfying lives at the end of the Victorian period made the need for such vicarious risk-taking especially important.

Mason certainly provided this. In his books the adventurous life, however dangerous, is presented as openly enjoyable. The heroes express a positive nostalgia for the risks they have taken. When the Elzevir Horace unlocks "a flood of glistening memories" in Morrice Buckler, it is of "that brief but eventful period" when
he went on his quest for vengeance: in other words, of a
time when he was frightened and horrified almost to
madness and sometimes in danger of his life. Though the
ending had given him "compensation" in the companionship
of the woman he loved, he does not seem as satisfied as
one might expect. The Horace comes to light because he is
moving his books "from sheer fatigue of idleness" and he
says that even they have lost their "savour". For
Lawrence Clavering, too, living in safety in Avignon with
the wife he loves, it is the memory of the "brown hills"
of Cumberland which were the setting for his disastrous
adventures which move him to a "foolish melancholy." 164.

"Action", therefore, may be said to take the place in
Mason's work of "honour" in Weyman's or "chivalry" in
Doyle's: a concept presented as important and eminently
desirable, yet at the same time doubtful in its nature and
effects. Such concepts are closely allied to general
social attitudes in all three authors. "Action" in Mason's
work is attractive not only because it provides
excitement, but because it helps a cause in which the hero
believes; in an age when the individual was aware of the
world as increasingly dominated by big institutions and
forces beyond the control of one nation, let alone one
person, such activity therefore implies a pleasing sense
of personal power to influence events.

The nature of action is therefore one of the major
themes of the books and kept constantly before the

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reader's attention, yet its nature and effects are presented as ambiguous. The danger inherent in taking action which might ruin the lives of innocent people, set against the dishonour of inaction, which might betray a cause or a friendship, preoccupy the minds of the heroes almost obsessively. This is not too strong a word; these issues appear to them in the form of vivid pictures and dreams which, in Lawrence Claver at least, become an important strand in the plot. The pictures and visions reflect feelings of guilt and disgust which can arise as a result of action, particularly for a political cause; but the heroes are none the less drawn towards such action. In these circumstances, their only sure guide to maintaining their honour as individuals is a purely personal loyalty.

Thus, in Lawrence Claver, a recurrent motif is the portrait of "a dead man speaking" which Claver sees in Paris, and which seems to him a symbol of his own hypocrisy and guilt. These feelings arise from the conflict between the claims of his training as a Jesuit and his longing for a more active and adventurous life, exacerbated by a sense of lost vocation. As he tries to suppress these wishes, he endows the portrait in his imagination with his own face, dead and damned. It begins to obsess him to the point at which "the mere sight of my Marco Polo was sufficient to bring it into view". Did his guilt come from a sense that he was wrong to wish for
action, or wrong to continue studying when he wished for a more active life? His conscience suggests the one, his kinsman, Lord Bolingbroke, the other. The reader is left with a feeling that the issue is in doubt.

However, when the portrait of his own damned face recurs later in the novel, it is in circumstances which leave the reader in no doubt that it is the consequences of his own Jacobite activities which trouble him, not his lingering over his books. On the one hand, he is proud to be chosen as the Old Pretender's spy in Cumberland; on the other, when the painter Anthony Herbert is arrested in his place, he feels an enormous sense of guilt. He feels he has been disloyal to Herbert, both in showing kindness to his wife and allowing his arrest. The face of Herbert's portrait of him, with its damned face, shows him something he already knows. He has been feeling a hypocrite for some time, in particular because of the Curwens' praise of him. They admire him for his Jacobite work, whereas he thinks of himself as a traitor: not to a cause, but to a friend.

In The Courtship of Morrice Buckler the hero's mission is a more personal vengeance on behalf of his friend against Count Lukstein. He, too, is aware of terrible human consequences arising from his action. He kills the Count in a duel; and, as he does so, the Countess, walking in her sleep, wakes up to discover she is standing by the body of her husband. Buckler, horrified to think of the effect on her, becomes haunted by a dream of the Countess with her husband's blood
trickling towards her: "I knew I should never get the face of Countess Lukstein from my eyes, or the sound of her cry out of my ears" 167. And Wogan, uneasy with the half-formed knowledge of his love for his King's bride, identifies himself with Konigsmark, lover of George I's imprisoned wife, and is tormented by something close to hallucination: "his eyes could almost discern a shadowy and beautiful figure, his ears could almost hear a musical vibrating voice ... [which] warned and menaced him" 168. Just as Clavering sees the dead man's portrait with his own face, so Wogan sees Konigsmark's ghost becoming "incorporate with him".

The likeness between these incidents is too marked to be coincidental. Each occurs at a moment when the hero has reached a point of crisis. In each case, too, the hero feels a clash of loyalties: Clavering wants to act in the Jacobite cause, but as long as he goes on doing so he cannot "redeem" himself by giving himself up in exchange for Herbert; Buckler is horrified by the harm the action on behalf of his friend has done to the innocent Countess; and Wogan must decide between his loyalty to James and his love for Clementina. He is aware that Clementina looks to him to take the initiative in declaring the love that both of them feel.

The way in which each of the heroes resolves his dilemma, and the outcome of his decision, tells the reader a good deal about the nature of public and private action. Two out of three are faced with a choice between betraying a cause and betraying a person. The one who chooses to be

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loyal to his cause - as Wogan does, in resisting Clementina and bringing her safely to James - is in the end the least happy. True, in keeping faith with James he has avoided Konigsmark's mistake and thus is relieved of the guilt of disloyalty to his king. Clementina recognises this: when she plucks a straw from her gown at the wedding ceremony, her smile says that he has proved trustworthy. Yet the significance of the action is double-edged, since the straw had a secret meaning; earlier, Clementina had suggested that Wogan was a man of straw, not a firm support. In a sense, he is aware he has not been. The epilogue, which shows Clementina "imprisoned" in her convent and Wogan an exile in La Mancha, seems to confirm this view.

In contrast to Wogan, who remains loyal to his cause, Clavering and Buckler both act, in the end, out of a sense of personal loyalty. Because of this, their adventure has a relatively happy conclusion: loyalty ensures them the love of the heroines, which is to compensate them for the loss of a life of action in one case and of England in the other. The message to the reader seems clear: action in the cause of personal loyalty is a glorious adventure; action for a political cause is fraught with moral dangers and likely to turn out badly. Such a message is well suited to an audience of vicarious adventurers; it suggests the glamour of action while stressing its unattractive aspects. The reader is likely to be content to do his or her adventuring by proxy, therefore; the tendency of the books is to keep the readers in their
armchairs rather than to stir them to activity. At the same time, adventure remains attractive enough to spur the young to carefully controlled activity - in defence of the empire, for example.

The consequence of this is that the books reinforce rather than challenge accepted social and moral attitudes among the readers. The target audience was, as has been noted, very similar to that of Weyman's books. It belonged to a class which not only looked to their reading for vicarious colour and excitement, but also found certain trends in contemporary life disturbing. Thus, they disliked extremism in politics, but saw it increasing, and so were led themselves towards an avoidance of political action; they disliked violence in popular movements and, in particular, a challenging attitude from trade union activists; and they disliked an "unwomanly" aggressiveness among "new women" and "suffragettes". As has been suggested, this class, with its slender hold on property-ownership, perhaps feared the consequences of social upheaval more than any other.

Mason's novels offered a fictional world with nothing to disturb such fears. In his books, the working class exist only to serve the upper. There is plenty of violence, but it is between individuals, and not a symptom of social disorder; and women might be just about capable of joining in an adventure (if they were being rescued from danger, for example) but there was no unmaidenly pother about a vote.

As for his heroes, they belong to a class above that
of the majority of Mason's readers, but not so far above that reader-identification with the hero was prevented. Morrice Buckler is a rich landowner and the cousin of a lord; Lawrence Clavering is a distant kinsman of Lord Bolingbroke; and Wogan is a courtier, albeit at a pseudo-court. These men are not quite of the aristocracy, but they move on the fringes of the fashionable world; and money is not an object with them. Their position is something to dream of; but they remain essentially private individuals within the upper reaches of the middle class, and so not beyond the range of the readers' hopes.

Here again there is a difference between Mason and Weyman and Doyle. Weyman and Doyle's heroes - many of them aristocrats, and knights or royal servants - did not invite such easy identification. On the other hand, the narrative standpoint in both author's work is more flexible, so that the reader views the action not only from the hero's point of view, but often from that of the heroine or a minor character. In Weyman's Count Hannibal, for example, the narrative point of view fluctuates between that of Clothilde and de Tignonville, and only gradually do we come to view some of the action through the eyes of Hannibal himself. In The Abbess of Vlaye, the narrative view-point passes almost bewilderingly between des Ageaux, Bonne, Odette, Joyeux, Roger and the Countess, resting occasionally as it passes from one to the other with some of the soldiers and servants. This means that
the author can make his comments to a relatively detached reader; and in Doyle's work, the author tends to intervene even more with comments. In Mason's work the identification with the hero is much more complete.

Between the work of Doyle and of Mason, therefore, though the books were nearly contemporary, there are differences which are akin to the differences between generations. Doyle's work still has the amplitude and range of the mainstream, multiplotted, Victorian novel, and Weyman, too, exemplifies something of this. Mason's work shows the result of a process of narrowing and thinning, so that one's concentration is focussed more on a single action, a sequence of events which happened to a single individual. This process was to develop further in the subsequent history of the genre.

This increase in unity and, more especially, in the sense of identification with the hero, has the effect, as has been shown in chapter three, of encouraging the reader to feel that the experience of reading the book is one of sharing a real experience with the hero. Because of this, there is a tendency to accept uncritically many of the hero's assumptions. Thus, attitudes not dissimilar to those expressed by Weyman and Doyle are in Mason's work implicit in the feelings and choices described by the hero. As in the case of Weyman and Doyle, the particular attitudes towards the lower classes as a part of society as a whole, and towards the roles of men and women, are
informative when matched against the general social and political attitudes of the period.

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Most immediately noticeable is the effect which the close identification with the hero has upon the image of the heroine. Typically, she seems distanced, inexplicable, and slightly alien. This is appropriate to a romantic view of femininity, and does not threaten as the "new woman" might. Heroines vary more in social status than the heroes do. Dorothy Curwen, in Lawrence Clavering, is the daughter of an impoverished country gentleman, while the Countess Lukstein, in Morrice Buckler, is a court beauty who has "the whole town [London] at her feet" 170. And Clementina, of course, is a princess. They are all at least the social equals of the hero, and in some cases much higher in the social scale. They can thus be presented as prizes to be won - which again confirms the impression of otherness.

In character, however, they cannot equal the heroes' loyalty, courage and ingenuity. They cannot compare, either, with such heroines of Doyle and Weyman as Maude Loring and Bonne de Villeneuve. Mason is not concerned to present them as persons in their own right so much as
objects to be won by the hero, that is, as a doubtful compensation for the loss of a life of adventure; sometimes, even, as obstacles to be overcome.

Thus, the Countess Lukstein blows hot and cold in her manner to Morrice Buckler, treating him in a way which would be bewildering at least, and at worse, heart-breaking. To keep her good opinion for more than a day together men ride half across England to fight a rival to the death. Their efforts are useless, however, since this woman has no stable moods. "She has a passion for fresh faces" 171, says her creature, Lord Culverton, and even the meek Buckler comments "you jump from one extreme to the other" 172. But however much he may suffer, neither he nor anyone else sees anything unusual in her behaviour. They well might, since in actual fact she is playing a role, trying to discover the slayer of her husband; but the fact is that her behaviour is what they expect in a female. The Countess herself admits that "women are capricious" 173, and even when the reader is given the secret of her behaviour, there is no comment to show that her capriciousness had been a necessary part of her act. The reader is left with the impression that her volatility is a natural consequence of her femininity.

The women in Lawrence Clavering share her unpredictability. Mrs. Herbert, Lawrence's first love, shows "alternations from pride to tears" 174; and the heroine, Dorothy Curwen, runs through an amazing variety
of moods the first time she and Lawrence are alone together. After a very slight misunderstanding on Lawrence's part, she stamps her foot "with a little imperious movement" and walks away from him "with great stateliness and dignity"; but after ten yards "her stately walk changed to a dance", and then "in an instant her manner changed" 175. Clavering accepts this behaviour, something between that of a queen and a spoiled child, as though it were natural.

Female vanity comes close to wrecking a number of enterprises in Mason's stories, but again is accepted as tolerable behaviour in a woman. Dorothy Curwen, worried about being thought too short, insists on wearing high-heeled shoes to escape across the Cumbrian moors with Lawrence. At the best of times this would be unsuitable footwear for fell-walking; when speed across country is their only hope of saving their lives, it is foolhardy vanity. In the same way, Wogan's rescue of Clementina is nearly foiled by her maid's insistence on wearing high-heels. Clementina would not have needed to be rescued in the first place had her mother not lingered too long in the state of a Hanoverian sympathizer, to have her jewels cleaned. Women are vain by nature, and concerned about trivialities; hero and reader thus cannot condemn them for it, and indeed may find such characteristics lovable. After all, Dorothy wants to wear high-heels to look well in Lawrence's eyes, because Lawrence's opinion matters to
her: thus is male vanity flattered.

Women are charming creatures, seems to be the message, but irritating and irrational. Men may be absolved from taking such women seriously; they are certainly totally unsuited to any heroic activity. Though in this way they seem much more restricted in role than Weyman's heroines, in actual fact the picture Mason gives is not dissimilar. For love's sake, they can take risks and act heroically, as Dorothy Curwen does when she shoots the sheriff's officer to prevent him from discovering Clavering's whereabouts. Her apparent fierceness is in any case modified by more "feminine" feelings immediately afterwards, when she feels sorry for the man she shot.

As in Weyman's books, heroines are shown as having their own strength within the realm of feeling. Dorothy is at her most impressive when she is seen intuitively understanding her father's weakness (he is a dreamer with no sense of reality) and in working to protect him from the consequences. Heroes have no part in this realm; they lack feminine delicacy of feeling. Clavering's insensitivity and lack of understanding of feminine nature lies at the back of much of Dorothy's childish attitudinizing. Though personal relationships are seen as women's special concern, they cannot take the initiative in a relationship. Wogan is shocked when Clementina suggests spending the night with him, and then running away together. He goes off alone to decide what he should...
do about the situation; Clementina is not thought of as capable of such a decision. Her place is merely to accept.

In such a situation, women are driven to hinting and various kinds of indirect communication; Dorothy's high heels may be a sign of this, or they may be an assertion of individuality. Women's opinions and inclinations are very rarely sought by the male characters, who tend to make plans - often for the women's own good - and expect the women to play their parts without comment. Clementina's appeal to her father before she will consent to be rescued (which seems capricious and delays the rescue by many weeks), or Dorothy's high heels both make sense when seen as a protest about being a pawn in a masculine game.

Moreover, women may be encouraged in such behaviour by the fact that men evidently enjoy it, or at least seek their company with no protest about the way in which they are treated. The only women who is criticized for untimely vanity is the mother of Clementina, and this seems to suggest that vanity and irresponsibility is allowable only in youth. The fact that women are valued for their sexual attractiveness and eligibility is thus emphasised.

In their turn, the heroines value men for their dependability. Clementina thinks of Wožan as a straw pretending to be a stone, and the Countess Lukstein thinks of Morrice Buckler as a lath sword when she looked for one of steel - until both heroes have proved their worth.

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Though the heroines do not act for themselves in the way that Weyman's Henrietta does, they are none the less aware of the need for some protection in an over-masculine world which can bring them harm.

This sense of masculinity as a source of potential harm is not confirmed to the women. In fact, it exists largely in the imagination of the heroes. Both Buckler and Clavering think of the heroines as so pure and innocent that they must be protected from all knowledge of the truth about their own and the heroes' situations. In Buckler's case, the Countess must be protected from the knowledge of her husband's disloyalty, and in Clavering's, Dorothy needed to be ignorant of his guilt in coming between the Herberts. There is a feeling that the danger comes from the heroes themselves, from their masculinity and activity. Buckler's vision of blood flowing from the man he has killed towards the nightgown of the unconscious Countess suggests a sullying of the heroine through his action, while Clavering's sense of his Dorothy's virtue is so intense that "I shrank in shame from standing face to face with her".

In many ways, female behaviour reinforces this impression and forces the hero into a protective role - ironically, if the behaviour, as has been suggested, is a response to the hero's. The varying moods of Dorothy and the Countess may be seen as an elaborate game to bring about the end she wants - in the case of the Countess,
expressly so, since she admits at the end that her behaviour was part of a ruse to find her husband's killer.

Their resort to such weapons reinforces a sense of feminine helplessness. In contrast to Weyman's heroine's - who none the less can be vain and coquettish themselves - Mason's are never shown confronting problems, or thinking and deciding for themselves. Clementina, it is true, comes close to admitting her strong sexual feelings to herself, and to declaring them to Wogan, but in the end she is content to leave her destiny in his hands: "Say that Bologna is our goal! I shall go with you. Bid me ... hoist a poor scrap of sail in an open boat, I shall adventure ... with you. What will you do?" 176. And Wogan "must decide" without help. It is interesting to note that this is the closest that a Mason heroine comes to an interest in "masculine" adventure (the scrap of sail in an open boat being very typical of the sort of adventure Mason provides), in comparison to the wistful longings of Lady Maude Loring in The White Company.

The comparison is a significant one, highlighting the essential nature of Mason's image of women in comparison to that of Doyle. Despite Doyle's chivalric feelings about women, in his medieval romances he tried to provide a picture of "real" medieval women, even if he was not wholly successful. Mason appears to be presenting realistic pictures of eighteenth century women, but in actual fact they have far more in common with the
artificial heroines of medieval courtly romance than Doyle's had. They are valued for a purity which remains untouched by the activities of the world. Their power lies in the giving or withholding of love. They seem to exist merely to be courted - unlike heroines such as Mdlle. de Cocheforet in Weyman's Under the Red Robe, Bonne in his Abbess of Vlaye, or Lady Mary and Lady Maude in Doyle's books, who worked as mistresses of their estates.

In contrast, Mason's heroines are seen picnicking, engaging in fashionable diversions, or making music. They are described in terms suited to medieval romance and link themselves with it in a number of ways. The countess Lukstein is "la belle dame sans merci" (anachronistically) and sings "an old ballad of Froissart:

Que toutes joies et toutes honneurs
Viennent d'armes et d'amours" 177.

Dorothy Curwen, too, expresses in her song "The Honest Lover" an ideal which is not far from chivalric, emphasizing "lowly mien and steadfast faith", "reverence" to "all womankind" (Mrs. Herbert excepted presumably) and fear "whene'er he tries his worship'd lady to address" 178.

The attitude here and in Morrice Buckler is devotional, and the woman is playing a role akin to the goddess figure of the medieval love-court. Such feeling has become domesticated with time to seem "simple" and "honest" but in fact is complex, sophisticated and un-
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masculine strength with feminine feeling, such a fusion is not available to Mason's heroes. This is not to say that they show no feeling, but that their emotions are limited to the kind of mixture of sexual feeling and courtly emotion shown above. They are not particularly insightful in matters of human relationships, and the women, who are, tend to reinforce their blindness: the indirect hints and wayward behaviour which the heroines must perforce adopt in a society where women cannot be open about their feelings without endangering their purity confuses rather than enlightens the heroes. And in a world where women will not act for themselves, and in fact have developed characteristics which make it difficult to do so unless the springs of action are tensed through love, the hero needs to act on their behalf as well as on his own. Strength, dependability and blind devotion are thus seen as valued male characteristics. Subconsciously the heroes feel the conflicts of this role: such a mixture of qualities is likely to harm those the man is supposed to protect. Hence the visions of damned faces and bloodstains creeping towards white gowns.

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The "courtliness" of male attitudes towards women is only the most evident feature of a total picture of society which has more in common with that of medieval romance than with the realities of society in any age. It was a picture which, none the less, was likely to reassure because it portrayed a world apparently lacking in social conflict.

It is noticeable that Mason's books markedly lack any presentation of productive labour, and that the working class appears in a limited number of roles, almost all connected with service. There are no popular movements, no discontented rebellious peasants: virtually, indeed there is no populace. Those members of the working class who are mentioned have a relationship with the upper classes which is feudal in nature, and has an unlikely air at the beginning of the twentieth century.

In Lawrence Clavering, for instance, there is scarcely any representation of the lower classes. There are the servants at Blackladies, the house which the hero inherits: Burtham, Wilson, Blacket and Ashlock (though the last, being the steward, is almost middle-class, and the only one to play a substantial role in the story); and those at Applegarth, the Curwen house: the housekeeper Mary Tyzack and "some half dozen shepherds and labourers" 179. These accompany Mr. Curwen to Preston and seem to be the only lower class soldiers in the Chevalier's army there. The comparison has already been
drawn between Doyle's picture of Monmouth's army, which was shown to include a wide spectrum of society, and Mason's description of Prince Charlie's: according to him it comprises noblemen, "Gentlemen Volunteers" and "Highlanders" 180, who are working class in a way, but, significantly, a troublesome element. They refuse to cross the border because, in their ignorance, they believe that once on English soil they will be sold as slaves.

Ashlock and Mary Tyzack are unusual among Mason's portraits of servants in being shown as both sensible and devoted (though not unique: Otto in Morrice Buckler and, to a lesser extent, Wogan's servant in Clementina, are both loyal servants). It is notable, however, that they are valued not so much for good sense as for their loyalty to their masters: "it is a true friend you have been to me" 181, Clavering says to Ashlock. Doyle, the attorney, expresses a more typical attitude when he addresses Clavering, dressed as an apprentice, in Carlisle: "it will make a difference whether a lad in an apron and brass buckles gives himself up, or a proper young gentleman" 182. Gentlemen can be trusted, apprentices cannot; and Clavering does not dissent from the comparison.

In Clementina there are a number of inn-keepers, sometimes dishonest, and hired braves of indeterminate class. Jenny, who takes Clementina's place in prison to delay pursuit when Clementina escapes, is a lady's maid, and does show some heroism - but modified by a childish
vanity and ignorance. There is also a sentry on duty outside the Princess's prison, who is killed by Wogan: an accident regrettable mainly because it endangers his enterprise. There is no sense of a valuable life's being lost, and no nightmares for the hero such as accompany even the slightest harm done to a lady. Certainly there is no attempt to portray working class experience in this book, and, if anything, working people are seen as disposable appendages, ignorant and (in the sentry's case) prone to drunkenness.

The Courtship of Morrice Buckler is the book which comes closest to portraying a working class community, and here the attitude of patronage and indifference becomes almost contempt and disgust. A small group of woodcutters lives on the mountainside close to Lukstein. Though workers, they are also bound to the upper class Countess by ties of service, and so fulfil the kind of role familiar from Mason's other books, in a society which retains many feudal features. They may actually be servants of the Countess: certainly their obedience to her is absolute. They hold Buckler prisoner at her orders, apparently without question; and her servant Grober works alongside them as of right. In winter they live in a nearby village. There are four or five houses here, and an inn, where the woodcutters frequently get drunk (typical working class behaviour in a Mason novel as may be seen by a comparison with Clementina). Even here the Countess's
will runs, for if the woodcutters get too drunk to stand guard, "there were ever some cottagers from the neighbouring cottages ready to fill their place" 183.

The impression given is of a medieval vassalage, and there is no suggestion that this system is out-dated or unfair. Like the portrayal of female roles it is made to seem part of the natural order. The Countess is a superior person; the peasants are inferior by nature - coarser, with almost animal habits, and brutish by nature. Their "greasy steaming gruel" and "dry coarse bread" and "spirit of a very bitter flavour" are things Buckler, the gentleman, has to "constrain" himself to eat 184. The gruel forms the "chief food" of the woodcutters, but there is no suggestion that they are badly treated in having to live on such awful food while the Countess banquets in the castle. If anything, they are blamed for it, and for forcing it upon Buckler, as though it were the result of free choice arising from degraded tastes. Their occupations - felling trees in summer and ropemaking in winter - are "tedious and mechanic labour" 185 for Buckler, a hardship of a terrible nature from which he must escape, but again it is not suggested that there is anything wrong with a system which enforces a lifetime of such labour upon his fellow human beings.

Instead, the reader gains the impression that the peasants are well-suited in their work. Their conversation consists of "rough jests and songs" 186, but they have
nothing to say to Buckler, and they are often drunk. To Buckler, the idea that he might become like these peasants is the most horrifying aspect of his imprisonment: that he might sink into "a dull apathy ... until I become one with these coarse peasants in spirit and mind ... ignorant boors" 187.

The portrait of the working classes in Mason's work, therefore, is one of beings at best childishly ignorant, at worst so bestial that a gentleman can scarcely consider them as fellow human beings. One or two - Otto Kraus in Morrice Buckler, Mary Tyzack and Ashlock in Lawrence Clavering - rise above this level, and are presented as persons of character, worthy of the reader's respect. It is notable, however, that this respect must be based on their loyalty and dependability - the qualities of a good servant rather than a companion.

Such a picture of the working classes - valued only for their efficiency in fulfilling the functions of a servant to the gentry - may be contrasted with Doyle's. As in Doyle's books, the lower classes are seen as being of a different nature to the upper - even granted that Morrice Buckler sees himself as becoming like the peasants, the overwhelming impression is that they belong to a different order of beings - but the attitudes expressed in Mason are closer to those satirized when they are expressed by Sir Tristram in The White Company than to those directly described by the narrator.
Mason's attitudes may therefore be seen as more extreme than those of the radical Conan Doyle. The more romantic form of Mason's books, which are more concentrated and allow less space for authorial comment and the presentation of a balanced picture of society, as both Weyman's and Doyle's attempt to do, is not for that reason more neutral in conveying attitudes. On the contrary, because the attitudes are implicit in the action and feelings of the characters, their force is greater, because they appear more natural, to be taken for granted. Though not all romantic novelists express attitudes as stereotyped as Mason's, the way they work upon the reader's consciousness is similar in later fiction of this kind.

In the case of Mason's books, one can see that the prejudices of those who feared working class violence and power were explicitly confirmed. Mason's pictures of peasants and labourers have much in common with Arnold's image of the Populace, which in the second half of the nineteenth century he saw as beginning to issue from "its poverty and squalor" to perplex the middle classes by "marching where it likes, breaking what it likes" 188 in particular, the sacrosanct railings of Hyde Park.

If such were the fears of the new lower middle class reading public, as has been suggested, then the picture which Mason gives of a brutish but totally subservient lower class which existed merely to serve its betters must
have been appealing.

Mason's books, then appealed to the same kind of reader as Weyman's did. The attitudes he promoted were similar to those of Doyle and Weyman in many ways, but whereas Doyle attempted to confront and challenge the prejudices of his time, and even Weyman tried to explore them and to give glimpses of the reality behind the stereotypes, Mason on the whole accepted them without calling them into question. To those readers who feared the incipient violence and upheaval of contemporary society, he offered the picture of a fantasy world which passed for the historical past. Here religious and political divisions are not seen to exist, except in so far as they provide the hero with a motive for adventure, women are something between attractive children and the ladies of courtly romance, and the working classes exist merely to serve their masters, a role for which they are fitted by nature.

In such a world the hero is justified in following personal aims at the expense of support for causes, since public action is at best useless and at worst corrupting. Thus he need not trouble himself (and neither need the reader) about social and religious problems which might give a motive for public action.

Indeed, Mason's heroes find little necessity to think at all. Lawrence Clavering is desperately eager to escape from his books, and even the studious Morrice Buckler
finds that his library loses its savour. Only Wogan remains a man of letters, but his studies are the diversion of his exile, and a substitute for personal fulfilment. There is no suggestion in Mason's books that they might do well to take some time from their adventures to reflect upon the world; an attitude which might well recommend itself to those who found such reflection unpleasant.
In the work of these three novelists, all flourishing in the eighteen nineties and in the first decade of this century (though Weyman had begun writing in the eighteen eighties and Conan Doyle was already well-established by then) a range of form from the fusion of romance with realism, through partial realism to fully-fledged romance may be discerned. If Conan Doyle is backward-looking to the traditions of the Victorian novel which fused realistic and romantic elements, Mason's work points forward to less realistic work to come. Perhaps Weyman, as the most popular of the novelists, best hit the taste of the time with a transitional form, as Cockburn suggested.

The range of forms is echoed in a range of attitudes. In part, these were the reflection of the individual attitudes of the authors, but also the very form of the romances influenced the kind of message that was promoted by the novels and their potency. Doyle's "chivalry" appears to be a view of the world precisely locatable in time, giving an effect of greater realism than in the work of the other authors, even though such appearance is misleading and the real function of such attitudes is to moderate the inequalities of society. In the other writers there is no exact equivalent, but the world picture presented by both Weyman and Mason has striking similarities. The attitudes of chivalry have become
diffused through the very texture of the novel. Women are seen as needing protection, the roles of men and women seem artificial and constrained, and the gulf apparent between gentry and populace is widened and made to seem natural. Whereas Doyle could provide some kind of detached commentary on such attitudes, seen at least in part as historically specific, in the work of Weyman and Mason they seem a changeless part of the very fabric of society - as suited to today's reader as to yesterday's hero and heroine.

All the books gain their excitement and tension from an adventurous plot. In a sense, love of adventure itself was one of the values promoted. Such books could be seen as healthy entertainment, suitable for giving as presents, for instance, to the sons and, to a lesser extent, the daughters, of friends and relatives. At a time of imperialist expansion and the beginnings of a slowing down of growth in the national economy, there was a useful outlet for such feelings in colonial trade and government; whereas, at a time when many were aware of potential violence in all aspects of political life at home, the books suggested the value of political quietism.

Thus, whereas in all the books the adventures are seen in a context of state activity, the relationship becomes more tenuous in Weyman and even more so in Mason's work. There is tendency in the heroes of these writers to withdraw from political activity into a private life which
presents some kind of fulfilment, though the genre itself, based as it was upon the excitements of adventure, often made such fulfilment seem dubious.

Doyle's books encouraged a pride in being English which may well have compensated to some extent for an increasing suspicion that Britain was becoming less self-sufficient and more dependent upon neighbours whose economic power was beginning to grow. Weyman was more interested in European settings for his novels, but the qualities he valued—Protestantism, domesticity, a sense of fairness and honour—would not have been out of place in a Victorian drawing room. Mason's heroes were shown as perhaps more cosmopolitan: Clavering and Buckler were educated abroad, for example. As for the characters in Clementina, they are from all over Europe: Wogan is Irish, Clementina Polish, and though James is English by birth (with or without the interposition of a warming-pan), his upbringing in France and Italy has made him rootless. None the less, Clavering and Buckler at least look back to England with a passion of nostalgia which suggests a certain unreality about life in any other country.

In the books of these authors, an image of what it is to be English was as yet implicit and incipient; a more potent image of England was to become more important in later writers. The development of such a national image may be seen as one of the functions of historical romance.
however; the work of such a writer as Mason may be compared with that of the writer who dominated the American market for historical romance during the period, Winston Churchill. His most famous book, Richard Carvell, has a plot turning on villainous relatives, an honest if not very reflective hero, and an inheritance - a plot which could in fact have been written by Mason (and, indeed, both authors were published by the same publisher, Macmillan). Carvell's actions are, however, more definitely for a cause - that of American independence. Loss of an inheritance and false accusations set him free to go adventuring with John Paul Jones - adventures as exciting as those described by Mason, but promoting republican interests. Republicans are seen as honest and straightforward, as opposed to the faithless self-seekers who favour the British government: the books shows a specifically American set of values and national spirit in the process of emerging. In many ways the spirit is akin to that shown by Doyle, but it is more potently expressed because of the more avowedly romantic nature of the book. It shows American historical fiction as moving in the direction which English historical romance was to take, not least because the "American" values it shows are strikingly like the "English" characteristics which Doyle describes, or Protestant values in the work of Weyman.

Above all, these books show individual heroism triumphing over all odds, whether in the service of a
national cause or not. This feature may indeed be called their raison d'être. It, too, has its ideological aspect, one which was to remain evident in historical romance as it developed. An emphasis on individual action at the expense of corporate, a feature one can see developing more in the younger novelists of the group, can be seen as an extreme example of that relationship between the novel form and "an increasingly confident bourgeois class" which Ian Watt noted in the novel during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In Terry Eagleton's phrase, there is "a concern with the material fortunes of an individual protagonist who moves through an unpredictably evolving, linear narrative". In romance, love and adventure may take the place of material fortunes, but they contribute to them, so that it is important in that end to know whether the hero can "settle down" or not in a bourgeois marriage with a home of his own, just as it is in more realistic fiction.

The growing masses which swelled the ranks of the middle class at the turn of the nineteenth century may have lacked the "confidence" of the emergent bourgeoisie in the eighteenth century but they shared with them many of their attitudes: their rows of semi-detached villas, each sitting in its own private garden, show what particular value they placed on individuality. Such an emphasis reflects that fragmentation of experience which, according to Eagleton, Marx saw as arising from the
"division of labour' known to capitalism" 189. Ironically, some of the most popular authors of the nineties and nineteen hundreds were expressing this individualism in its most exaggerated form at a time when British capitalism was beginning to seem threatened.

However, as has been said, these adventure stories differ from the mainstream novel in that, as Watt notes, there is "a shifting of interest from the romantic and supernatural to ... routine experience". Part of the attraction of the romances was their distance from everyday reality. The historical romance is both novel and romance: that is, it needs to combine verisimilitude and the extraordinary to achieve its effect. A historical background is a help here: it helps to validate an experience which might otherwise seem too extraordinary for belief. If the story happens in a real historical context, it gains the stamp of "truth", a discovery Iser attributes to Scott. As historical novels became increasingly romantic and less realistic, this function of the historical setting increased in importance, as may be seen in succeeding chapters.
Chapter Seven

New Directions in Historical Romance: Sabatini, Orczy and Farnol

(i)

In showing political involvement as essentially worthless, valuable only in providing adventure and eventual reward for the hero and at worst a harmful intervention in the status quo, Mason, the youngest of the three writers considered in the last chapter, seems most typical of the ways in which historical romance was beginning to develop. In the Edwardian period, romances with a new spirit were beginning to emerge. In the work of novelists like Jeffrey Farnol, Baroness Orczy and Raphael Sabatini one becomes aware of an appreciable tendency away from historical movements and towards personal concerns in the themes of romance, together with a more melodramatic atmosphere. The stock incidents and stereotyped characters already in evidence in earlier works now began to compose most of the story, and there was even less emphasis on the historical context.

Political involvement is not so much presented as valueless in these texts as simply non-existent, or existing merely as a context for a private intrigue; the "escapist" elements of the stories are predominant, but the motifs which provide the escape can none the less be interpreted in such a way as to show changing.
preoccupations, and in some cases increasing political and social concern, in the readers. Through all changes, however, support for the liberal bourgeois hegemony, expressed in the ways noted in the previous chapter, remains apparent. The affirmative political and social statements may have become less direct and the element of "myth" more obvious, but the meanings are similar, and subject to the same inconsistencies and contradictions, as are those of the earlier books.

In discussing the "expert practitioners" of the Edwardian historical novel, Jefferson Hunter singled out Farnol's *The Broad Highway* as "exceptionally bestselling" ¹, suggesting that the reason for its success was its awareness of the ingredients which would recommend it to an Edwardian reader. Claud Cockburn, who also commented on the unusual success of a book which was a bestseller from its publication and sold tens of thousands over the succeeding decades, thought it marked a new direction in historical romance ². It has attracted the attention of critics not only because of its success, but also because of the awareness shown in the text of what makes it successful; and, like Orczy's work, it may be taken as a response to the changing needs of the reading public and a pointer to the direction historical romance was eventually to take.

Weyman, as has been seen, combined, in Cockburn's words, "a kind of escape into an imaginary historical
world" with "a degree of realism". For Cockburn, Farnol represented a break from this "partial romance". The new direction, which he called "neo-non-realist", was based on the creation of a totally fanciful imagined world, rich in mythic properties, and was followed by such later writers as Warwick Deeping and even (though she was herself to make further modifications in the tradition) Georgette Heyer.

However, there is, as Cockburn would agree, a continuation of tradition as well as a break. Some of Farnol's innovations were anticipated to some degree by other authors who began writing in the preceding decade, and stressed tendencies which were later to be confirmed and almost fossilized in the work of Heyer. Though Cockburn credits Farnol with creating "the Georgian myth", Weyman's The Castle Inn, set in the Georgian period, contained a number of elements and plot motifs which were to become familiar in Regency romances. In some ways, too, Farnol is actually old-fashioned - in his presentation of heroes, for example, who seem more like those of Mason or Doyle than those of his contemporaries. Fanciful backgrounds and romantic motifs are already growing more frequent and important in Raphael Sabatini's The Tavern Knight (1904) and Baroness Orczy's The Scarlet Pimpernel (1905), six years before the publication of The Broad Highway. Although there are individual differences, in fact, there are sufficient similarities between the works
of these writers to consider them together, as symptomatic of a movement in historical romance which swung the balance of this hybrid towards romance and away from "serious" historical fiction.

Orczy and Sabatini worked within a traditional framework, and their use of history is essentially similar to that of Weyman and Doyle. They differed from these writers in the more casual ways in which their heroes were related to the great events in which they took part. Essentially, the focus of interest has shifted to a world of family relationships and private preoccupations - with wealth and social status as well as love. Heroes are caught up in historical events almost by accident, as a by-product of their private concerns. Though, as a group, Orczy, Sabatini and Farnol have much in common, Orczy and Sabatini may be differentiated from Farnol, therefore, and considered as a pair, followed by a separate analysis of the work of Farnol to bring out his individual approach.

(ii)

**Orczy and Sabatini**

Emmuska Orczy, who is usually known by her title as Baroness Orczy, is particularly famous for the historical romances based on the adventurer of the French Revolutionary period, the Scarlet Pimpernel, the first of which, as has been noted, was published in 1905. Raphael
Sabatini's first historical novel, *The Tavern Knight*, had been published a year earlier. He was a popular writer without being a bestseller; Ernest Baker, however, mentions him amongst the leaders of the genre in the Edwardian period. After a period of relative eclipse after the war, he renewed his popularity with a book which became a bestseller, first in America, and then in England: *Scaramouche*, published in 1921, the year in which Georgette Heyer's first romance was published. His career was so becalmed that he could not even find a British publisher for the manuscript until the book's American success; but its popularity was enough to give his next book, *Captain Blood*, a ready market, and his renewed success was confirmed. He went on writing novels, in fact, until the 1950s, and his books are still to be found on public library shelves today in some numbers; he remains one of the few "cloak-and-dagger" writers whose work is still read. The same is true of Baroness Orczy. Their work is, therefore, fairly typical of run-of-the-mill popular historical fiction in the early years of the century, including the period between the wars.

Both writers were traditional in that their historical backgrounds were important to them, both, in fact, including more historical detail than Weyman used to do. Where they differed from the older writers, such as Doyle and Weyman, was in the increased importance they gave to the private and personal, in their creation of
"historical" worlds remarkable for their magnificence and splendour, in an increasingly chauvinist attitude, and in moving away from the kind of open air adventure favoured by Mason or Weyman to a world of intrigue and vendetta. Their heroes were different, too; the innocent, chivalrous young man beloved of Doyle or Mason would not suit the new kind of adventure, and instead the Scarlet Pimpernel, Scaramouche and Captain Blood and their like are more complex, powerful and mature: suave, self-controlled, and, above all, superlative actors.

These changes may be seen to run parallel with developments in the attitude among the public from which their readership was drawn. As was noted in chapter five, the audience of historical romance remained a fairly stable one during the early years of the century - until, that is, changing leisure patterns and new genres such as the crime novel and the Western began to rival its popularity. The readers were on the whole members of the new lower middle classes, clerks, shop assistants, and shopkeepers, or skilled workers. Though the historical romance provided escape and adventure, it also made demands on its readers: and Orczy and Sabatini in particular could include a good deal of historical commentary which was not especially easy to read. A certain level of literacy and general education may therefore be presupposed in the readers.

They lived in a world which was in many ways growing
more comfortable; yet, at the same time, some of the tendencies which produced concern and discontent among the general reading public were intensified during the decades which followed. The sense that individual concerns were subject to the interplay of incomprehensible, impersonal forces necessarily grew as the state grew more bureaucratic and industry more depersonalized. New technical advances which made life more comfortable, and new methods of production which brought these within the range of ordinary people, also made for a sameness in their surroundings which was echoed in the increasing growth of suburbs and, eventually, the new council housing estates. Although there were some factors which militated against the divisions within society which were evident in the nineties, there were others which seemed to increase them, and these on the whole tended to have a higher profile.

In the sphere of foreign policy, a period of increased isolation gave place to new realignments, in which Britain did not necessarily have a dominant role, and these were to culminate in the horrors of the first World War, an event which, while it first stirred a sense of heroic purpose in the nation, was eventually to emphasise the gulf between a past which could be seen as a theatre for heroism and the present in which war itself became a machine for slaughter. Thus, for a time, the restoration of peace brought with it a fear of war and all
the "historically significant" events associated with it, which had been the very stuff of the old-style historical novel. Loss of economic primacy became more marked, and the imperial spirit, which at the beginning of the period provided some compensatory incentive to national pride, became a less important feature in the national consciousness; there was less place, therefore, for the questing spirit of adventure which earlier romances had tended to promote. In the light of such developments, the kind of change which became apparent in the historical romance seems an inevitable concomitant.

As the careers of Orczy and Sabatini developed, it may be seen that they were to some extent maintaining a traditional standpoint. At the same time, there were changes in feeling and emphasis within their work which show a certain adaptation to new attitudes and expectations in the readers; or, perhaps, it would be more accurate to say that readers found in their work qualities which suited new preoccupations. Older authors remained popular to some extent: Weyman was still read, but retired during this period to live the life of a country gentleman. Mason and "Merriman" gave up historical romance to write contemporary adventure stories, though Mason had a brief flirtation with the genre again in Fire over England (1936) and Konigsmark (1938) - which, however, is fictionalized biography rather than romance. Doyle had always found that crime, for him, paid better
than historical romance, and later historical works never achieved the success of his medieval romances. As historical writers, therefore, their day was largely over.

Yet Sabatini and Orczy retained many of their characteristics. Their attitude towards history was similar, for instance. Weyman and Doyle used important turning points in history - the consequences of the Black Death and the economic changes which marked the beginning of the end of the feudal system, for example, or the French wars of religion and the development of the centralized nation state - as a setting for their romances. These settings may not always have been created in detail - Weyman, for example, concentrated very much on plot at the expense of setting - but the reader is always aware of great events taking place, and of the significance these have for the characters.

If anything, Sabatini and Orczy took their roles as historical writers more seriously than Weyman did. The Hutchinson Library Edition of The Hounds of God quotes Sabatini as saying "Before he can come to a book, he must have rendered himself by study and research so familiar with every phase and detail of the life of the period chosen that he can move with ease within it, and so produce his effects that his narrative, without being clogged by a parade of his knowledge, will yet be fully informed and enlivened by it." Such a statement shows the traditional nature of his approach: it could have been made by Scott himself, who believed that historical novels should be written from a total familiarity with the period, but with the
research well-digested. Scott deplored the impression given by writers such as Ainsworth and Bulwer-Lytton who used a mass of research material in their writing and produced an indigestible effect. Sabatini would doubtless have won his approval, since their are no long historical digressions in his work; none the less, he includes a good deal of detail about contemporary issues and social life.

Like Weyman and Doyle, he chose periods and places which formed historical turning points, always including enough explanation of historical circumstances to make the context clear. His heroes and their friends reflect thoughtfully on the nature of their historic roles in a way which Weyman's would never have done, and which can sound unnatural. Sabatini tries not to make such reflections sound anachronistic, but not always with success. He also frequently comments on the hero's ideas in order to bring them into line with a more up-to-date viewpoint. "I suspect him", he writes of Scaramouche, "of actually taking pride in the fact that he had been mistaken, complacently attributing his error to the circumstance that he had been, himself, of too sane and logical a mind to gauge the depths of human insanity now revealed". Thus he modifies the original effect of his hero's conversion to Revolutionary ideals, keeping him essentially a man of the Enlightenment, but explaining his attitude to a reader who was not.

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Like Scott, too, Sabatini chooses to use a "neutral" hero: an outsider who becomes involved in the situation accidentally, who therefore provides an innocent, non-partisan, viewpoint from which all aspects of the situation can be seen. He is unlike Scott, however, in covering a narrower range of characters; he deals mainly with the nobility in earlier periods, and the upper and middle classes in later ones.

Orczy, too, was like Weyman in choosing a crucial moment of conflict in the past when one social order was passing into another. Her favoured period was that of the French Revolution, and she presents it not simply as an individual experience but as a movement which affected millions of lives. As has been remarked, she was apt to intersperse her action with quite extensive pieces of historical discourse, giving some idea of the progress of the Revolution to the point at which the Pimpernel enters. The Pimpernel's activities are thus shown to spring directly from the historical situation. An impression is given that the rescue of aristocrats is somehow a historical necessity: without the intervention of the Pimpernel, France would never recover from anarchy and the rule of power-crazed demagogues. The "Triumph" of the Pimpernel coincides with the fall of Robespierre, and the plot incidents in the book of that title could well give rise to an idea that this is actually caused by the Pimpernel's actions.
Orczy in fact goes much further in the direction of "light history" than do Weyman or Mason; her eagerness to inform the reader is reminiscent of Conan Doyle, or - more appropriately, since he was, like Orczy, fond of interspersing a sensational story with gobbets of pure information - of Harrison Ainsworth.

She was also like Weyman and Mason in sending her hero on a mission - though, to be exact, he appears to send himself. However, there are certainly signs that the mission has royal approval - it is even hinted that the Regent is one of Sir Percy's band, and he appears to know the Pimpernel's identity. Orczy is more traditional than Sabatini in this, since few of Sabatini's heroes can be said to have a mission, and those causes which they espouse are taken up doubtfully and even sometimes by accident. Both, however, give a very traditional picture of public life, and of class relationships and sex roles: all topics which remained matters of concern in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Before the war, for example, the position of women was kept in the forefront of public attention by suffragette activity, and discussed in popular novels such as Well's *Ann Veronica*; while as far as general politics were concerned, the immediate pre-war years saw a good deal of government-inspired social and political reform. This was a trend which continued to some extent in the twenties, though fears of extremist uprising linked to
Soviet Russia led to the development of a moderate consensus which dominated politics despite the slight reformist tendency; and this fear of extremism kept alive that wariness towards committed political activity noted in the books of the nineties and exacerbated by some flamboyant political scandals of the years immediately succeeding the war.

The attitudes expressed in the work of Orczy and Sabatini, and the assumptions behind the images of society which their books present, were in line with such attitudes, though those to be found in Orczy's work are simpler and less ambiguous than those in Sabatini's. Orczy condemned revolution unequivocally; her vituperative descriptions of the mob are stronger than anything in Carlyle, and she presents her descriptions as though their truth was something to be taken for granted. At the very beginning of The Scarlet Pimpernel she characterizes the revolutionary crowd as "human only in name" and "savage creatures" with "vile passions" 10. The work of the guillotine which "daily, hourly" claimed "old men, young women, tiny children" - all the victims mentioned are such as to stir the reader's compassion - is stressed to such an extent that it appears to be the sole feature of the revolution; the reader might be forgiven for inferring that the only purpose of the revolution was to kill aristocrats.

There are, it is true, a few balancing statements in
this early stage of the sequence of romances. The aristocrats are described as having "oppressed the people", and the reference in the third paragraph to "the scarlet heels of their dainty buckled shoes" suggests a certain luxury, even degeneracy in them, especially when contrasted with the "shoeless" crowd. On the other hand, the aristocrats are descendants of "the great men who since the Crusades had made the glory of France" 11; since they alone were responsible for this glory, the implication seems to be, they might be allowed a little luxury. This particular argument may have been less easy to make after the war, which put an end to the idea that heroic suffering was the prerogative of the upper classes. Throughout all the books, however, the innocence of the aristocrats - particularly of the women and children, who are kept in the forefront of the reader's attention - is stressed. A certain amount of self-seeking and vanity among individuals (since, after all, these people are French) may occasionally moderate the pity - as in the case of the snobbish Comtesse de Tournay in The Scarlet Pimpernel, or of the slightly sinister spy Baron de Batz in Eldorado - but in general the aristocratic characters are sympathetic.

By contrast, almost all the revolutionary characters are contemptible: Robespierre is shown as power-hungry and unprincipled, though cowardly and superstitious at the same time in The Triumph of the Scarlet Pimpernel (1922),
while St. Just is a demagogue who works only in the interests of his leader. As for the populace on whose behalf, supposedly, they commit their crimes, they seem quite degenerate. Their very shoelessness suggests savagery as well as poverty. Killing is a mere pastime to the Paris mob: irresponsible and callous, their fickle attention is easily distracted by any novelty. In *The Triumph of the Scarlet Pimpernel*, the very children clutch toy models of the guillotine, and in *The Adventures of the Scarlet Pimpernel* (1929), a book of short stories, revolutionaries in the provinces are seen to be petty-minded people who use the revolution for self-aggrandisement and spiteful personal revenge.

England, on the other hand, is presented as a society without class conflict. Here, aristocrats like Sir Percy can wear, not merely red-heeled shoes, but gorgeous silks encrusted with jewels, without provoking revolutionary reprisal - or, indeed, critical comment from the author. Upper-class Englishmen, however, are not vain and snobbish or ridiculously touchy like the French: they are friendly and jolly towards the lower classes, and, in turn, the ordinary people show respect for them and are honoured to serve them. Jellyband, the landlord of "the Fisherman's Rest" inn, is thrilled rather than put out to learn that he is to be host at short notice to not one but two large parties of aristocrats, and exorts his daughter to attend to them rather than to the local trade. In other ways,
however, the habitues of the inn are like children, naive, yet vain of a non-existent worldly wisdom. In a less well-ordered society (like France), their ignorance, it is evident, could be a danger.

The very fact that a book which expressed attitudes as extreme as this could become a best-seller, and that Orczy developed rather than modified her views in later novels, which continued to sell, suggests that they were sufficiently in line with popular prejudice to be accepted without much question by the readers. Perhaps the readers themselves, if pressed, might have disowned this degree of feeling, but it did not disgust them; perhaps they were not even very aware of it. Though the viewpoint is more severe, it is consistent with that of previous authors such as Doyle and Weyman and leading back as far as Dickens and Carlyle. As Nicholas Rance 12 has suggested, such fears in the nineteenth century were fuelled by awareness of contemporary social instability, which certainly had not been laid to rest in the years leading up to and following the Russian Revolution.

David Thomson 13 had characterized the period between 1900 and 1914 in England as one where economic development slowed, the country's aggregate income remaining at the same level for fourteen years despite continued population growth. This he saw as leading to "discontent" characterized by "anxiety for the protection and extension of trade-union rights" and a series of strikes of
"unprecedented number and scale" fuelled by syndicalist ideas from France. Though the year which saw the publication of The Scarlet Pimpernel was in a lull in strike activity after the spectacular strikes of the nineties when Weyman began writing, the responses of the political parties - a protectionist platform for the Conservative and Unionist parties and one of social reform for the Liberals - show that there was serious concern about the possible consequences both of the economic standstill and of inequalities in wealth at this period. At the same time, optimists could point to the popularity of Liberal policies of social reform, the prospect of which swept them to power with an enormous majority in 1906, as showing that the populace were still content to look to the government - still, at this time, largely drawn from the upper classes - for the amelioration of their sources of discontent, rather than towards revolution.

It was to become an attitude even more marked in the twenties, the period of books such as The Adventures of the Scarlet Pimpernel and The Triumph of the Scarlet Pimpernel when a "red-spy" mania in England followed the Russian revolution: socialist Sunday schools were suspected of breeding terrorism and the "Zinoviev letter" was thought to have encouraged insurrection. The image of Trade Unions as a potentially disruptive force had grown steadily from the beginning of the century and was
reaffirmed when in 1921 the workers withdrew from the National Industrial Council, set up to promote industrial harmony, and the General strike did little to help the popular image, even if, as Thomson felt, it was more likely to have arisen from a series of mishaps than as the culmination of a revolutionary trend. Despite the fears that such an image might promote among the non-unionized, its real significance according to Thomson was that its failure showed that the public in general, unionists and non-unionists alike, would not accept direct action on the Sorelian pattern, leading to revolution. In other words, it created an awareness of popular discontent in the reading public while suggesting that on the whole they rejected violent solutions. Such a public could easily accept Orczy's picture of popular revolution and class relationships, which was broadly in line with their own.

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On the other hand, Weyman had shown that a best-selling author could challenge accepted attitudes to a certain extent as long as the reader's views were finally confirmed in his books. This is the model followed by Sabatini. His work expresses much more sympathetic
attitudes to popular movements than Orczy's. In the final analysis, however, a similar picture of revolution - and, indeed, of politics in general - is presented. Sabatini writes sympathetically of young revolutionaries, but shows them to be lacking, at times, in balance and common sense, while the political arena is at all times shown to be morally dubious, with both sides in any issue potentially corruptible.

Thus, in *The Trampling of the Lilies* (1906), the revolutionary hero, La Boulaye, is presented sympathetically, while doubt is cast upon the value of the ideas by which he sets so much store (he is first described clutching a copy of Rousseau's *Discourses upon the Origin of Inequality*). The cues which are given in the description of the hero are all favourable ones: Rousseau's ideas are in one way a "great belief" and prophesies of "things to come", but their most significant life is in the "great soul" of La Boulaye - as though it is his innocent interpretation of them which makes them potentially great. On the other hand, Rousseau himself is described as "old" and his "dreams" metaphysical; philosophy in general is "a musty subject". In part, this is a preference for an active life over a studious one which Sabatini shares with Mason, but the description undoubtedly gives an impression of ambiguity. Sabatini seems to expect us to feel the value of Rousseau's ideas, while at the same time being wary of their possible
impracticability: they would be all very well if all men who followed them were La Boulayes, but ... the inference is left unexpressed. None the less, Sabatini never suggests that La Boulaye is wrong to feel as he does.

Indeed, the beginning of the story seems to confirm his beliefs, and allows the reader to sympathise with the hero's revolutionary fervour. His cause may not have been a good one, but at least it offers something better than government by a tyrannical aristocracy. The aristocrats are presented as almost grotesquely evil. Within the first couple of chapters, the Marquis de Bellecour has fired La Boulaye (his secretary) for "insulting" his daughter with words of the most respectful admiration, tried to enforce his "droit de seigneur" upon one of the village girls and had La Boulaye flogged, as he thinks, to death. Other aristocrats are worse. The Marquis's prospective son-in-law, Vicomte d'Ombreville, does not even consider the "common" La Boulaye to be human. "You might have thought that it was perhaps my duty as a man of honour to go and effect the rescue of this fellow", he tells Suzanne, his betrothed, when La Boulaye, Sidney Carton-like, has allowed himself to be arrested in his place for love of her. "Were he a gentleman ... I should not have hesitated. But this canaille!" 17. Only one of the aristocrats, Des Cadoux, who intervenes on La Boulaye's behalf, shows a humanity and courage which is the other side of the aristocratic stereotype.
If the nobles suffer in the Revolution, then, the book gives a feeling that they can have no-one to blame but themselves. The revolutionaries, like La Boulaye, are portrayed as sincere, at least. There is even a sympathetic portrait of Robespierre, who becomes La Boulaye's patron and remains a loyal friend, even when their purposes clash. On the other hand, the singleminded purity of his belief, and his fierceness towards the aristocracy, can be seen to be greater than even La Boulaye's, and fuel the machine of Terror which nearly destroys La Boulaye along with the Bellecours. There is a fearful picture of a revolutionary mob in the description of the storming of De Bellecour's chateau, and the company from the revolutionary army into whose hands La Boulaye and Suzanne fall as they try to escape the guillotine may parrot revolutionary expressions but are merely undisciplined and drunken louts. The sympathetic elements in the picture of the Revolution are thus balanced by more familiar ones which would not be out of place in *The Scarlet Pimpernel*.

A similar effect is given by *The Strolling Saint* of 1913, which is set in medieval Italy. Here, too, there are signs that Sabatini is trying to hold a balance between commitment and detachment, while at the same time conveying a powerful feeling of the corruption of the political arena. The hero's father is a ghibelline, both from family tradition and from hatred of the papacy.
Agostino, the hero, learns to follow in his footsteps, which he does with ardent enthusiasm. Yet the Emperor's cause is not presented as being particularly worthwhile. Charles V is "crafty, cruel and mistrustful of all... without greatness of any sort" 13, and Galeotto, the father, recognizes this. The reason why he supports Charles is that the alternative is worse.

Like the aristocrats of eighteenth century France, the guelfs are presented as almost grotesquely loathsome. The Pope, immoral and power-loving, aims at providing a fief for his natural son, Pier Luigi Farnese; and Farnese's authority is tyrannical. Pier Luigi himself is "A thief, a murderer, a defiler, a bestial, lecherous dog" 19. Power for him means complete self-indulgence at the expense of the people, whose support he first courts and then exploits. The nobles are reduced by taxation to "a miserable condition" 20 (though if their living conditions were only half as magnificent as those described by Sabatini, they show little sign of it). By the time of Farnese's death he was "crushing the people" whose support he once had sought: "Extortion had reduced them to poverty and despair and their very houses were being pulled down to supply material for the new citadel" 21. If the alternative is the situation as it was before Farnese took power, with "supine" nobles jostling for power amongst themselves, this at least is preferable to Farnese's rule. Hence it is the duty of the nobles to
revolt, and those who will not are seen by Agostino and his father as "coward" and "irresolute" 22.

The message conveyed by such a description must, however, be a very modified approval for revolution. The triumph of such an Emperor cannot be seen as an unmixed good. As far as class attitudes are concerned, it may be noted that this revolution is by no means a popular one. It is the nobles who have a duty to revolt; the populace is shown as gullible, easily swayed by a demagogue who does not scruple to enslave them as soon as they have given him the power he seeks. Such a description is in line with that of Orczy. As with the revolutionary army in *The Trampling of the Lilies*, the populace would be the better for a little discipline. Left to themselves, they cannot even be trusted to do their work properly. The inn-keeper who is so rude to Agostino when he thinks him an ordinary man is deferential once he realises that he is a noble; one can only expect good service if one exercises power. The inn is slovenly, too, again reminiscent of the soldiers' living conditions in *The Trampling of the Lilies*, and perhaps of the unpleasant hovel in revolutionary Calais in *The Scarlet Pimpernel*.

The conclusions to be drawn from such a presentation are, therefore, that revolutions are justifiable, but only in extreme conditions; that in the hands of the populace they are dangerous; and that those who wield political power tend to be either monstrously self-indulgent, or
inhumanly cold, or, at best, inadequate. The impression
given of both political activity and the common people is
thus far from favourable, even though it may appear
sympathetic on the surface.

This is the message of books written before the
upheavals of the war and of the Russian Revolution, which
brought "red spy" scares in its train. Later ones give an
even more negative impression of both. Scaramouche,
published in 1921, has a hero who does not even have
revolutionary ideals, as though Sabatini felt that the
public could no longer be sympathetic to them. Andre-Louis
Moreau is the agent of an aristocrat, and has had no such
experience of ill-usage as fell to La Boulaye's lot. On
the contrary: his master has been a second father to him,
giving no excuse for revolutionary sympathies. He sneers
at his friend Phillippe's democratic sentiments, but after
the Marquis de la Tour d'Azyr has killed Phillippe he uses
his friend's arguments and his own eloquence to trigger
the Revolution in Nantes and thus punish the Marquis for
his friend's death. In so doing, he merely reveals the
reality of public events. Like the improvisers with whom
he is to find shelter, the actors on the public stage give
the impression of acting by their own volition when in
fact they are taking part in a pre-arranged scenario.
Andre understands this. As the applause for his speech
rolls "loud and long" (as later it will in the theatre),
he observes that the leaders of this "delirium of
enthusiasm" are in fact wealthy merchants 23.

These are the real leaders of the revolution; with wealth, but no power in the state, the "opulent bourgeoisie" promote a movement which they see as changing the system to their advantage. The populace is their tool - just as it was of Farnese. Andre knows himself to be insincere, but he also knows that it would make no difference if he believed what he said. The Revolution is bound to happen; the occasion is irrelevant. It will happen, not because the people suffer, but because the middle class wants it. He may have "lighted the torch of the Revolution" but "the torch itself was supplied" by the merchants 24. The sordidness of public activity, in which ideals are unscrupulously used to promote the interests of a powerful class, and nothing can be trusted, since its public manifestation is a theatrical sham, can rarely have been more forcefully stated.

Moreover, the very ideals which are abused are shown to be wrong. Even the Marquis de la Tour d'Azyr can destroy them. He considers that a stratified society is necessary for public order, "or life will perish". "No other conceivable society is possible", he adds; for all that a revolution can do is to produce a temporary state of anarchy out of which a new, but not necessarily better, order will arise 25. The Terror, during which these words are spoken, is confirmation of this: Andre-Louis himself sits the truth of them at the end of the novel. "It is
... the day of the rabble... Chaos must follow, and a despotism of brutes and apes." 26. By contrast with that in the earlier book, the picture given of the Revolution is an unpleasant one, not unlike the traditional picture of the Revolution to be found in the work of Carlyle and Dickens, and also in Orczy. The reader is expected to sympathize with a hero who expresses attitudes about the populace not very different from those of the unpleasant aristocrat D'Ombreville in Sabatini's previous "Revolution" book.

If Revolution is to be condemned, however, Sabatini is careful to put in place of the democratic ideals of the revolutionaries ones with which the readers can feel some sympathy. At the very end of the book, Andre-Louis admits to the heroine that, while no revolutionary at heart, he had not simply been a cynical "Scaramouche" in his activities. He had hopes of a true republic arising in France, "a society which selects its rulers from the best elements of every class and denies the right of any class or corporation to usurp the government to itself" 27. He had supported the Revolution because it had broken the hereditary power monopolised by the nobles. Such beliefs were ones which could easily be admired by readers in the twenties. Ideally, the checks and balances of the British constitution should have resulted in just such a society; in moments of complacency, in a period when power was shared between two Prime Ministers, Baldwin and Macdonald,
whose similarities of policy seemed to have brought political stability and moderate social reform, they might have seemed to have done so. Such complacency could only be momentary, however; there were political scandals like that of Hore Belisha, and social discontents of the kind which gave rise to the General Strike. Consequently, the dominant message of the text is that such ideas are pipe dreams: in the end, Andre-Louis has to find his happiness in one of those retreats into private life so characteristic of Weyman's conclusions. Sabatini may have changed, or he may have been giving the public a message they wanted to read, or, more probably, a little of both; but there is a general feeling in this book and in its successor, Captain Blood (1922), that politics is not a business for an intelligent man, the experience of Scaramouche suggesting in particular that if ordinary people try to take power into their own hands to ameliorate their own condition, they will become a mob and incapable of ruling.

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These books were written in a period when women in particular were seeking a share in the rule of the country - or, at least, in electing the government. These years
saw suffragette agitation at its highest, and then, in the years of the war, women stepping out of their conventional roles to do the "masculine" work which men were no longer available to do. Recent books of photographs and life-histories concerned with this period show women as shipyard workers, railway carters or working on vehicle maintenance. After the war, they gained a limited form of the franchise the suffragettes had desired; but Thomson comments that the social role of women was still very limited. Though the 'twenties, which saw the publication of Scaramouche, was the decade of the "bright young things", many of the new freedoms affected only a small number of women. The majority accepted new styles of dress and a new freedom in manners and movement, for example, but essentially traditional roles remained untouched. The continuing problem of unemployment, for example, meant a good deal of resentment was felt against working women and pressure was put on them to return to the home. What change there was was apparent rather than real.

Historical romance might be expected to reflect such attitudes, as one can link Weyman's pictures of "feminine" women to a concern about possible defeminization in the 'nineties. To some extent it does: Sabatini's novels, in particular, show slight but noticeable changes in the way women are portrayed during the course of the period. None the less, as in the portrayal of politics and class
relationships, the attitudes suggested by the books of both these writers are essentially traditional ones, which would not have been out of place in a work of the 'nineties.

The portrayal of women in two books of Sabatini's, one from before the first world war and one from 1928, shows both aspects of Sabatini's attitude, the recognition of the new together with the traditional. The *Strolling Saint* was published in 1913. It is a book firmly centred on the hero, who is the narrator; women, consequently, are only important insofar as they affect him. They are presented as either seductresses or saints. His mother affects one kind of saintliness; she is a religious devotee, and Sabatini, like Doyle, shows too fervent an adherence to the Church as dangerous and destructive. Her puritan morality is unnatural and narrow, leading her to betray her husband to his enemies on the one hand while keeping her son in ignorance of sex and warfare on the other.

Agostino, the hero, is seen by his father as having grown up in an atmosphere which takes not only religion but also a particularly feminine code of thought and conduct to absurd lengths. In trying to make him sexually pure and unaggressive, it's implied, the mother was flying in the face of nature, and as soon as Agostino is away from her influence - indeed, to some extent, before - nature reasserts itself. The thrill which he feels when secretly
practising swordsmanship is compared with his feelings when first he innocently takes a girl into his arms. He is vulnerable to the wiles of the first unscrupulous beauty who crosses his path. He feels that his relationship with this woman, Guiliana, has made him unworthy of the love of the heroine, Bianca. His father, however, sees the affair as part of a learning process, to be regretted, perhaps, as a waste of time and emotion, but not ultimately harmful. Even the heroine, though she is shocked by the story at first, comes in the end to accept the young man's behaviour as natural and forgives him.

Sexual adventure can thus take its place as a natural, if perhaps to be deprecated, part of a man's life. It is not so with the women. Their sexual nature defines them totally, and the only motives with which the reader is concerned with in them are connected with love and sexual relationships. Whatever other qualities they may possess, in the last instance they are defined by the nature of their sexuality. It does not matter that Guiliana is a poet with a wide cultural knowledge which puts that of the hero to shame; nor that her position as wife to an elderly scholar is similar in its constraint of nature to that of Agostino in his mother's home. Agostino's confessor shows him "Guiliana as she really is" 30, and the "really" is significant, suggesting as it does that all else is superficial appearance; what Guiliana is
is a whore and seductress. The heroine, Bianca, is, on the other hand, all saint, but a natural saint: that is, one who is willing to accept a co-existence with masculinity on its own terms, while being herself pure and as tender as the women in Weyman's romances.

Her purity is suggested from the beginning, in language which stresses her "saint" function. She has a "chaste beauty" which moves the hero "to purest ecstasy of awe and worship" 31. A vision of her brings Agostino to atonement. He is "devout" with "a devotion that must be Heaven inspired, so pure and sweet it is" 32. She is inactive in the story, her function being mainly to inspire Agostino and to suffer near rape at the hands of Farnese, but, like the hero, she goes through a learning process in the book. "Pure" by nature, she has to learn that nature has made such purity impossible for men, and to accept that they may still be virtuous in their own way, through hard experience. Her only significant action in the story, therefore, is to turn her attention to Farnese when Agostino has disappointed her; a transference which has near-catastrophic results.

The Strolling Saint is a relatively early book and one with a considerable chivalric element. Other heroines, even in stories written before the war, are described in less devotional terms. Suzanne de Bellecour in The Trampling of the Lilies has a mind of her own, and will not be bullied into beliefs and actions which run
counter to her conscience by her father or her betrothed. She can act for herself, too, if need be, laying out the hero when she is trying to escape from him with a well-directed blow. Andre-Louis Moreau is no devote of Aline's in *Scaramouche*; their love grows out of a long-standing friendship. However, neither of these heroines is completely unlike Bianca. It is her womanly tenderness which first draws Suzanne to the suffering La Boulaye; while Aline only considers the attentions of the Marquis de la Tour d'Asyr because Andre has disappointed her by forming an association with an actress. The actress, Clymene, is very like Guiliana, a seductress who is dismissed as "worthless". Other qualities - her pride in her work as an actress, for example - form no part of our valuation of her.

In *The Hounds of God* of 1928, there is an attempt to break away from portraying the "feminine" woman. The story is set in the reign of Elizabeth I, and Elizabeth, who has a role in the story, is of course a strong woman character herself, one who can be shown as having a destiny outside marriage. Her "mannish" qualities are emphasised as though to explain and excuse this. She is described as having a brow "almost masculine in its loftiness and breadth" 33, and a "mannish" 34 voice; there is something unnatural, almost freakish, about her. She is absurd and rather terrible, with her "monstrous wig", her childlike greed for sweets, her extravagant clothes and the sudden tempers
which turn her "livid under her paint" 35.

Elizabeth's qualities, however, seem to provide Sabatini with a warrant for creating, in Margaret Trevannion, a more masculine heroine in this book than in any of his others - rather as Doyle had noted the Middle Ages as a time of warlike women before describing Lady Mary Loring. Margaret has been brought up almost as a boy; as a girl, "she was as one of the lads of her own age with whom she associated". Growing up, she learns to observe the limits of the feminine role, and feels them as a check upon her freedom, "setting a check upon her hoydenishness, arousing her to certain realities and imposing on her thereafter a certain circumspection" 36. There is no suggestion, as there might be in a book by Heyer or one of her followers, that there is anything unfair in having "circumspection" imposed; the word "realities" suggests that this is the way of the world, and "hoydenish" implies that there is something unpleasant about too great a freedom of action in women. Margaret can follow her "earlier pursuits" (riding, hawking and hunting) without being considered hoydenish. The implication is that she can be allowed a certain freedom of action without losing her femininity, but only by stealth.

The reward for "conformity" is that her masculine pursuits have "nowise coarsened her" (an "odd thing", comments Sabatini, as though any contact with the masculine must inevitably corrupt female daintiness).
She has a "feminine grace" of body and a "dignity entirely feminine" of mind. It is in this context that Sabatini talks of "inbred traits" which assert themselves "in despite of environment and experience". Thus feminine characteristics are explicitly presented as natural and the male and female roles as biologically determined, just as they were by "nature" in The Strolling Saint. In an age when science was enjoying unprecedented prestige, and when intelligence was viewed increasingly as being predominantly inbred, this was a powerful warranty for presenting the traditional female of romance as the work of nature, not to be improved.

Certainly, Margaret pays for stepping outside her role and acting against her nature. Her free wanderings across the moor bring her to Don Pedro's attention. Her incautious freedom of association with him makes him fall in love with her and so leads to her abduction, though to the end, in her innocence she has believed that they are no more than friends. Don Pedro's feelings are some of the realities she has ignored at her peril: one infers that she is to some extent "responsible" for her own abduction.

The positive side of her "masculinity" is that she is allowed to show considerable courage after being kidnapped, refusing to be intimated by Don Pedro at first, or the Inquisition later. She plans to use Frey Luis to help her escape: later, when facing the Inquisition, she uses a quick wit and a "masculine" facility in argument to
combat their accusations. "She stands upon forms of law, arguing with diabolical skill", complains Frey Luis. "Heard any ever of a woman with the wit to do that?" 37. Frey Luis is a fool, for, in common with other historical romancers of the period, Sabatini looks warily at all forms of religious enthusiasm. Margaret is even allowed a degree of success. Her courageous bearing makes the Inquisitor doubt her guilt. She wins a reprieve for herself and thus escapes the auto-da-fe which would have rendered Gervase's rescue attempt vain. It is the hero, however, who must carry out the rescue by the exercise of manly qualities such as strength and determination. It may be assumed, too, that she will marry him, her early "unnatural" resolution to live a single life having disappeared without comment on her change of mind.

Side-by-side with her "masculine" qualities she has others as feminine as those of any previous romantic heroine. The proper nature of a heroine - to Sabatini in the 1920s as to Mason in the 1890s - includes unstable moods, a propensity to be dazzled by the first specious sophisticate who comes her way, and a taste for playing with a man's feelings as a kitten plays with a ball of string, to enjoy a peculiarly feminine power. The resulting mixture of masculine and feminine is an uneasy one, and the character is not really successful; too often she is merely annoying. It is interesting that Sabatini should feel the need to create a "mannish"
heroine at this time, when the spirited female was becoming popular as a heroine in Heyer's romance, but it is evident that he felt, also, that he had to temper her strongest characteristics in order to maintain her femininity.

Orczy stays closer than Sabatini to the traditional portrayal of women as maintainers and sufferers rather than as active participants in the story. This does not mean to say they are unimportant. It is often their suffering which motivates the Pimpernel to his acts of rescue; and, since the Revolutionary government is so occupied with schemes for his capture, this means that women are frequently used as decoys. Besides, the susceptibilities of the League members are well known to the French, and so not all their decoys are victims; some, like Jeanne, the actress who ensnares Armand St. Just in Eldorado, are beautiful and fascinating women whom the revolutionaries consider a potential recruit to their cause, whatever means need to be employed to win them. Though some may be innocent pawns of the government, others are blackmailed to play their part - as Marguerite, Percy's wife, herself is when Chauvelin makes her work for him to save the life of her brother. Orczy's women face many such dilemmas, which are essentially ones of feeling; the role they play in the story may be quite an important one, as is Jeanne's, or Marguerite's, or Theresia's in The Triumph of
the Scarlet Pimpernel, but they are shadow players, parts of a grander strategy than they know, in which the real contestants are the Pimpernel himself and the revolutionary forces.

For this reason, though Jeanne and Marguerite and their sisters may be described as fascinating, courageous and clever, they can only be allowed a modified success. Marguerite, for example, can use her acting ability to obtain a sight of the Pimpernel's letter to Andrew Foulkes (though her success here is at least as much due to Andrew's chivalry as to her acting), and can go off masterfully to save Sir Percy once she knows he is the Pimpernel, but neither of these actions affect Sir Percy's scheme very much, since he is to some extent aware of her dilemma and likely actions and has made his plans to take account of them. The result of her rescue attempt is that he has to rescue her.

The effect is that, though Orczy often assures us of the ingenuity and courage of these women, the reader has to a large extent to take these qualities on trust, since the women are rarely allowed to deploy them fully in the stories. On the other hand, because their role is a secondary one, they are able to observe the action more than the more active male characters. For this reason the action is often described from their point of view, as much of The Scarlet Pimpernel is from Marguerite's. This means that the books are attractive for women to read,
providing a focus for identification, even though their action is so male-centred.

On the other hand, the image of women presented is a traditional one which offers little that is positive as a female role-model. If they face dilemmas, it is because their feelings are tender; they are made to feel afraid, not for themselves, but for the men they love, as Marguerite is for Armand. Or, if they face real danger themselves, it may be because, like Josephine Palmier in *The Principal Witness*, a story in *The Adventures of the Scarlet Pimpernel*, they are being blackmailed into a marriage they detest; as in Weyman's stories, women's suffering and bravery is usually in a context of love and marriage. Suffering and bravery: the two go together. Women's nature is seen at its best in its capacity for endurance - endurance which is so frequently on behalf of men, as well as caused by them. Thus, if Aline in *The Chief's Way*, another story from the *Adventures*, sickens of endurance and walks on her own to turn aside from the horror she has witnessed, it is because of what had happened to the men in her family and because "Men, even the most evil, seemed to have done their worst with her" 38.

Such portrayals are clearly intended to arouse sympathy; aristocratic women are the "innocent children" of France. To their lovers, they seem a combination of goddess and child: when Sir Percy is appealed to by
Marguerite on behalf of her brother at Richmond, it is the smallness of her hand on the balustrade which rouses such a passion of protective tenderness in him. In *The Chief's Way*, it is the revolutionary hero's attitude towards the heroine which leads Sir Percy to save him on her behalf, rather than aid his jealous rival Fanshawe, who is a member of his own band. This attitude is characterized by reverence: where Fanshawe gives her "dear little hand a last squeeze", Notara, the hero, can only touch the hem of her skirt, and his humility - when he might have been brutal - masters her. Aline begins to feel pity, the "kinsman of love", towards Notara because he is "gentle", and promises to keep her "safe". The attitude towards love may be seen as transitional, since what is demanded of the hero is a tender cherishing of the female, though at the same time he is likely to feel the same kind of devotional inspiration characteristic of a chivalric hero.

Women as a whole, however, are beautiful decorations rather than actors in history. In the first story of the *Adventures, Fie, Sir Percy!*, the court ladies are seen as "beautiful peacocks, spreading out their multicoloured silks and satins". In this setting they are "imperious", but they are allowed to rule in a court setting specifically because it is a useless milieu. Here, the exploits of the Scarlet Pimpernel produce a kind of hysteria of fan-worship; they are stories to produce a
thrill in an otherwise boring existence. Sir Percy down-
plays the exploits, not only because, as a chivalrous
gentleman in the Victorian tradition he is modest, but
also because the reality of his adventures is too
dangerous to make into a holiday tale for a "spoilt child
of society". Though he protests gallantry towards the
"galaxies of beauty" 43, it is clear that he allows women
a playful pre-eminence here, because they cannot touch his
real existence; the court is a self-contained little
world where inverted values rule and in the real world -
the world of adventure - it is masculine values of
strength and bravery which are important.

Although it is society women who are thus shown as
enjoying a false sense of importance which they are
allowed to feel even though - or, perhaps, because - they
are beautiful, useless and silly, the description of even
the best of the women in this story emphasises
characteristics essentially similar to those of the spoilt
darlings of the court. Thus, a good woman is "Dainty,
sweet and gracious as usual" 44. Sir Percy often acts on
behalf of women, and his attitude is invariably
chivalrous, but his behaviour both towards Theresia in The
Triumph of the Scarlet Pimpernel and towards his own wife
in The Scarlet Pimpernel and, even after they have become
allies, in Eldorado, shows how little he trusts them. If
he occasionally allows them a little part in his
adventures, it is made to seem vitally important, but the
tone is that of keeping a child quiet.

Sabatini challenges the stereotype of women to some extent, in the character of Margaret Trevannion; Orczy often allows the reader to perceive the action through a woman's viewpoint. Yet both are presenting a picture of women which stresses weakness and irrationality on one hand, and, more positively, tenderness and capacity for enduring suffering on the other. Their picture remains consistent with the traditional images of women found in earlier romances.

It may be inferred, therefore, that although some superficial change had taken place in attitudes towards popular politics, or the role of women there was still a strong residual element of old attitudes remaining, which meant that readers could accept without question the traditional stereotypes – or, at least, without much question. More fundamental changes in attitude are suggested, however, by transformations in the kind of story told, and what these show about changing preoccupations among the readers.

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These transformations include a tendency to move away from political activity and focus upon private
relationships, with a corresponding increase in traditional romantic motifs, and a change - perhaps a reassuring one - in the presentation of violence and war. Of the two, Orczy's books remain closest to the traditional adventure story formula, though even in these there is a change of focus; Sabatini uses a different formula, though one which comprises familiar elements. A certain amount of violence is included by both writers, but on the whole it gives an impression of greater control, of lacking the horror that some scenes in earlier books had.

The Scarlet Pimpernel is an adventure story, of course; but whereas in the books of Weyman and Mason the viewpoint is normally that of the hero, particularly during the more exciting parts of the story, so that the reader can share the adventure vicariously, in Orczy's work it very rarely is. This is partly because of the element of disguise: if the reader is not to know what role the hero is playing until the end of the book, for instance, it is difficult for the author to allow him or her to share his thoughts. In The Scarlet Pimpernel, it has been noted that the viewpoint for a large part of the story is that of the heroine, Marguerite Blakeney. She follows Blakeney to France and is an observer in the last part of his adventure, when he himself is in the greatest danger, but she herself is not in much danger even though there is great emphasis on her endurance - she is being
brave on behalf of the man she loves, as so many contemporary heroines were. But the suspense arises from our concern for Sir Percy. In all the books, Sir Percy is involved in hair's breadth escapes, but the truth is that even the element of suspense dies down; the Pimpernel always triumphs. The reader's interest becomes centred on the disguise and the ingenuity of his stratagems: what part is the Pimpernel playing? How will he save himself from the traps laid by the Revolutionaries, and bring off the prisoners he is trying to save as well? In the short stories, *The Adventures of the Scarlet Pimpernel*, the reader comes to expect an authorial sleight of hand to make the most unlikely character into the Pimpernel's disguise. This is entertaining, but it is difficult to empathise with a superman.

*The Scarlet Pimpernel* substitutes to a certain extent other forms of interest for the excitements of danger. For much of the story, the reader's interest is centred on Marguerite's dilemma as she weighs up loyalty to the Pimpernel, who is no more than an idea to her, against her much more concrete and immediate feeling for her brother. In addition, the author dwells on her relationship with her husband, and her disappointment in him, though always with teasing hints that Sir Percy is not the fool he seems. Although emotional concerns have not taken the place of excitement, they play a much greater role in the story than was usual at that time.

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Sabatini, however, makes concern with personal and family relationships into the central focus of his books. Though he chooses historical crises as his starting point, history is caricatured rather than presented. If he describes corruption, for instance, the picture of degeneracy is an extreme one: his description of Farnese's behaviour in *The Strolling Saint* may be contrasted with Weyman's description of Catholic licence in *Count Hannibal*. Weyman makes an impression through hints, without much overt description: a woman's foot peeping through the arras of the Duke of Guise's room is enough to suggest a world of debauchery. Sabatini, by contrast, is explicit: Farnese, his features all but destroyed by the symptoms of venereal disease, cannot keep his eyes or hands off any pretty woman, even the daughter of his host, and he is in the middle of a drunken feast when he is assassinated. Debauchery is almost gloatingly described.

Sabatini therefore seems interested in presenting historical issues as a necessary part of a colourful or horrific background where everything is more intense than in everyday life: a fantasy world which is a fit setting for "cloak-and-dagger" action. Tendencies already to be found in the work of Mason - though he was less flamboyant and more balanced in his presentation - are here taken even further. Against such a background, in which colour and excitement are stressed side-by-side with an
apparently thoughtful commentary, the characters play out an essentially private drama. Sabatini's first hero, Sir Crispin in *The Tavern Knight*, is a mercenary soldier who cares nothing for the issues in the Civil War, fights without any struggle of conscience on both sides, and is chiefly concerned with taking revenge for his wife's death and his own loss of patrimony. The discovery of his long-lost son, his confrontation with the two villains of the book, and his growing love for their ward, are central to the story, and there is very little detail about the war, which merely provides opportunities for plots and counterplots. Agostino, in *The Strolling Saint*, works on behalf of the ghibelines, but his energy is chiefly spent in trying to rescue the girl he loves from the clutches of Farnese, and even in his political activities attention is centred on the relationship of the hero with the man who turns out to be his lost father. La Boulaye is a convinced republican, but most of the story of *The Trampling of the Lilies* is taken up by an account of his attempts the life of the girl he has always loved, and their stormy relationship.

These books allow some importance to their heroes' public role; later books, written after the war, tend to stress private motivation even more. In *Scaramouche*, Andre-Louis's only reason for taking part in the Revolution is to take revenge on the man he hates for the death of his friend; his relationship with this man, who
(in a favourite Sabatini situation) turns out to be his father, is the heart of the book. In *Chivalry*, the hero engages in warfare on behalf of the ladies he loves; in *The Marquis of Carabas*, Quentin Morlaix becomes involved with the Chouans because he is trying to regain his patrimony. The hero of *The Lion's Skin* takes part in a Jacobite mission in order to be revenged on his unacknowledged father, and the story centres not on the mission but on the relationship between him and his father and step-brother. The hero of *Love-at-Arms* fights only to save the lady he loves from an unwanted marriage, having turned down an opportunity of political action against the same enemy. Even Gervase, a convinced opponent of Spain in *The Hounds of God*, only ventures to confront the Spaniards on their own soil to save the abducted Margaret Trevannion.

Sabatini's characteristic plot pattern is as formulaic in its way as that of Orczy. Heroes are concerned with reaffirming identities, with regaining lost rights to family property, and with relationships with estranged fathers and brothers, or with the women with whom they fall in love. Round their schemes for revenge or salvation the action of the story is woven; the historical setting provides occasion but not much more. Like Orczy, he provides exciting action, but most of the suspense centres upon the dramatic confrontations and discoveries of relationship made possible by the plot.
These two writers therefore differ from their immediate predecessors and older contemporaries in decentering both the element of physical adventure and that of public activity. Stories centred on private relationships can be found in Mason (The Courtship of Morrice Buckler) and Weyman (The Castle Inn, or Starvecrow Farm), but the general character of their work is more specifically historical than that of Orczy or Sabatini. The kind of drama which arises from family relationships and hidden identities can be found in the earlier books to some extent, but not obtruded so much, or developed into such a complex web as one finds in Sabatini, for instance.

Such developments cannot be readily traced to one single direct cause, or even a few. However, they do run parallel to changes which have been noted in society. It is noticeable, for example, that whereas in the late nineteenth century, from the eighteen sixties onwards, the employment opportunities for educated young men in Britain exceeded the supply, and as a consequence the empire gained enhanced importance as a field for their activities, by the 1920s the nature of Empire was changing. The concept of the Commonwealth, in which Britain was seen as merely one among equals, albeit with a special maintaining role, had its beginning in the immediate post-war period. The implications of this were pointed out by The Times at the time of the British Empire Exhibition in 1924/5. The Pavilions, "with their
suggestion of adventure, and space, and a happy life under
the skies of the bush, the prairie, and the veld" 45, could still be inspiring to young men, but the hard fact
was that such inspiration was no longer wanted "unless we
first find markets for their [the colonies'] produce". The idea of a complex world of interdependent producers
and markets, in which even the most sophisticated markets
were reaching a point of saturation, killed the idea of
the Empire as a suitable arena for the energies of surplus
young Englishmen.

National pride was not dependent upon the Empire. Doyle has already been noted as expressing an idea of
"Englishness" based on a notion that England was the home
of such qualities as chivalry, generosity and lack of
bigotry. It is a kind of national pride often expressed in
historical romance, and the more strongly as the imperial
dream decreased in importance. It can be found in both
Orczy and Sabatini: as early as The Scarlet Pimpernel in
1905 and as late as Sabatini's The Hounds of God in 1928.

Their standpoint, which combined a suspicious
attitude to all things foreign with a strongly positive
image of England, was compatible with a "little
Englandism" which could be seen as a reaction to a
shrinking empire and an increased sense of isolation among
foreign powers. As early as 1902, the English had begun to
feel isolated in a Europe bound together by systems of
alliances, and from that time onwards Britain tried to
break her former self-sufficiency among her neighbours by seeking, first, an alliance with Japan and, later, ententes with France and Russia. From standing alone as a great colonial power whose wealth and strength lay in empire, she was forced to compete on equal terms for alliance among neighbours who could once have comfortably have been ignored. In a time of economic retrenchment this loss of self-confidence made it natural enough for English readers to feel a certain amount of hostility and distrust towards the foreigners with whom they must now seek alliance. Political thrillers like *The Riddle of the Sands* expressed such hostility more directly towards Germany, one of Britain's chief trade rivals and not part of the new alliances. Such direct expression would be unthinkable if directed towards a friendly nation, but might be felt, none the less; historical fiction, however, could allow such expression if it was in the context of earlier wars, now safely in the past. Hence, it is the French against whom much of this hostility is directed in historical romance.

The mood is expressed very directly by Orczy. Revolutionary Frenchmen in *The Scarlet Pimpernel* and its sequels were loathsome: selfish, greedy, boastful, rude and treacherous. Even the best of the French, though, have their failings. Suzanne de Tournay is charming, but her mother is "the very personification of unbending pride" 46 and her brother is a "little bantam" 47, ridiculous in his
touchy sense of honour. French royalists, like the Baron de Batz in Eldorado, can be self-seeking and unscrupulous. Also, however perfunctorily the case for the revolutionaries may be presented, the Revolution can be seen as arising from a diseased society where the gulf between aristocracy and populace had been fixed too widely - the fruition of tendencies which Doyle had seen in medieval France.

The image of Britain, on the other hand, is a very positive, almost self-congratulatory one. Few lower-class characters are represented, and the landlord and clientele of the Fisherman's Rest for the most part stand for all. They are portrayed as a little stupid, fond of voicing their opinions, but characters all, self-respecting and comfortable in a free country. Their diet is better, their habits cleaner; honest bread and cheese instead of potatoes and pickled herring, which Orczy notes as poor fare in The Triumph of the Scarlet Pimpernel. The unclean tables of the fraternal supper in that book compare ill with the immaculate sanded floors of the Fisherman's Rest; in The Scarlet Pimpernel, the Calais tavern where Chauvelin awaits the Pimpernel is by contrast "horribly squalid", its walls "stained with varied filth" 48. The landlord shows his status as a "freeborn citizen" by smoking in the face of his guests, in contrast to Jellyband of the Fisherman's Rest, who may be "eager, alert and fussy" 49 as he greets Lord Tony, but is quite
ready to talk to him on equal terms without forced insolence. The English working classes know their place - Mr. Hempseed "respectfully touches his forelock" 50 - but they are not oppressed by aristocrats who are ready to chat with them, compliment their cooking and ask after their orchards.

Lord Tony is "a very perfect type" 51 of such aristocrats: lively and courteous, if not clever, he is "a good sportsman" 52 and makes himself a favourite with all classes of people. It is this typical Englishman whom Sir Percy is aping: the more easily since in many ways he is one. He has the sportsmanship and easy manners, the bravery and instinctive chivalry. What he lacks is the stupidity he assumes. As for the government, it is led by Pitt, "that great man": a complete contrast in his "caution and moderation" to Robespierre 53. The picture is of a sound and healthy society, if at times a little absurd; but though Orczy may poke fun at the English "John Bulls" who looked upon all foreigners with a "withering contempt" 54, the attitudes she herself expressed do not fall far short of theirs.

When his novels deal with a confrontation between England and a foreign power, Sabatini shows an equally clear bias towards England and the values the country is supposed to represent. His picture of the Spaniards in The Hounds of God, for example, is almost one of Fascists in embryo. The very setting - Elizabethan England - calls
upon the national pride of his readers by invoking a golden age. Little England can be portrayed as facing the bullying might of Spain. In addition, Philip seems to have forced war upon the "far-sighted" English through his unsportsmanlike behaviour towards English Protestants marooned in Spain.

There is a further dimension. The Spanish viewpoint is distorted by religion, the perverse logic of the church - just as Orczy's French were by politics. The Spanish feel justified in acting in bad faith towards heretics. The innocent English, sending aid to famine-stricken Galicia under safe-conduct, find that their sailors are arrested to "languish" in the prisons of the Inquisition. This is not simply described with anti-religious (or anti-Church) feeling of the kind demonstrated by Doyle, though Sabatini also manifests this strongly as The Strolling Saint shows; Spanish religious ideas are intermingled with some very interesting racist notions, an extreme version of a concept of heredity popular at the time. Frey Luis, the "spirited guide" of Don Pedro's ship, talks to Pedro of the Jews, "those armies of the powers of darkness", and the Moors, "those other legionaries of Hell". These racial groups have been exiled from Spain, but their taint remains in the impure heredity of many Spanish houses. All the more necessary, then, that those who are "clean of blood" like Don Pedro should not mingle it with that of heretics.
By presenting it thus through the mouth of Frey Luis, with his distorted mind, Sabatini implicitly rejects the notion of racial purity, even though he seems himself to have held some view of hereditary determinism, if not one that was overtly racist - a view that may be seen in this book in his description of the heroine. This is simply in line with the idea that moderate positions of a particular view may well be all right, while extreme variants are typical of an inflexible society; in the case of Spain, bigotry and spiritual arrogance can be seen to lead to casuistry, treachery and cruelty. Margaret's common-sense answers to the Inquisitors make an Englishwoman's thought seem refreshingly open and humane by contrast.

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The expression of a pride in a country marked by such qualities of generosity, fairness, love of liberty and common sense, side by side with the dwindling of Imperial pride, had its effect upon the presentation of adventure as the main source of narrative excitement in historical romances. The feeling that, in any case, there might be another side to the story of Empire was one which was already beginning to find its way into literature: Forster's *A Passage to India*, for example, was published
in the 1920s. Conrad's *Lord Jim*, calling into question not only the wish fulfilling nature of romantic dreams, but also the very concept of adventure as a fulfilment for man's nature, had already expressed a more sophisticated doubt of such idealism. If adventurousness was no longer functional after the First World War in providing cannon-fodder, neither was it in developing the outposts of the Empire. During these years, therefore, it was natural enough that other forms of excitement came to be valued. Sabatini adapted to changing attitudes in this respect by pruning the "heroic" aspect of his writing, and reinforcing other elements of excitement.

Sabatini's post-war romances made their appeal to readers sick of the violence of war as well as starved of glamour by its privations. Thomson has called attention to a widespread longing for peace after the horrors of war. To wage war was thought of as almost a criminal act, and should be punished (as in the case of German reparations). The British, too, were counting the economic cost of war: it became clear that this could not be balanced by the reparations, and that, in addition, a good customer had been lost in Germany. Keynes's attack on reparations had been very influential. Even before the war, as Cockburn has pointed out, rumours of war came "at least once a year" 58, and in such an atmosphere it could be reassuring to read fiction which stressed the theatricality and artificiality of its violent actions. The reader would
know that "these swords were only property swords" and "the blood is not real blood". He saw Farnol as supplying books with such a reassuring atmosphere, but Orczy and Sabatini did so too.

Warfare and violence were to a certain extent unavoidable, of course, for authors who were presenting the crises of history. Indeed, in *The Strolling Saint* Sabatini appeals to a different mood, one very prevalent in the year immediately before the First World War, of glorifying the nobility of war in the cause of one's country. War here is seen as a natural expression of manliness, as opposed to the unnatural religious life of asceticism imposed upon Agostino by his mother. His father believes that his "thews" were made to bear something more useful than "thuribles" 59. Saintliness almost breaks Agostino's health and has driven him half-mad by the middle of the book. When he leaves his hermitage, it is in the belief that "I might the better be able to serve God in the world" 60. It is soon made plain that this service is to be through the soldierly skills he has inherited from his father. When he first holds a sword in his hand he feels a thrill which is described as though it were almost sexual in its intensity. There is no suggestion that there is anything sinister in this feeling, however; rather, it is presented as natural. This is a long way from the espousal of "feminine" values promoted by Weyman; similar ones here, though taken to extreme, are made to
seem unnatural. The book is unusual among Sabatini's fiction, however; his very first book, *The Tavern Knight*, shows a withdrawal from warfare from the purpose of a private revenge, to find love instead, and this is more typical of his work in general.

Other books by Sabatini show a violence controlled by rules, and thus kept within careful bounds. Andre-Louis, for example, in *Scaramouche*, learns to be a master of fence, and thus fighting is presented as a skill to be learned. In *The Trampling of the Lilies* the violence of the mob is vividly described; in *Scaramouche* the climatic scene is played out against a moment of mob violence, but from the viewpoint of the actors it remains a distant threat, a "distant muttering of angry multitudes". Two Swiss guards are reported as having been "done to death", but there is no direct description of violence; the reader's attention is focussed on the personal relationships in Mme. de Plougastel's drawing room, as Andre learns the truth about his birth. The direct impression of the revolution's violence comes in the duelling in which first Andre's father and then he himself engage, in order to thin the numbers of their political opponents. These duels are at once more personal and more rule-bound than mob-violence; they seem well under the control of the characters. Although Andre-Louis kills his men, they seem like paste-board opponents.

This impression is reinforced by the theatrical
metaphor which runs through the book and is stressed in a
number of ways. Andre feels himself to be an actor as the
applause rings out after his speech in Nantes. He has been
speaking the words he has learned from another man: his
friend Phillipe, killed by the Marquis de la Tour d'Azyr.
Andre, we are told, decided to use his own eloquence and
his friend's ideas to spark off a revolution which will
destroy the Marquis. "'It matters little'", Andre
apostrophises his dead friend, '"that I do not believe in
your gospel of freedom. I know it - every word of it'" as an actor knows his part. In Nantes he takes the name
of "Omnes Omnium", which is interpreted as meaning "All
for all". It is an ambiguous phrase, however: it could
also mean "all things to all men". It is a name suited to
Andre-Louis, who can move men while being himself unmoved.

Sabatini is at pains to emphasise his hero's role as
actor. He finds refuge after his speech among a troupe of
strolling players, who use the roles of the Commedia del
Arte. Each has his own created character, which at once
hides and reveals his "true" nature - "'Each one'", says
the leader, "'is designed by nature for the part he
plays'". So it is with Andre. "'Buffoon!'" he tells
himself as he puts on the costume of Scaramouche. "'At
last you have found yourself.'" Sabatini comments: "Today
he went forth under the name that properly described his
type, whereas last week he had been disguised as a
respectable provincial attorney."
Such comments highlight the fact that when Scaramouche takes part in public events, he is merely playing his theatrical role on a wider stage: hence the book's title. "For what had he been at Rennes but a sort of Scaramouche - the little skirmisher, the astute intriguer, scattering the seed of trouble with a sly hand." 65. Even in his personal life he greets emotional moments with an assumed air of frivolity: "He must ever be playing something. That was his nature" 66 describes his acceptance of the revelation of his mother's identity.

Such an emphasis on the theatricality of the story tends to make the revolution itself seem like one of Scaramouche's ingenious plots, always under his control and readily brought to a close by drawing down the curtain. Horror controlled by a veneer of ritual and of calm politeness is something which is often to be found in Sabatini's work, especially in the later books. Justin, the hero of The Lion's Skin, can jest when he is almost mortally wounded; 67 Peter Blood, the pirate, treats the heroine in Captain Blood with exquisite politeness, dressed in his best black and silver. Chivalry is about warfare; but it is mercenary warfare, which, as Sabatini is at pains to stress, is limited in its horrors. There is something of the game about it: "one of those games of living chess which still made up a campaign between mercenary forces, who desire neither to suffer nor to cause unnecessary casualties" 68.
In any case, war is presented in this book as being too costly a business to wage irresponsibly. "Venice was not the only one to be exhausted by the long-drawn war. What but exhaustion ... had reconciled [Francesco Sforza] to leaving Bergamo and Brescia in Venetian hands?" asks the "crafty" Duke of Milan; he himself was in "no case to initiate a fresh campaign". The lords fear the kind of treatment their cities might receive from irresponsible mercenaries who break the code, like Piccinino who, having seized some townships, "delivered them over to pillage and rapine by his soldiers". They therefore stand aside from wars which are no business of theirs, and there is a feeling that they are sensible to do so: "It was not that it mattered to her whether Anjou or Aragon ruled in Naples". This is far from the commitment to reform found in The Strolling Saint. War is portrayed as costly in economic and human terms, and its objectives valueless. It is only tolerable to contemplate when it is a kind of chess: Columbino, the hero, wins his battles as much by trickery as by fighting, and it is difficult to believe that he actually kills anyone.

Chivalry was published in 1935, at a time when the shadow of war was just beginning to appear again. It offers a conception of history in which warfare becomes outdated because of the formation of mutually suspicious power blocs. It was a view which may have appeared reassuring in the year in which Italy moved into
Abyssinia, since it suggested that while the means may have been questionable, positive good could come of such a move. Columbino, the hero, is aware of the nature of the world - he is "equipped with ... perception" and sees it as divided into sheep (merchants, peasants, craftsmen and clergy) and wolves (the princes and their soldiers). Wolves may destroy the sheep; they are also necessary to protect them, for otherwise, the sheep or "toilers" are subject to unending harassment.

But in the end he gives up his role of ambiguous protector, since it has become outdated: his mistress abdicates the lordship of Ravenna to bring it into the Venetian hegemony. "'How many times,'" the Venetian envoy asks her, "'have its [Ravenna's] hapless citizens been given over to pillage and rapine? ... because the rulers of Ravenna have not had the necessary strength to intimidate attack'". Venice is strong enough to protect them but will not use that strength irresponsibly; once having gained Ravenna, she will be satisfied and no more wish to wage war than Florence or Milan would, since none of the powers wishes to disturb the political balance: "at heart Florence no more desired a Milanese than a Venetian hegemony in the North ... so that the balance of power should not be disturbed". Meanwhile, the power of Aragon has been established in Naples, which will therefore be a reasonably stable unifying force in the south. Columbino's comments on Samaritana's
renunciation ends the book on a note of affirmation: "'it is very well'" 76. It may have come to seem like an affirmation of appeasement, too; if so, it would ring hollow in later days.

As for Orczy's Sir Percy, he must have taken part in many violent scenes and his life was often enough in danger, but once his ability to control any situation is established in the first book of the Pimpernel series, the danger seems unreal. Sir Percy, like Scaramouche, is an actor, "playing a deliberate and studied part" 77; like Columbino, he is capable of fighting but prefers to gain his ends through ingenious stratagems. To him, adventure is a kind of sport; he will even give himself a handicap if he thinks it improves the game. Thus, in The Triumph of the Scarlet Pimpernel, he agrees not to tell Marguerite, his wife, that Theresia Cabarrus is a revolutionary spy, even though it could put his wife in danger 78. Theresia has flung down a challenge which appeals irresistibly to his sporting instinct. He is certain, however, that he can win, whatever the odds; nothing really terrible is likely to happen, since he will always have an answer to the most apparently dangerous situation. In The Adventures of the Scarlet Pimpernel he comes close to death on one occasion, only to remark in the end that he had never enjoyed an adventure more. Imprisoned, and at the mercy of his enemies, in Eldorado, he seems really to suffer; but he
is only waiting for the best time to put his plan into action.

Stories such as these, where the hero's role is an actor's part and danger is only a game, offered escape from fears of real war, or reassurance that history was moving in a direction which would, in, the end, make war impossible in the civilized world. Mature powers do not fight; mature heroes are not in danger. And the pasteboard armour and cardboard swords of the stories necessitate a particular kind of hero: one who is powerful enough to control events, but vulnerable and sensitive enough to make him hide his true nature under a mask.

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The heroes of Sabatini and Orczy are more complex and opaque than those of earlier writers. They are objects of contemplation rather than ciphers to be identified with; already the modifications which eventually enabled historical romance to become a predominantly feminine genre were beginning to take place. Thus, though Sabatini's Agostino, and Gervase in The Hounds of God, are innocent juveniles very like Alleyne in The White Company, his first hero, Sir Crispin Galliard, has the fascination
of a much older man for his heroine - one who is experienced, wily and cynical, but tender at the core. Honoria, the heroine of The Lion's Skin, has to see through the cynical, imperturbable surface of Justin Caryll before she can appreciate his genuine chivalry. Andre-Louis Moreau is a complex rogue with a strong sense of personal honour and a capacity for deep feeling, which he hides behind a flippant exterior because his intelligence tells him the dangers of exposing one's emotions. These are heroes whose qualities are not obviously heroic - but who are closer than the more virtuous and adventurous heroes of Mason and Doyle to the masterful, worldly wise figures at the centre of women's romance.

The character of Orczy's hero is given more prominence than was usual in historical romance of the period, where plot was generally more important than character. Sir Percy's character is crucial to the plot of The Scarlet Pimpernel. The story turns upon the identity of the Pimpernel, and the fact that, in his persona of gilded fool, Sir Percy is the least likely candidate. Like Sabatini's heroes, he hides real feeling and capacity under a frivolous exterior, but Orczy goes further than Sabatini in disguising his true nature. The Pimpernel is almost extravagantly brave and competent; Sir Percy is his exact opposite, a man who "had very little brain" and who is "passive, drawling, sleepy". Although the
Pimpernel is "a leader of men ... a hero ... the mighty, high-soaring eagle" disguised, he is negligible. In all the stories he is the most contemptible, the least noticed figure, so that despite his obvious hero qualities - his height and athletic bearing for example - he can take advantage of the natural camouflage his roles afford to pass unseen. Thus, in *The Scarlet Pimpernel* itself, he is one old hag among many as the loathed tricoteuses drive out of Paris; or, at the end of the book, an anti-Semite's dream of a Jew, all greasy curls and whining opportunism. Sir Percy is but one of these various personas, but it is the most striking.

It is so because it is one which allows hints of the truth to appear constantly. Sir Percy gives the impression of a man who must wear a mask of some sort, since he, too, like Scaramouche, has learnt the dangers of deep feeling. There is a hint in the very power of his self-control that he might have had reason to distrust the strength of his emotions; he certainly distrusts their objects. His much-loved mother, we are told, died mad, and he is very like her; the fact is presumably, both a threat and evidence of a kind of betrayal in her withdrawal from the world of the sane. Marguerite is the second person to whom he has given his heart unreservedly, and she proves false; when, on their wedding day, he hears of her denunciation of the Marquis de St. Cyr, he knows she is not to be trusted. The "gilded fool" becomes a mask in private as well as in
public, for fear of self-betrayal.

The fact that he had allowed Marguerite to see a little of his true nature before the mask was in place, however, means that although she believes that she despises him, he fascinates her — and, consequently, must perforce fascinate the reader, too, since it is her viewpoint that we chiefly share. Even in a featureless babble sounding from another room, "she could distinguish... her husband's occasional, drawly, sleepy comments" 81. Though a wall separates them, the thought of him is enough to banish dreams of the Pimpernel: "not twenty yards away from her a man was drinking and laughing, to him she had sworn faith" 82. The precision of the distance suggests a heightened, nervous awareness. She is for ever jibing at him: "'The child is bursting with rage, and, 'she added with a soupcon of dry sarcasm, 'might do Sir Percy an injury'" 83. The sarcasm is directed at Sir Percy's passivity, since he affects not to notice the insults of an incensed Vicomte.

All these jibes may spring from irritation and suppressed frustration since she has to admit to herself she has made a mistake in marrying Percy and is now tied to him. Yet it is clear that he fascinates her, too; she admits that "she tried to arouse him by sharpening her ready wit against his dull intellect, endeavoured to excite his jealousy ... tried to goad him to self-assertion" 84. Her consciousness of him runs parallel with
her dreams of an idealized Pimpernel, and the two are linked by memories of Sir Percy's love for her: a love which once had had "a certain latent intensity" which gave hints of the heroic and make her suspect that his present dullness was something she had herself created through her behaviour - though the truth of this is not clear enough to her to make her change her tactics. All these references, however, serve to keep the central enigma of the book - the implied contrast between hero and dullard, and the association between Sir Percy and the Pimpernel, who even share the same initials - in the forefront of the reader's mind.

As to the personality itself, it was popular because both the mask and the face beneath had their own fascination. The very fact that Sir Percy is a role-player gives him an interest of the same order as that of Scaramouche or Justin, and Orczy emphasises the fact as much as Sabatini does: "he was not only wearing a mask, but was playing a deliberate and studied part." He is by definition a man of mystery; but his roles themselves have their own fascination. On the one hand, he is a fop: to be laughed at, it is true, but associated none the less with a kind of expertise, an ability to operate the social rules which is close to worldly wisdom, and with a surface magnificence which has its own glamour. On the other, without the mask he is a resourceful leader of men, a skilled actor, a brave and chivalrous hero and a cunning
strategist. For the figure to be effective, both sides are important; without the hero, the fop would be merely ridiculous, but without the fop the hero would be a bore. It is the tension between the two which creates the excitement and glamour which gave the book its appeal.

Heroes like Sir Percy and those of Sabatini attract despite the fact that we are shown little of their inner thoughts - Orczy, in particular, never shows the action from Sir Percy's viewpoint, and despite Sabatini's constant commentary we often have to infer his heroes' real feelings - because they are figures of power, whose intelligence and self-control render them relatively invulnerable. If readers were turning to romantic literature as an escape from features of their lives which were beginning to seem intolerable, this impression of power, together with the stress on the importance of the unique individual in history, can be seen as providing an antidote to an increasing sense of individual powerlessness which has already been noted as arising from the nature of British society at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

A sense of personal powerlessness was almost inevitable in a society in which the government had grown too complex for the individual to grasp fully, and in which power was invested in bodies of increasing size and
remoteness. Public Administration was centred in larger and larger bodies: the Electricity Commission, founded in 1919, and the BBC, founded in 1922 are examples of such a centralizing tendency in the post-war years, while examples from the end of the last century have been given in chapter six. "Ministries", says Thomson, "were no longer seen as the means by which an individual minister exercised power, but as permanent bodies of experts" 87, while "administration" took on increasingly bureaucratic connotations.

In the workplace, employers were more likely to be big corporations than accessible family firms: Thomson notes the growth of industrial giants such as Courtaulds, Celanese and Austin-Morris, all big combines developed in this period 88. An economy dominated by big international monopolies was unlikely to give the individual a sense of power to affect his or her environment; by contrast, what a novel by Orczy or Sabatini offered was a mystery at whose core was revealed a single, powerful individual. Yet the fact that this individual at heart is as vulnerable - or more so - than ourselves, allows us to share his experience a little by understanding it.

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In the same way, the conditions of daily life in the twentieth century emphasised the glamour of the historical setting, which in Orczy's and Sabatini's books is made to seem very magnificent. The suburbs whose growth had been so marked a feature at the beginning of the period were now becoming enormous, particularly in the south-east; by 1931, London had grown to a population of 8,000,000, a fifth of the population of England and Wales. The fastest growth was in the suburbs, in the shape of ribbon development and vast council estates. Moreover, the buildings had, since the previous century, been made from mass-produced brick and standardized plans, so that towns began to lose their individuality. New methods of production and retailing - the assembly line and the big cheap store like Woolworth's - meant that life was becoming more comfortable, with more consumer goods within reach of the ordinary person, but at the cost of individuality and a sense of craftsmanship - the loss of which was expressed in the work of writers like Sturt and the Leavises. Q.D. Leavis's *Fiction and the Reading Public* (1932), and often, parts of *Scrutiny* itself, read like a lament for the loss of quality from life and a determination to preserve what traditional standards remained. *The Scarlet Pimpernel* and *Scaramouche* were the very kind of books that Queenie Leavis deplored, but their appeal probably came from a similar, though less articulate, feeling in the reading public.

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The paraphernalia of daily life in the works of Orczy and Sabatini was, as often as not, made up of things of beauty and magnificence for which the historical settings gave warrant. Most of the descriptive detail which Sabatini includes in his stories of the Italian Renaissance, for instance, is lavish and colourful. The interiors of The Strolling Saint with their frescoed walls, brilliant hangings - some in cloth of gold and silver - and elaborately carved table-furnishings (a salt by Benvenuto Cellini, for example) are especially rich. Details of male and female attire are described lovingly and extensively - like the golden net in which the Count of Acquilla confines his hair in Love-at-Arms, or the heroine's silks and velvets in Chivalry.

Orczy has chosen a period which on the face of it seems drabber than the Italian quattrocento, but she takes the reader to the very heart of a glittering Regency society, none the less, as can be seen by her choice of location: Covent Garden on a gala night, the Foreign Secretary's ball, or Sir Percy's magnificent Richmond mansion. The settings - the grand rooms of the Foreign Office, exquisitely decorated with exotic palms and flowers "for the most brilliant function of the year" 90 - are complemented by the magnificence of the costumes: the Prince in "salmon-coloured velvet richly embroidered with gold", Sir Percy in "shimmering cream satin" trimmed with "priceless lace" 91, or Marguerite with her gold-
embroidered train and sparkling rubies. This picture of a splendid Regency society was one which was to be drawn again and again by later writers.

What Sabatini and Orczy offered their readers, therefore, was a world where violence existed, it is true, but was always under control, a game or masquerade. Though their books contained warfare, it was painted in less favourable colours as the terrible reality of war began to be realised. Above all, it was a world where the conditions of life were beautiful, and the individual was important, even in a political context which seemed to make this impossible: the French Revolution, or an Italy which was rapidly coming to comprise a balance of conflicting power blocs. Perhaps the epitome of this is to be found in The Triumph of the Scarlet Pimpernel, where it appears that the fall of Robespierre is a direct consequence of Sir Percy's desire to free his wife, held hostage by the revolutionaries.

Jeffrey Farnol

Whereas Orczy and Sabatini were traditional in the way they set their work at a time of historical crisis, Jeffrey Farnol made a definite break with such uses of history. His work is romantic first and foremost, and historical only insofar as it uses the past as a nostalgic

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frame for a world which never existed in fact: an impossible "old England" untouched by the industrial revolution. He is not concerned to produce an accurate picture of pre-industrialized Britain; his England is simply what the modern world is not, a gentle, countrified background for private adventure.

He includes almost no public conflict; his is an England at peace, though there are suggestions of a heroic recent past. Sir Richard Anstruther in The Broad Highway, for instance, is the "type" of an English country gentleman who has fearlessly confronted death on "the littered quarterdeck of reeking battleships" and "the smoke and death of stricken fields" but who now passes his days happily among turnips and cabbages. His experience links him with the humble men who fought with him as common soldiers: Tom Price the carrier, for example, who fought in the Peninsular war, saving his officer's life and being set up afterwards in business by him. Sir Richard's "duty" has been "well and nobly done" and Tom has achieved "Glory!" for his pains. For the readers of 1910 who feared the prospect of war, the book therefore offered a peaceful world, but one in which fighting, safely in the past, has provided an achievement of which Englishmen could be proud and which has to some extent united all social classes.

In general, however, it is the peaceful beauty of the countryside rather than the fighting, however noble, which
is stressed. Farnol's picture is idyllic, like his description of the Oxford road in The High Adventure: "a white, dusty highway shaded, here and there, by stately trees ... past crawling country wains ... past plodding wayfarers ... past shady wood and purling rill ... past fragrant rickyards where busy fowls clucked and smock-frocked figures turned to stare" 94. The parklike suggestion of "shady trees" frames a picture which could have been drawn by an eighteenth century landscape artist, with a wealth of picturesque detail but anything that might suggest poverty, hard work or filth left out. The archaic, slightly poetic diction, which was not altogether unusual in this period but which was a particular hallmark of Farnol's style, adds to the impression, which seems designed to lend the past a warm, sentimental glow like a Christmas card scene.

A country village in Farnol's England is portrayed as manageably small, "some half-dozen cottages with roofs of thatch, or red tile, backed by trees gnarled and ancient" 95. Here, "characters" like the Ancient in The Broad Highway - childlike, opinionated, yet loveable, a kind of idealized grandfather - or Black George, the gigantic blacksmith who can fell a man with a blow and yet, when he is not tormented by jealousy, is a gentle man and a loyal friend, live out their lives. They may not be significant figures on the national stage, yet in the village setting they are men of importance, as is every individual who
lives there, since the village is shown as a tiny world in itself, though linked with a hundred others as complete and self-enclosed. The past, too - a purely local one - lives on here in the memory of the old people, to become legend in due course, like the story of the suicide who built Peter Vibart's cottage in The Broad Highway.

Farnol does offer the reader some splendour: though the setting is rural, his heroes and heroines are aristocrats or gentry, and have their London seasons as members of society. As Jeremy or Sam, in The High Adventure (1926) or Heritage Perilous (1946), go to town to take their place reluctantly in the polite world, the fashions they are made to wear are described in detail - the swallow-tail coats, embroidered waistcoats and buckskins and knitted breeches - so that the reader can share the pleasures of Regency magnificence. The pastimes are described, too: the company of fashionable wits, like "the brilliant Sheridan ... Fox and many others", or the games for adults: "wild prodigality ... drunken, midnight orgies ... days and nights over the cards" 96. Although in Farnol's work these indulgences bring the heroes - or, more likely, their friends - to grief, to read of them brings vicarious pleasure.

The country setting and the cosy world of the village is, however, more characteristic of Farnol's writing, and it is easy to see how this could fulfil the same function as the individual adventurer does in the work of Orczy and
Sabatini. Their power and success gave an impression that the individual still mattered, in a world where the springs of power seemed far away from the control of the ordinary man or woman; and the miniature village society, where everyone is strongly individualized, gives a similar one.

Within the limits of the village society, Farnol portrays a world which may contain individual, private conflicts, but no social conflict. Cockburn mentions a radical quality in Farnol's first book, The Broad Highway 97; when the hero, Peter Vibart, first broaches the idea of leaving the world of scholarship behind him, for example, he shocks his friend Sir Richard by valuing the man who works with his hands (digging, for example) more than the idle gentleman such as he himself might have become had he received his uncle's fortune. Later in the novel he actually becomes a blacksmith, and takes pride in his craftsmanship.

Despite this, there is no suggestion that the villagers, who take pride in doing an honest job of work, feel any resentment when it becomes obvious that power in their world lies in the hands of the idle gentry. Peter's friend Peregrine, for example, is just such an idle gentleman who has wasted his patrimony through dissipation in London. An unexpected legacy gives him another chance, and this time he settles down to become a landowner near Peter's Sissinghurst. When Black George, the blacksmith
who is so valuable to society by comparison, breaks the law, however, his friends must beg leniency from this very Peregrine, now a magistrate; not only that, but they have to beg Peter's help to put the case to him, since they cannot approach such a powerful figure themselves. Yet no-one seems to feel that there is any injustice in this.

On the whole, whatever stratum of society the characters may belong to, they are portrayed as content with their lot. The villagers respect the gentry, but do not envy them. Black George, for example, is honestly glad to hear that Peter is a gentleman of fortune, though he feels that this distances Peter from him as though a gentleman were another order of being; he wants to wash his hands before shaking Peter's, even though he had shaken them often enough before without any such fuss. Peter, on the other hand, shows that he values George's friendship and the dirt which is the fruit of his honest toil by insisting on shaking George's hand just as it is. An image of mutual respect and loyalty has been built up which contrasts with the fashionable yet treacherous world of Peter's cousin, Maurice Vibart.

Farnol thus portrays a prosperous countryside in which a self-respecting and basically contented peasantry looked to the local squire for authority. The squire protected his own interests against them, it is true, through the game laws. Though the hero of The Broad Highway is too new to fortune to be much concerned with
such matters, he already shows an awareness of the landlord's right to his game when he disapproves of eating a poached rabbit from the Sefton estates. His wife laughs at his precision, but only because she knows that the rabbit is in actual fact her own. Sam, the reluctant aristocrat of *Heritage Perilous* and *My Lord of Wrybourne*, is forced to scare off poachers by the disapproval of his fellow landlords.

None the less, Sam is typical of Farnol's heroes in making his operation of the laws as lenient as possible, and in his concern with the well-being of his tenants. A good landlord shows his sense of responsibility by looking after his tenants, and by knowing them as individuals and as friends; thus Peter's attitude to Black George shows him to be a good landlord in embryo. This ideal society is an essentially patriarchal one.

Certainly, in turning his back on Sir Richard's world at the beginning of the book, to live in Sissinghurst, Peter does not leave Sir Richard's values behind him: his generosity, loyalty, bravery and love of the land. Such qualities belong to the true gentlemanly code, which in Farnol's work shows an affinity with Doyle's chivalry and the feminine, Huguenot qualities promoted by Weyman. By the time of *The Broad Highway*, the chivalric paraphernalia beloved of the Victorians might no longer be in fashion, but its values can be seen as assumptions, not only in the work of Farnol, but also in that of later writers who
developed the "Georgian myth", like Warwick Deeping. In Farnol's books it can be seen to have a similar function to chivalry in Doyle's, since "gentlemanliness" amongst the landlords means a contented peasantry, and none of those social discontents which at the time could be seen to disrupt the social fabric in the contemporary series of strikes.

The code thus validates the claim of the aristocrats to their authority, as Sam shows himself aware in *Heritage Perilous*; he will not take upon himself the responsibilities of the lordship of Wrybourne until he is sure that the taint of Wrybourne blood - which so often shows itself in irresponsible tyranny towards the tenantry - is not dominant in him. *The Broad Highway* is, among other things, the story of the development of a good landlord. Peter has a right to become one, first, because he was born an aristocrat - but that alone is not enough, as the experience of Maurice Vibart, and of Peregrine, shows. An aristocrat may succumb to the temptations of London society and live a life which is wholly frivolous and irresponsible. Peter refuses to do this; hence his expressed preference for an honest workman over an idle gentleman at the beginning of the book.

Secondly, Peter's education makes him, in the end, a wiser man than ever the childlike and naive villagers can be, because it gives him the opportunity to know the world and reflect upon it. Education by itself is not enough,
however; this too, is one of the things which Peter seems to be rejecting when he expresses a preference for "digging" at the beginning of the book. Charmian, the heroine, laughs at his philosophizing and suggests that his learning hinders him from understanding people; the suggestion is, that the best schoolmaster is experience. Peter learns more about dealing with people - by implication the most important thing he can learn, and one which fits in with the image Farnol is promoting of the good landlord's role - from his love for Charmian and his relationship with George than ever he did from his books. He learns a good deal about his own human nature, too; but on the other hand, it is his philosophy which gives him the vision and self control to act, on the whole, at the promptings of the better part of his nature. Farnol's attitude towards learning is not unlike Mason's, in fact, since his heroes too prefer the active life to their books, and also find too much learning a handicap when dealing with villains or women. Farnol's heroes tend to profit in the end more both from action and from learning than Mason's do, however, and they are unhampered by the needs of a public mission.

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Peter - and in this he is like Sam in *Heritage*. *Perilous* is shown at the beginning of the book as having good natural characteristics, but as needing to learn others through experience before he can take his place as a leader by right in the idealized society which Farnol depicts. The qualities which are developed in him are familiar ones: manly strength and judgement tempered by feminine understanding and gentleness. Farnol is more unusual in showing her heroines as also developing and maturing during the course of the book, though Doyle had previously given a hint at such development in his portrait of Maude in *The White Company*. Farnol gives his heroines a more substantial role than Doyle did, though in character they are not unlike traditional heroines.

Charmian, in *The Broad Highway*, is fairly typical, and in some ways the most interesting. Like other Farnol heroines, she is at home in natural surroundings, though she can also take her place as a leader of society. She has the bravery of a character in one of Weyman's stories when it is necessary, but she also has a wilfulness which Weyman would have disagreed with. She is vain, too, as Mason's women are: she submits Peter to a course of teasing which is designed to make him acknowledge her beauty. St. Anthony himself, she complains, would at least have acknowledged her charms in rejecting them; Peter will not even notice them. On the other hand, her behaviour is seen to spring from a half-conscious desire.
to educate him: all his notions of women are drawn from books, so that she sets herself to show him that imaginary women "exist for us only as their historians permit them" 99. Real women need understanding, and understanding needs both experience of human nature and emotional commitment, the lack of which she is continually deploiring in Peter. Hence her ridicule, which drives him nearly demented, in the fashion of a Mason or Doyle hero, with frustration and bewilderment.

Charmian thus shows a mixture of vanity, worldly wisdom and women's instinct ("I believe in first impressions") 100, apparent volatility and actual loyalty which is traditional in these romances. At the same time her strong sense of her own individuality ("you cannot bend or shape her") 101 and her readiness in defending herself - it is with difficulty that Peter stops her from shooting Maurice - are foreshadowings of the "spirited" qualities of later heroines. In a way, Farnol is producing a figure which combines two different, and not easily reconcilable, sets of qualities. He resolves the difference between the two kinds of heroine - spunky and teasing - by making Charmian into a kind of earth-goddess, and thus beyond easy comprehension. She cradles Peter in her arms when he is wounded, and her eyes have a "witching" quality 102; she comes to him first by moonlight and he finds in her beauty a "dormant power" which is "at odds with prettiness" 103. Though Peter says
she is "no goddess" 104, even her name has a suggestion of enchantment.

She is, therefore, a fit object for chivalrous worship, but at the same time she is domestic, softening the austerity of Peter's hut with little feminine touches, like making him use a tablecloth; she cooks him bacon and rabbit stews and nags him about mending the front door. With her "strange whims, and fancies, her swift-changing moods, and her contrariness" 105, she represents, like Mason's heroines, very much a man's view of the ideal woman. Many of Farnol's heroines, like Andromeda in My Lord of Wrybourne, exhibit the same mixture of mysterious femininity and Amazon. Essentially, while anticipating later "feminized" romance to some extent in his presentation of women, Farnol's stories remain male-centred and narrated from a masculine viewpoint.

This is modified by the fact that Charmian, at least, learns and develops during the course of the story. In her femininity there are wild qualities which respond to the aggressively male qualities in Maurice Vibart: "the tempest that may destroy her ... a will strong, and masterful, before which all must yield or break" 106. She allows Maurice to tempt her into an elopement, but his attempt to rape her convinces her that he is not the man for her. Instead, she chooses Peter, having learned to value the opposite qualities to those to which she responded in Maurice. Though she recognises these
instinctively (so that she falls in love "from the very first" and "meant you should marry me from the first") she puts Peter to the test by living side by side with him for weeks and letting him believe that she is a killer. She demands from him absolute chastity, protectiveness and loyalty, and Peter, though sorely tempted, provides them.

Both may be said to learn more of their roles in life as man and woman by being together, just as Weyman's hero and heroine in *A Gentleman of France* learn in the greenwood. That this was Farnol's intention may be seen from the little allegory he provides in the names of his characters, showing them both moving together in moral qualities. Charmian comes to value the steadfast qualities of Peter, the trustworthy foundation stone, while he has to ignore the attractions of Prudence, the blacksmith's love, for the more dangerous enchantments of Charmian, who is half goddess or witch as well as woman; in the end, he wins, and she becomes Sophia, or wisdom, since this is her true name.

This presentation of Charmian can thus be seen to have features in common with earlier romance, though it also shows a move towards the kind of relationship between hero and heroine which is typical of later romances - notably in the heroine's reaction to Maurice Vibart. Maurice, changed in function, could have figured in almost any female-centred romance after Heyer, and the heroine's reaction would have been very similar. Farnol's actual
hero, "a gentil man, and strong", in the words of Charmian's rhyme, is, however, typical of the heroes of older romance.

On the whole, therefore, despite the innovatory personal and a-historical nature of his story, the imagined world of Farnol retained much that had been traditional in historical romance. Even the society he pictured was not very unlike those of Doyle, Weyman, or even Sabatini, for in showing a paternalistic, aristocratic and contented society he was showing as already achieved the state to which their societies were striving. There is a hint in Doyle that this kind of integrated society is a tendency in English society in particular: French society is shown as much more class-ridden and full of conflict than England, and the knightly code, though international, seems most recognised in England. If anything, the cause of any class conflict in Doyle's world is the foreign aristocracy. This strong tendency to see free and contented lower classes and true gentlemen as particularly English is part of a strong nationalistic sentiment which can be seen to a certain extent in Weyman and Mason, but is even clearer in Orczy and Sabatini and was expressed with particular potency by Farnol - in his case, without any mention of foreigners.

He creates the impression he wants by portraying Arcadia in the English countryside. All the traits of his landscapes and villages already described add up to an
impression of a mature society, in which the individual could live free from over-many social constraints, and in which communities lived bonded together by mutual respect in an idyllic countryside; even to walk its roads was a heady pleasure. Wars had been honourably fought, but now the land was at peace. Here the values which Orczy and Sabatini portray as typically English - fairmindedness, sporting instincts, bravery and chivalry - seem typified by a succession of heroes - Peter, Sam, or Jeremy - who are scholars, sportsmen and gentlemen, and who do doughty battle against the forces of evil.

The peacefulness of the countryside does not mean, however, that there is no violence in Farnol's books. His heroes live constantly threatened by villains and their creatures; his books are often murder mysteries, like The Loring Mystery. Jeremy's life is constantly threatened in The High Adventure, as is Sam's in Dangerous Inheritance. Perhaps his best-known character is a detective - Jasper Shrigg, the Bow Street Runner. Cockburn saw this element of violence as being, paradoxically, a reassuring one: he believes that Farnol was providing an anodyne for the concerns of an increasingly alarming period by showing disruptive forces at work in society, but making clear that his story was all illusion, so that they need not become over-involved in its sufferings - the "property swords and unreal blood" which have been noted - and, allied to this, the unreality of the "Georgian myth"
already referred to.

Thus, The Broad Highway, Farnol's first book, begins with an "Ante-Scritum" which purports to be a dialogue between the narrator and one of the book's characters, a "literary Tinker". This not only has the effect of calling the attention of the reader to the fictional nature of the story (since the book they are discussing is the one which contains them both) but also lays bare the important features of the genre.

These may be roughly divided into two major groups, corresponding to the two views expressed in the dialogue. The narrator wants to write about the English countryside: "walls and by-roads" with their trees and streams, dotted with wayside taverns, "country things and ways and people" - in other words, the English idyll aspect of Farnol's writing. The Tinker, on the other hand, feels that he will only please his readers if he writes of "docks or earls, or barro-nites", "a little blood", "and some love". For him, the pleasure of reading a book comes from living vicariously through its experiences, the more exotic the better: "I've made love to duchesses, run off with heiresses, and fought duels - ah, by the hundred!". Cockburn feels that the function of the Ante-scriptum is to destroy suspense, and to some extent it does, since the reader knows that the book will end happily in some way. More importantly, it tells the reader the kind of story to expect.
The book proves to contain something of both elements, country things and blood; it is the story of a strange inheritance, a disguised heiress, mistaken identities, an elopement, misunderstandings and mysteries - culminating in the murder of the villain and the danger which threatens both hero and heroine as a consequence. This aspect of the book is a concentration of the stock situations of romance. Cockburn comments on the "creaking" of the plot, but admits that this was no disadvantage in the eyes of the readers, who presumably chose it because it was that sort of book. The devices of the genre are here brought together and exposed without shame, rather as Umberto Eco suggests happened in the film Casablanca. This gave Casablanca the psychological pulling power which made it a cult movie, and presumably the same quality made The Broad Highway into a bestseller; the effect is much more concentratedly romantic than is the case with Weyman's novels, or even Orczy's and Sabatini's.

The melodramatic devices may therefore, to judge by the popularity of the book, have touched springs of feeling deeper than the public attitudes expressed in the generality of historical novels. One of the most potent is that of the mask, as Farnol uses it in The Broad Highway: the discovery of a hidden identity. Peter Vibart lives as "Peter Smith" in Sissinghurst, as a symbol of his rejection of the idle world of the Regency gentleman. He
marries Charmian without ever suspecting that she is in reality the Lady Sophia whom he rejected at the beginning of the book, so that although he seems to have turned his back on the prospect of fortune held out by his uncle's will, which made the marriage a condition of inheritance, chance and his own chivalric nature brings him the money anyway.

In seeking out first Maurice and then Peter, and testing both, Sophia can be seen to be controlled in her turn by the will, which therefore takes on the aspect of fate or magical determination. Pre-determined or not, the hero has to go through a number of tests before he can achieve this fate. Hero and villain, however, are, to a degree, one whole person; startlingly alike, they are often mistaken for one another, though they are opposite in temperament. The struggle between them is a kind of psychomachia, since one is all evil and the other all good; where Maurice tries to elope with and then, it appears, rape Charmian, Peter lives by her side by her side for weeks and controls his feelings. Maurice carries out the evil which appears as temptation to Peter; when he escorts Peregrine's bride Helen through the wood, for example (after saving her from abduction) the warfare between good and evil becomes internalized; he is aware of temptation like a demon speaking in her ear. It is not so much, however, that the cousins represent opposite sides of the same nature, as that their family connection

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gives them the same raw materials of identity, to shape as they will.

Although an account of the plot may make it seem the weakest element in the book, its popularity must in part have been due to it. and not only because of the unreality with which the presence of the Ante-Scriptum invests it - though this does undoubtedly give a tongue-in-cheek quality to the incidents of the story. In unashamedly drawing together so many romantic motifs into a story which has elements of fairy tale as well as of melodrama, Farnol completed a development which had begun with Weyman and continued through Mason, Sabatini and Orczy: to make history merely a validating frame for an essentially unreal story, but one which contained elements which spoke strongly to the hopes and fears of its readers.

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Conclusion

All three of the authors in this chapter show a movement towards a more melodramatic plot with a greater emphasis on such romantic situations as hidden identity, family disagreements, revenge, contested inheritances and the like. In Farnol's work, indeed, history itself has become little more than a frame whose distancing effect provides opportunity for a fantastic plot.

Many of the attitudes expressed by these writers are
traditional ones to be found in other writers of the genre: towards sex roles, social class and popular revolution, for example. Up to a point, received attitudes may be questioned, but, as in the case of Weyman or Doyle, ultimately the effect is to confirm them in the name of moderation: heroines may be spirited, but ultimately they must conform to a patriarchal society, and though sympathy may be shown towards poverty and hardship, the populace should not take their fates into their own hands through revolt or dissent.

One or two new attitudes were beginning to emerge. In a period full of alarms of war, which was finally to break out in circumstances which were ultimately to bring its horrors home to ordinary people, the violence characteristic of the melodrama is shown as unreal and carefully controlled. War's evils are stressed, or warfare is shown as safely in the past. To counter-act the drabness of contemporary life, there was a stress on the power of the individual and the magnificence of the wealthy. At the same time nationalism was satisfied by a strongly positive presentation of England.

To some extent this magnificence, though attractive, emphasised the gulf between rich and poor and contradicted that sense of harmony between classes which the authors offered as one of the advantages of being English. Farnol's heroes, for instance, often choose to live simply in a cottage, but the "happy ending" demands that they
take their places in society without a backward glance or a sigh for rural simplicity. For the most part, the writers attempted to gloss over such inequalities.

There seems to be some attempt to do this by associate magnificence with cleanliness, and cleanliness with sympathetic characters - good, sensible, middle-of-the road ones. Agostino's return to aristocratic normality in The Strolling Saint is signalized by a bath and clean linen. However, the concept of cleanliness is an ambiguous one. Certainly, when Orczy comments on the dirty tables of the republican "fraternal suppers", it is meant as a comment of the degeneracy of the Parisians (as well as, perhaps, an expression of a view of the continent as a dirty, unhealthy, place very common in England until very recently). As certainly, the clean, sanded floors of the Fisherman's Rest are part of a picture intended to be pleasing: the inn may have its ridiculous features but on the whole it is the product of a sound society, and good housewifery is a sign of it.

Obtrusively clean clothing is another matter. That shimmering cream satin of Sir Percy's - even the colour seems chosen to challenge dirt - and his wife's gold embroidered train which she trails on the steps of her Richmond mansion 113 - these things imply a care which Marguerite Blakeney herself was unlikely to supply. Regency hostesses in Georgette Heyer are constantly sending their jewels to Blundell and Rudge for cleaning

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(often taking the opportunity to have them unobtrusively copied in paste at the same time so that the originals could be sold); but who starched those immaculate cravats which the heroes could tie with such ease? Regency upper-class cleanliness was supported by an infrastructure of workers whose labour produced half the value of the "priceless" lace and silken fine linen. Another part of their value of course came from the labour involved in their manufacture - in countless backstreets and country cottages in "dirty" France, no doubt. The cleanliness in this part of the financial structure of a society where the work of the many goes to benefit the few, and from that point of view the theme is one which points to, rather than glosses over the divisions of society.

When, however, Sir Percy appears in the squalid tavern near Calais where Chauvelin is waiting to trap him, the trouble he has taken with his appearance (Orczy mentions the "immaculate" lace at his wrists) is clearly intended to show his insouciance rather than the intrinsic value of his outfit, and also to symbolize something clean and wholesome in that filthy place. Cleanliness is to his credit, not to his laundress's.

Equally, when Sabatini's "Marquis of Carabas" or "Scaramouche" are seen abroad in noticeably clean linen, or making sure their rooms are spick and span, this is counted to their credit, whereas dirt is often a sign of villains - especially among the lower classes. Here,
cleanliness is seen as the result of the hard work which is their natural function and keeps them out of mischief: the gleaming pots and pans of the Sissinghurst inn in Farnol's *The Broad Highway* are portrayed as being actually jealous when Prudence marries George and so divides with him the attention which was once wholly theirs. Charmian starts a regime of cleanliness in Peter's hut as soon as she moves in; she insists on a tablecloth, for instance, and begins to nag Peter to do odd jobs like making the table legs even and barring the door. Both now spend a good deal of time washing in the pool or in the well.

*Enjoyment of the magnificence, or even the nostalgically attractive simplicity, of the setting is, therefore, not a simple matter. It is part of a complex of associated themes which contain moral implications. On the one hand, the value of the materials which create the glamour can be seen as part of the economic structure of an unfair society. That this is not more evident is due to the omission of any reference to the detail of the work which supports it, unless that work can somehow be presented as natural and therefore pleasurable - in reinforcing the female role, for example. Thus a great lady might find housework unexpectedly enjoyable. For the rest, the work of so many laundresses, lace-makers and silk-weavers can be seen, not as something to be enjoyed by the rich, but as something the rich have willed into being - a part of their personality and even something*
which can be set to their moral credit. This was a feature, first noticed in books of this period — though it has been characteristic of Ainsworth and his popular imitations — which was to become characteristic of the genre.

Although many of the changes in the genre contributed to the continuing popularity of historical romance, as the success of The Broad Highway, The Scarlet Pimpernel and Scaramouche shows, they may have been, in part, what ultimately led to the withering away of the cloak-and-dagger story for a general readership. Adventure stories had made a particular appeal to men, but the new kind of romantic hero, though adapted to appeal to developing feelings of insecurity and powerlessness in the modern world, made identification, and so vicarious enjoyment, for men more difficult. An enhanced role for the heroine, which is noticeable in a number of the books, The Scarlet Pimpernel in particular, might have made the book more attractive for women — as did the new kind of romantic hero — but less so for men. Even the magnificence of the clothing, and the lingering over details of fashion may have made the genre less appealing for men, especially when the fashions of both sexes had a feminine quality; no man, presumably, in the twentieth century, could easily identify with Sabatini's count of Acquila, who wears a hairnet, silk stockings and a tunic which, after all, is a kind of skirt. Contemporary genres such as the Western,
the crime novel and the political thriller, which either emphasised masculine adventure or showed the individual hero warring against a corrupt society, were at this time growing in popularity and gave men a readier focus for vicarious enjoyment. It may even be that the emphasis on chivalry, good sportsmanship, and "feminine" qualities of gentleness and retirement may in itself have provided a barrier for such enjoyment compared with the tough-minded heroes of an American crime novel; the heroes of an English historical romance may well have seemed insipid and the general tone one of drowning in sugar syrup.

At the same time, new leisure activities were available - sports facilities, the radio or the cinema (which to some extent popularized cloak-and-dagger romances, though at the same time providing a rival to fiction reading in general). Watching football matches, or going for a drink and a game of darts with friends at the local pub became popular. Men, therefore, had more activities to choose from whereas for women, especially after the war when many returned to the home, fiction reading remained popular, both as fitting in with their patterns of work - as has been noted, they needed an occupation which could be done in odd moments - and as giving glimpses of a wider world. At the stage of development the genre had reached by the time of Orczy and Farnol, not much was needed to change it to a form which directly satisfied this need.

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In consequence, one finds the old cloak-and-dagger or adventure novel appearing less frequently. The nature of the stories which took its place, and the way in which the change was made, is the subject of the following chapter.
Chapter 8

Georgette Heyer

The early years of this century saw a number of developments which influenced the course historical romance was to take. Many of these have already been mentioned: different patterns of leisure-time activity, especially for men, which made fiction reading less attractive for them, though not for women; the cinema, whose costume dramas both stimulated interest in historical romance and provided a rival medium; and the development of new genres, such as crime and spy fiction, or Westerns, which satisfied the taste of many men for adventure and, perhaps, for vicarious violence. At the same time, as has been observed in the previous chapter, developments in historical romance itself may have made the genre less appealing to male readers. An increasing glamorization of the hero made him a less suitable object for identification; while luxurious descriptions of social life, and, in particular, details of fashionable dress, were becoming of predominant importance, for reasons suggested in chapter five, even though danger and excitement (of a more "private" kind) remained important ingredients. This kind of fashionable detail is usually taken as having a particular interest for women.

It was in this context that, as has been shown in chapter two, a striking change took place in the genre.
the love-story - sometimes combined with an element of social comedy, sometimes retaining the melodramatic, swash-buckling qualities of the earlier stories - became a predominant element. Thus, from appealing to a general audience, the genre became almost exclusively a branch of women's fiction, and eventually developed as a sub-genre of women's romance.

As was mentioned in chapter two, the writer most directly responsible for the change was Georgette Heyer. This writer, who was both prolific and extremely popular, specialized in historical romance, though, as has been noted, she did write some more serious historical fiction based on biographies of serious historical figures, and some crime novels. It is her historical romances, however, for which she is chiefly remembered, and her distinctive style and typical mode of characterization and plot structure were enormously influential, as was described in chapter five. The authors who followed her in the genre have for years been writing within the framework she laid down.

This is not to say that an early Heyer novel is markedly different from the work of her immediate predecessors. Her earliest books - in particular her first, The Black Moth, which was published in 1921, the same year as Sabatini's Scaramouche - are "cloak-and-dagger" romances of a kind which could have been written at any time in the early twentieth century. Even in her
mature, fully-developed work, there is no abrupt break of tradition. The difference is one of emphasis; yet this change was enough to reorientate the books quite markedly towards female experience and interests.

Heyer is thus an important figure in promoting those changes in the genre which are the concern of this study, and an examination of the way in which the changes were made, together with their ideological implications, is therefore of particular interest.

Her first book, *The Black Moth*, shows the state of the genre at the point at which she entered it. This is a traditional romance of the Farnol-Orczy school: in fact, Joan Aiken Hodge, Heyer's biographer, mentions these writers as important influences. Hodge calls the book "a wildly romantic tale, and wildly readable" and the "wildly" suggests its flavour fairly accurately - that is, as an engaging piece of melodramatic nonsense. It is a good example, in fact, of what Cockburn called "the Georgian myth", the creation of which he attributed to Farnol. The plot is full of romantic motifs, centering round a disgraced hero who makes a living as a highwayman, and the attempts of the villain to abduct the heroine. There are duels and dramatic confrontations and hair's breadth escapes, and the climax is a nerve-tingling ride across country for the hero as he goes to rescue the heroine from the villain's clutches. Such elements link the story not only to those of Farnol and Orczy, but to
the work of Mason and Weyman before them.

The success of this book, which was enough to establish Heyer as a novelist, suggests that the "cloak-and-dagger" story still had a wide audience. In fact, like Sabatini's work, which has many similarities, it still sells and is enjoyed: some fans continue to prefer it, as Hodge points out, to some of her later novels. None the less, she achieved a success of a different order with These Old Shades, a book which, as was noted in chapter two, she wrote at a time when she felt her career needed a new impetus. To some extent the book is a return, after a number of experiments, to a previously successful formula. It is set in much the same period, though it gives a picture of Parisian high life which differs from the setting of the earlier book in an English country landscape. This is not a "Georgian myth", but it is a "cloak-and-dagger" story, centering upon the discovering of the heroine's noble identity, and involving disguise and abduction. That there was a significant difference from the usual "cloak-and-dagger" story is, however, shown by its enormous sales. It has already been remarked that her fans throughout the rest of her career were predominantly female, and when her fiction was serialized it was in a well-known woman's magazine. Yet her first book, so like it in so many ways, had been written for an ailing younger bother. In other words, its hair-raising adventures had been created with a male audience in mind. What was it
about *These Old Shades* which made the difference?

As it happens, the two books invite comparison, since their relationship is a close one. The "shades" of the later title are, as it were, shadows of the earlier characters. Names have been changed, but there are noticeable similarities both in the characters and in what has happened to them. In other words, reference to the past in *These Old Shades* suggest that they have been recently involved in some such episode as the story told in *The Black Moth*. The villain of *The Black Moth*, Tracy, Duke of Andover, reappears in *These Old Shades* as Justin, Duke of Avon, and some at least of his family - Lady Lavinia, who becomes Lady Fanny, and Andrew, who becomes Rupert - are common to both books. The hero of the earlier book, Jack Carstares, and the heroine, Diana, have a minor role in *These Old Shades* as Anthony and Jennifer Merrivale. Because of these close links, the similarities and differences between the two books are easy to pick out.

Since the plots are basically very similar, the major differences are to be found in the way the characters are portrayed, and in their roles. Essentially, what has happened is that the villain of the first book has become the hero of the second. This makes him a different type of hero from those of earlier books. The new kind of hero has more faults than virtues, but has provided a pattern for countless later romantic heroes. Avon stands out from
the rest, not as a sympathetic personality, but as the most powerful character in the book. It is difficult to imagine him carrying out a mission from some higher authority, like the heroes of Mason or Weyman; nor can he be seen as a dispossessed victim, as so many of Sabatini's characters were. Consequently, although he is the most charismatic character in the book, which owes much of its appeal to his fascination, he is too much in control of events for the reader to feel much suspense on his behalf; and this disqualifies him from playing the central - usually the victim - role in the romantic motifs which make up the plot. This role must now be played by the heroine, who, though of greater importance in twentieth century than in earlier novels, was usually of minor importance compared to the hero. This shift in turn led to other changes, and so is worth a detailed examination.

The qualities of the new type of hero can best be seen by comparing Avon with his predecessors: the hero of The Black Moth, who shares his function, and the villain, who shares much of his personality. Jack Carstares is not a wholly conventional hero for a historical romance, but he has much in common with the heroes of Farnol. Just as Farnol's Jeremy Veryan (in The High Adventure) was sent down from Oxford because he would not "sneak", so Jack takes upon himself the blame for his brother's cheating at cards, and loses his place in society. His relationship with his brother is not unlike those of Farnol's heroes.
with ne'er-do-well relatives for which they feel responsible, and like these equivalents - Richard Armadale in The High Adventure, or Ralph Scrope in Heritage Perilous or My Lord of Wrybourne - the wildness is shocked out of the younger, Dick, and love completes his reformation.

Jack, ruined and falsely disgraced, picks up his living where he can, as Crispin Galliard and Andre-Louis Moreau do in Sabatini's The Tavern Knight and Scaramouche: like both of them, he has been a fencing master, and, like Crispin, a gambler. His disguise as a highwayman is something to be enjoyed by the reader for its own sake, since evidently it is quite unnecessary - the reason given for it is very thin - but it adds an element of danger to give piquancy to the romance of a hidden identity. Jack is, of course, the most chivalrous of robbers, a Georgian Robin Hood who only takes from the undeserving rich, and never from a lady. His chivalry links him to the heroes, not only of Farnol, but also of Orczy and Mason, and the mask of foppishness which he assumes to hide his vulnerability is borrowed from the Scarlet Pimpernel.

The villain, on the other hand, is pure Farnol. Like the Chevalier de Ravenac in The High Adventure, Tracy the Black Moth, will not shrink from ruining a young man if it suits his purposes. Thus he engineers the mistake which disgraces John, and uses the hold which Dick's guilt offers him to "squeeze" him for all the money he can.
His heartlessness and promiscuity are stressed, and he seems to prefer rape to seduction: he abducts the heroine twice, apparently with this intention. None the less, like the wicked Sir Robert Chalmers in Farnol's *My Lord of Wrybourne*, he seems to have a heart to be touched by the right person: his love for Diana humanizes him, or so his best friend thinks.

Justin, Duke of Avon, is clearly based on Tracy, but there are differences which are significant in the context of the changing readership. The retained characteristics are perhaps the most immediately obvious. Tracy is "Devil Andover"; Avon's nickname is "Satanas". When Tracy speaks, he is said to "drawl" or "sneer" and his "smooth tones" are shot through with a "faint hint of sarcasm". Avon's voice, too, is "smooth", with "an undercurrent of sarcasm"; at one time he even "purred". Both men have gambled away a fortune, and Avon has unscrupulously repaired his by ruining a young innocent at play, an action which has led indirectly to the young man's death in a duel. Both are womanizers, and both resort to abduction when they cannot have the girl they want. Both have one redeeming feature: an honest friend, of whom they seem unaccountably fond, who stands by them when their plots are foiled and carries them off to Italy: Tracy to Venice, Justin to Rome.

The differences between the two are slight, but their effect on the image of the character is striking. It is
perhaps significant, for instance, that although Avon is conventionally villainous in ruining a young man, he is not directly responsible for his death - as Farnol's Chevalier de Ravenac had been, for instance, for so many suicides. Avon's victim delopes in a duel: there is an element of doubt about Justin's responsibility. There are differences in the appearance of Justin and Tracy. Avon is a less striking figure than Tracy, whose appearance suits his devilish nick-name. Both have heavy-lidded, glittering eyes, but Justin's hazel sounds gentler than the green of Tracy's, which has associations of jealous slyness and catlike qualities of mystery and the occult.

Tracy is altogether a sinister figure: his unpowdered hair and brows are black, his face "almost unnaturally" pale, with slanting brows, thin lips and high cheekbones - a "damned mask" of a face which reinforces the impression of the uncanny. He dresses always in black and silver. Even his boots have "wicked-looking" spurs on. There is less stress on Justin's pallor, and though his lips are equally thin and sneering, his brows are straight (with connotations of straightforwardness and honesty) instead of slanting. He wears powder on his hair (we are not told the colour) and favours purple instead of black. Each detail has been shifted very slightly so that although the general impression is remarkably similar, Justin seems warmer, more colourful - in short, humanized. He speaks of the
It is impossible to imagine Tracy "chuckling". And whereas Tracy's eyes seemed to the half-mesmerized Dick at one point "to be reading to my very soul" 12, Justin reveals that the "uncanny omniscience" with which he is credited is a quite false notion 13. Many of the "devilish" connotations have vanished: even Justin's version of the nickname, "Satanas", does not state them so directly as Tracy's.

The loss of the most obtrusively villainous characteristics is one of the ways in which the "Devil" becomes hero material. In their place, he has attracted to himself some of John's romantic-heroic characteristics. It is more surprising to find a likeness between these two characters than it is to find one between the two obvious equivalents, Tracy and Justin. There are, however, a number of common characteristics, and, together with the softening of Tracy's villainy in Justin, they make the character a more viable hero. The first description of each hero shows a likeness. On Justin's first appearance he is described as walking "mincingly" in red-heeled shoes, with a long purple cloak lined with rose hung loosely over a "full-skirted cloak of purple satin", gold-laced and covered in jewels 14. This may be compared with Jack's first appearance as "Sir Anthony Ferndale", wearing a "full-skirted coat of palest lilac laced with silver" and "shoes with high red heels", "a huge emerald" (a
favourite stone of Justin's) flashing on his finger 15. Justin's purple may be said to stand midway between Tracy's villainous black-and-silver and Jack's heroic pastel colour.

Both John and Justin thus value a rich and fashionable appearance, but in both cases the "foppish" look is only a surface impression. Even the vigorous way in which Jack opens the inn door shows his strength 16, while Justin, attacked by the heroine in the guise of a boy, bears down "his" wrists with an unexpected strength 17. Justin shares Jack's wit and sang-froid. Though their mocking manner is often assumed to hide their feelings (Jack, especially, grows cold and stiff if anyone trespasses on his private feelings; throughout an emotional scene with the heroine, for example, he remains pale but well in control of himself) 18, their mockery is often little more than good-natured banter. Thus, when Leonie admits to bad temper and adds that the local Cure had often scolded her for it, Avon is "dry" but amused: "'You do not appear to have profited unduly from his discourse'" 19. His language is more sarcastic and less whimsical than Jack's: more like that of a crusty schoolmaster. Justin, however, is more sociable and witty than Tracy: the company at Madame du Deffand's in These Old Shades eagerly wait for him to read his verses or tell a story. "'He is always so witty!'" 20 comments one of the guests. While not exactly genial, he has clearly
moved a long way from the "Devil" persona of Tracy.

Thus changed, he is capable of becoming a hero who can to some extent engage his readers' sympathies. None the less, his characteristics are not those usually associated with a hero in the tradition of the genre. If he is more sympathetic than Tracy, he remains a powerful and rather alien figure. To rob him of his enigmas, to show him uncertain or suffering (as so many previous heroes had been) would be to destroy half his fascination. Though he disclaims "uncanny omniscience" he is a powerful figure by virtue both of his superior intelligence, and of his lack of scruple. He is will personified: a puppet-master who makes the other characters dance under his control - a man to be admired, rather than someone with whom the reader can easily identify. Moreover, a number of decidedly unheroic qualities remain, left-overs from Tracy: his promiscuous womanizing, for example. When he first enters the story, he is on his way from his mistress's, a woman who is to be discarded almost as soon as he meets the heroine.

Despite such barriers to identification, or perhaps because of them, Justin provided a pattern for innumerable later heroes. The powerful, ruthless man who shows contempt for women, but who is "tamed" by love for the heroine, was to become a cliche of women's romance. Janice Radway, indeed, claims that this kind of character and transformation is necessary if the romance is to be a
satisfying experience for its readers. She saw the transformation as important because it released the tender, caring, womanly side of an aggressively masculine hero. If that is so, then the character must assume a natural dominance before transformation since he stands, in a way, for the patriarchal hegemony.

Certainly, Justin is changed by his relationship with Leonie. The impression is given that he has been cold-hearted in the past — though, in line with the general modification of the character, less so than Tracy. Tracy, for example, has little family feeling: "'the contemplation of my brothers appals me'" he tells his friend Frank, and though he has some affection for his sister Lavinia, he does not hesitate to use her as a pawn in an attempt to fleece the rich, weak, Richard Carstares. Only for Frank does he show any hint of kindly feeling, though this does not prevent him from wounding Frank in a duel. Justin may also disclaim family feeling (his brother and sister "'more than suffice me'"), but a friend has heard that in fact he "reared" them, and indeed he seems to have been a relatively strict and conscientious guardian. However, he certainly makes no show of fondness for them, and his relationship with his friend Hugh (the "Frank" of the later book) seems one of tolerant mockery rather than
real friendship. Though he may not go his own way as "insolently" as Tracy does 25, he is an essentially lonely figure, uncommitted to any relationship.

From the moment he meets Leon/Leonie, however, he begins to change. He tolerates "impertinence" from her which no one else would even dare to offer. He tells the Cure who used to teach her that he is to be trusted with her, and his description of her is tender. He is angry with his sister Fanny when she thinks Leonie is his mistress, though his former way of life had given her good reason for the supposition; a movement towards "respectability". When he brings Leonie back to Paris as his ward, Davenant is astonished at the change in him: "There was a shout of laughter; Avon's own face was alight with it." His eyes "rested upon his ward with ... tender amusement" 26. To Edward Marling, Avon's brother-in-law, Davenant confides: "'I see ... a vast change ... in our Satanas ... she twists him round her little finger, and, by Gad, he likes it!'" He hears a note "'of - faith, of tenderness'" in his voice and believes that Justin will cherish Leonie 27.

By the end of the novel, Justin seems to have changed his personality almost entirely. He is warmer, more tentative, and more like a conventional hero. He behaves as quixotically in love as Jack Carstares does, refusing to marry Leonie for a similar reason to the one Jack gave for refusing Diana: that he will drag her down, in
Justin's case because of his debauched past. Leonie has to call him "blind" (as many a former heroine had called her hero) and refuse to take the place he has won for her in society before he will make his offer. When he does so, it is in terms as reverential as those of any Mason hero, asking if she will "stoop to wed him." By this time, too, love has made him forget the aim of personal revenge with which he began his plot against Saint-Vire, and he thinks only of avenging Leonie. When at last, her identity established and his doubts allayed, he presents her to his family as his Duchess, it is "with a curiously proud smile." He is more open in his feeling for his family too: when Rupert has "rescued" Leonie from Saint-Vire, Justin praises him and takes care of his wound. All these changes fit the model suggested by Radway, in which the tender, caring, feminine side of a man's nature is brought out by love, overwhelming the socially constructed "masculine" qualities such as hardness, aggressiveness and irresponsible use of personal power. All Avon lacks to be completely within the pattern is the tender-looking feature which Radway notes as essential for the transformation; and this may be found, perhaps, in his unavowed care for his brother and sister in their youth.

Few earlier heroes of historical romance fit this pattern: heroes in novels by Mason, Doyle and Farnol, for instance, have to be teased into becoming more assertive. They become more "feminine" in a way: the heroes have to
learn to "read" human relationships, which is seen as a "feminine" skill. This is not the same thing as identifying the tender, caring side of human nature with femininity and making it an important quality. For that, one must go back to Weyman's novels. Some of his heroes do change - Clyne, for example, or de Berault - but they do so by learning to respect femininity, not by showing it. Only de Marsac is naturally tender, and in A Gentleman of France the heroine has to learn tenderness, and de Marsac more assertiveness. On the whole, heroines are presented in earlier books as naturally tender, as Genevieve is when she takes care of Hannibal in Count Hannibal, or as Heyer's own Diana is in The Black Moth. Heroes, however, retain their masculine "strength" and power, even when they lose masculine aggressiveness. Weyman's Henrietta has to be tamed; his Clyne does not, even though he may have to learn to respect his wife as an individual.

The particular transformation described in These Old Shades seems, therefore, to be new in historical romance, even including Heyer's own early work; but Radway's comments suggest that it set a pattern which is very typical of romance, and which female readers find particularly satisfying, since on the surface it seems to enhance female power and prestige. This alone might be enough to account for the popularity of this book and the successors which followed the same pattern; but also, the change had implications for other relationships in the
novel, which played their part in making the genre a part of woman's literature.

The transformation of the hero, for instance, is accompanied by a shift in perspective - necessarily so, since if the full dramatic impact of the change in the hero is to be felt, it must come unexpectedly. Also, as has been noted, the hero must remain powerful and apparently invulnerable in all except his relationship with the heroine. For both these reasons, the reader cannot be made a party to all his inner doubts and tensions, or learn the truth about his change of feeling as it happens, before the time comes to reveal it. The hero must remain opaque and enigmatic: an object for contemplation rather than a subject for identification. Consequently, though he remains central to the book, he cannot be the central figure that he is in earlier romance; on the other hand, the solving of the enigma of his feelings, the revelation of his love for the heroine, becomes a high point of the story.

This means that in These Old Shades, as in later women's romance, the interest of the story lies in this revelation, rather than in the intrigue and adventure. Indeed, there is little physical adventure in These Old Shades, a point of strong contrast with The Black Moth and Heyer's other early historical romances. The chief danger for Leonie is one of social ostracism, not imprisonment or death. She does escape from Saint-Vire when she is
abducted, and runs away from Avon rather than shame him, but she does so with relative ease. There is no doubt that the novel is a romance of a familiar pattern, of course, since it is so full of conventional romantic situations - Leonie's identity, her boy's disguise, and her abduction by Saint-Vire, for example - but in comparison with most cloak-and-dagger stories this is an adventure of the drawing room, the court and the salon.

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In such a setting, the heroine can take a more active role than she can in an outdoor one, and this means that her part becomes a central one rather than peripheral. In previous novels, the heroine entered the action almost by accident, often because she happens to live in a place where the hero finds shelter, or enters for his own, masculine, purposes. A novel such as Weyman's Starvecrow Farm is a rare exception: more typical are his Under the Red Robe, or The Abbess of Vlaye, in which Des Ageaux finds shelter for the night at the home of the heroine. In These Old Shades the action centres upon Leonie from the beginning. The plot is initiated by her precipitate meeting with Justin; her situation provides the problem to be resolved in the story. The resolution is achieved
when her identity is revealed and she takes her proper place in the world; in earlier romances it was more typically the hero whose situation provided the story's main interest.

This does not mean that the story is told wholly from her viewpoint, though when feelings are described they are usually hers. There is a difficulty, however, in completely laying bare the thoughts and feelings of someone whose identity is hidden from us. Much of the action of the book is in fact described as though we were viewing it from the outside. There is comparatively little description of feelings and thoughts, and where the viewpoint of one of the individual characters is used, if it is not Leonie's it is usually that of one of the minor characters: Lady Fanny or her husband, one of the Merrivales, Hugh Davenant, or Rupert.

None the less, the heroine is undoubtedly of central importance in this book, even if she does not provide a ready focus for reader-identification. The reader's interest and sympathy are solicited for her, and her character is displayed very fully. Indeed, the revelation of all the facets of her personality seems to be one of the book's chief objectives, and this gives the book much of its characteristic tone and atmosphere.

This means that the heroine's personality must be an unusual one, capable of bearing such scrutiny, and able to take an active role in the story. Few earlier heroines
could have done so: Mason's Clementina, perhaps, or Doyle's Maude. For the most part, however, there was little opportunity to develop an interesting character for the heroine, though she might have commendable characteristics. Diana Beauleigh, Leonie's counterpart in *The Black Moth*, provides a good example, and shows the kind of heroine to which the character of Leonie is a reaction. Her most noticeable characteristics are beauty and tenderness: she is described as "graceful as a willow tree" and capable of weeping "her pretty eyes out over a dead puppy" [33]. This tenderness is counterbalanced by the kind of "feminine" vanity often to be found in a Mason heroine: she is flattered by Tracy's attentions even though she feels an instinctive repugnance towards him, and, like Weyman's heroine in *A Gentleman of France*, she is not averse to violence when it is on her behalf, perhaps because it flatters her sense of feminine importance. Thus, when Jack rescues her for the first time from Tracy and fights him, the duel "set her every nerve tingling" [34], and it remains an open question whether her care for Jack when he is wounded is due to natural tenderness or to the apparently aphrodisiac effects of watching him fight. Like Weyman's heroine, she finds it a short step from this state of mind to love.

She also shares with earlier heroines a kind of playfulness which was clearly intended as part of their attractions. As has been noted, such gentle teasing may
have been a reaction to masculine insensitivity, a restatement of feminine superiority in the sphere of personal relationships; with other women, it could function as a bond of sisterly solidarity. Thus Diana may tease Jack to his face, as his friend Miles's wife does her husband: it is almost a sign of affection. To her aunt, Diana mocks her father, though very affectionately, for showing no care for the things which they, as women, considered important - visits, household matters, and lovers. As has been noted, such teasing functions as a statement of independence in the kind of dependent heroine created by Mason. It is all that is allowable to a character whose essential quality is innocence - an innocence which is perpetually under threat from masculine corruption. Diana's is shown by her trustfulness - she is "fearless" and has "candid" eyes, but the implication is less that she is brave (though such an inference could also be drawn) as that in her innocence she does not know what to fear. Her feelings of repugnance towards the rapacious Tracy show a sound instinct when it comes to protecting that innocence.

Like other heroines, Diana is brave, and can show initiative, but only when her love or her sexual "virtue" are at stake. Thus she abandons maidenly modesty when she hints her love very strongly to John, and more or less asks him why, if he loves her, he will not marry her. It is typical, however, that even in this situation she
cannot bring herself to say what she means straightforwardly: all is hypothetical and full of references to non-existent third parties. The same combination of strength of will and ineffectiveness in action already noted in the case of other heroines placed in similar situations can be seen in her reaction to being abducted by Tracy: she feigns sleep to avoid his attentions, but cannot do so for the whole journey, and when she searches surreptitiously in the pocket of the coach door for a pistol, Tracy notices. Her spirit is still high enough to give Tracy "word for word" 37, but as time goes by she becomes a "trapped and frightened child", moaning her lover's name 38. The picture is a familiar one: traditional heroines can be brave up to a point, but in extremity they are helpless and need to be rescued. Their expressions of independence are those of childlike beings who assert their maturity only when they feel secure from harm: in times of danger they retreat into dependence. The childlike quality in Diana, even when she is not in danger, is suggested by the way "a dimple quivered" when she teases the hero 39.

Diana's qualities are ones which, therefore, could be found in a great number of early heroines, the creations of Mason or Farnol or Orczy. Above all, her role in the action is a minor one, like that of so many earlier heroines. She is introduced late in the story, and in the whole book some three chapters are chiefly concerned with
her and her feelings. Her main importance is as an object of contention between hero and villain, which the hero wins. Tracy finally acknowledges that this is the case, when he sees that she loves Jack, saying that the latter had had the better of it this time. There is something perfunctory about her characterization: her alter ego in These Old Shades appears very briefly indeed, and it may be significant that in the later book she is given the name which in The Black Moth was given to Jack's mare. If anything, the "Jenny" of The Black Moth has the more striking and important role.

The message given to women readers by the kind of heroine typified by Diana was, perhaps, a melancholy one. Only the innocent and childlike could hope to attract the love of a man and achieve a happy marriage. Though a female reader, particularly a young one, might be more inclined to find enjoyment in adventure stories by identifying with the hero than a male reader would in identifying with a heroine (that this is a normal difference between the reading patterns of the sexes has been attested by a number of studies of children's reading tastes), none the less, as such a reader grew towards womanhood it would become inescapably evident even to her that the role these books offered her sex was one which denied most of her individuality and freedom of action. In writing a book which was to typify much later women's romance, Heyer modified the traditional heroine figure of
historical novels in ways that offered more freedom of action and respect for individuality without, in fact, sacrificing the innocence of the typical heroine or the security of her childlike dependence. The modifications are in part in the characterization of the heroine herself, in part in the nature of the relationship between hero and heroine, and the change in the hero from ingenu to transformed man of power makes a contribution to this effect.

The heroine is given more freedom of action by the simple expedient of making her masculine for the first half of the book. The idea of putting a heroine into male dress was not new to Heyer: she does so with effect in Simon the Coldheart, and must have felt that the change in image was an attractive one, marking her heroine out as someone lacking conventional feminine weaknesses: she makes her hero admit "'I never knew thee till I saw thee in thy boy's clothes'" 40. There are, indeed, hints in this novel of the kind of love-hate relationship between hero and heroine which was to become commonplace in Heyer's work, and the heroine, Simon's "spitfire love", is an especially spirited one, though the book itself is a Doyle-like, male-centred adventure story about medieval chivalry. The potential of cross-dressing for developing the figure of the heroine without sacrificing her intrinsic femininity may well have struck Heyer, however: These Old Shades was her next book.
The idea is very much more developed in the later book: Leon/Leonie actually lives as a boy for four years and has had time to unlearn much of her feminine identity. Her freedom of behaviour, in contrast to that of Diana, is striking. She can go about the streets of Paris unaccompanied, and find less danger there than she finds at home. She can "hurl" herself in an unladylike way at Avon as she races to escape from her bullying brother; the very fact that the brother had not yet caught her attesting to the turn of speed she can command. When she relaxes, she can do so in a comfort unrestricted by maidenly limitations: she sits with her feet tucked under her, or squatting by the fire in Avon's library. As Avon's page, no facet of Parisian life is closed to her: she accompanies her master to brothels and gaming houses - though not, of course, with the same purposes in mind.

Even before her sex is known, Heyer plays with the ironies of the situation in a way which depends on the reader's awareness of the difference between the male and female roles for its effect. When her fellow male servant wants to discuss the visit to the brothel with "Leon", the female cook demurs, protesting that it is an unsuitable subject to discuss in front of a woman. Of course, it is an even more unsuitable discussion for Leonie to take part in, especially since she is so much younger, and unmarried. In a society which places so much value on female virginity on marriage, such limitations are seen as
necessary. Avon's awakening to the unsuitability of taking a girl to such a place is implied, but remains unstated; he sends Leon suddenly from the room as though suddenly aware of her sex. Leon interprets this as "Monseigneur's" being angry with "him", but with hindsight the reader will be able to interpret this as a clue, not only to Leon's true sex, but also to an awakening care for her in Avon's mind.

Later, Avon tells Davenant that Leonie is not as innocent as he (Davenant) thinks her; her lack of innocence is not to be interpreted as either criminality or sexual licence, however, but as an unmaidenly width of knowledge of the baser side of human nature which has made her cynical. The text is vague about the exact nature of this baseness, but since she has lived in a Parisian tavern, one of those public places normally frequented by men, it no doubt has connexions with drunkenness and violence, and possibly with unrestrained masculine sexuality: all of which, of course, is in line with the notion, to be found ubiquitously in earlier texts, of the corrupting power of masculinity upon women. Leonie, it is implied, has seen what men are like by nature, and the knowledge is so terrible it has damaged her for life. When Avon rounds upon Leonie in the brothel, he is - perhaps for the first time - admitting the kind of feeling which was common among chivalric heroes, that he himself, by virtue of his male identity, was a source of contamination.
which was endangering the heroine. (There is never, of course, any question that Leonie has not remained physically a virgin: that, after all, was the purpose of her boy's disguise in the first place.)

It may be seen from these comments that unlimited freedom for women is far from being presented as an unmixed good. In this, Heyer was setting a pattern for women's romance, which, as will be shown, often in this way takes away with one hand what it gives to women with another. None the less, freedom has allowed Leonie to develop her personality along less restricted and more natural lines than is usual with women, and this is seen as good. She thinks more than most heroines seem to do, observing much and drawing conclusions from her experience: Avon speaks of her "Pucklike quality of old and young wisdom" 45. A bravery based on stoical endurance can be inferred from what, as Avon is aware, remains unsaid when she talks of the "hardships" (the author's term, not hers) of her early life. She is able to express love openly for the hero where her sister heroines are forced into hints and indirections.

The "naturalness" of Leonie is played off against the artificiality of Lady Fanny and her chaperone, Harriet, once she is acknowledged as a girl. The two older women are all false prudery, and insistent upon the conventions which govern and limit feminine life. Leonie clearly feels that to conform to these is a hardship, a loss of
her freedom of activity and speech which is a loss of herself. She grieves that she "must wear petticoats, and not say bad words, and always be with women" 46, and when she is laced into her gown she protests that "something will burst ... Me perhaps." 47. Moreover, feminine restrictions are seen as senseless in themselves: when Fanny protests about her free talk of "breeches", she points out that if men did not wear them there would be greater cause for blushes 48. Her real, if knowing, innocence is contrasted with the artificial creation which passes for innocence in the Polite World, but is really senseless prudery. And if innocence is something demanded of women by men, it is clearly women who do the policing of it. Avon himself sympathises with Leonie's loss of liberty and hopes that her fresh personality will not be spoiled; though he is startled when she asks him "do you understand what it is to be put into petticoats?" 49. What is universally accepted as necessary, if tedious, for a girl is made to seem ridiculously unnatural and inappropriate for a man.

The freshness and natural qualities which come from Leonie's male upbringing are presented as very attractive characteristics. In England, and later in France, she wins all hearts by her unmaidenly candour, her open acknowledgement of feeling (of enjoyment at social occasions, for example) and her "valour". Her behaviour is always unexpected, and this is perhaps the chief way in
which Heyer manages to sustain interest in the character throughout the book. Moreover, her masculine skills and attitudes fit her for a more active role than that of the average heroine: she can be aggressive in defence of those she loves, and dangerous, since she is used to carrying a knife and can use it. Her struggles are more effective than those of other heroines when she is abducted: she manages to free herself for long enough to call for help to Rupert, listening nearby, and she manages to make life thoroughly uncomfortable for Saint-Vire, her abductor. Like Diana, she decides to feign sleep, but whereas Diana's sleep, and later her abandonment of this defence, are presented as instinctive reactions, Leonie's behaviour is the result of a logical train of thought, which is described to us. Finally, she manages to escape on her own, without need of rescue; when Rupert catches up with her, and is wounded in her place, she is able to get him away and support him to an inn. Thus, she is able to take the central role in the limited element of adventure in the story.

This does not mean that Heyer believed that all women should become masculine, even though, as Hodge points out, she preferred men to women, finding women trivial, over-conventional, and sometimes foolish. Leonie retains enough of the traditional attributes of a heroine to leave the reader in no doubt about her femininity. She is, for example, vain about her looks (she is, of course,
extremely beautiful, as a heroine should be): "'Voyons, petit, you are as conceited as a girl,'" says the Duke's housekeeper as "Leon" smooths "his" curls in front of a mirror. She is interested in fashion: when Avon reports the outcome of his revenge to her, her first question is about what he was wearing at the time. "'Thus speaks the feminine mind'" says Avon: though, to be fair, he himself regards clothes as important and can tell her in exact detail what he wore. The impression remains, however, that an interest in clothes, and in trivial detail, is part of female nature.

In this way, the inferiority of women is confirmed rather than rejected. The effect is to retain the conventional relationships of men and women while providing as a central character a unique human being who is well able to sustain the reader's interest throughout the novel, and who makes an acceptable foil for the powerful figure of the hero. That there is no attempt to provide a dominant role-model for female readers may be seen from the strong elements of subservience in Leonie's feelings for her guardian. "'I am his dog'" says when she acts as his page, and throughout the book she is given infantile characteristics which make Avon's dominance seem natural. The duke calls "Leon" "Infant", and continues to call her this as Leonie. At Versailles, "Leon" is frightened of losing the Duke and clutches at his coat-tails like a small boy: later, on the way back
in the coach, "his" "deep little voice" grows "sleepier" - again, in a childlike way - and "a small hand tucked itself into the Duke's" 53. Much of Leonie's "free" behaviour might also be described as childlike: the way she hurls herself at the Duke on his finding her after the escape, for instance. Thus, for all her masculinity, Leonie is seen as a person who needs care and protection: Avon, says Davenant, will "guard her well", and she needs to be "cherished" 54.

The effect is to invest the transformation of the Duke from power-figure to carer with special importance and interest for the reader. Clues to the change of heart in the Duke are scattered throughout the book as the relationship between hero and heroine is gradually unfurled: perhaps the first being his "angry" behaviour in the brothel. On the occasion of the visit to Versailles the Duke not only bears with "Leon's" familiarities, but when "he" falls asleep in the coach he allows his page's head to rest on his shoulder and settles a cushion under "his" arm. Though he tells himself he is a fool for doing so, he smiles as he says it 55. Throughout the book other similar hints are scattered, and the development of the Duke's attitude remains throughout at the centre of interest. Thus, despite what the book has in common with other historical romances of intrigue, this is pre-eminently a love-story.
The success of the book must have suggested to Heyer that there was something particularly satisfying for women readers about such a modification of plot and characterization. Certainly, in her next book she again explored the potential of the heroine in men's attire, and even added a hero disguised as a girl (The Masqueraders, London, 1928). Though this was successful, it did not reach the sales of These Old Shades, and this may well be because the reader's interest is claimed for two heroes and heroines, and also because, though the "masculine" heroine is an attractive character, the hero lacks the powerful, even brutal, characteristics of Avon, and is not transformed during the novel. A traditional, male-centred adventure story, Beauvallet, sold not much more than half the number of copies of These Old Shades; while a venture into fictionalized biography with The Conqueror, sold less than half that number, and was turned down by her American publishers.

It seems, therefore, that there was a large new public - which, as became evident, was predominantly female - who wanted to read books like These Old Shades and not other kinds of historical romance. Though a readership for more traditional kinds of story clearly still existed, these could no longer hope to dominate the
market as once they had. Heyer found that if she were to remain successful, she would need to provide more examples of *These Old Shades*. Hodge comments: "She drew her own conclusions" from the comparative lack of success of these books; "in 1931, planning ahead, she decided to channel her creative gift in a more prosperous direction" 57. In other words, she made a conscious decision to return to the mode whose popularity was assured. She made one more attempt, the following year, to break away from the apparent inevitability of such a decision by publishing a crime novel, but, as she later commented, "My thrillers are not my major source of income and never will be" 58. The experience emphasised the need to return to her earlier mode if she was to tap the potentially vast public for the new kind of historical romance and achieve best-seller status again. The point was underlined by the success in the same year of *Devil's Cub*, a romance on the model of *These Old Shades* and in fact containing some of the same characters. Whereas the thriller only sold 16,000 copies in four years, the romance sold 115,000, and confirmed her success 59.

Possible social causes for the change of readership have already been discussed in chapter five. It seems clear, however, that if the genre was to provide bestsellers in the future, it would be for a female readership, and Heyer had found the formula which would best appeal to them. This is not to say that her books did
not change after *These Old Shades*, a woman's romance sprung whole and perfect from her head. In fact, as had been seen, the book had much more in common with earlier, more traditional stories, and although the heroine played a central role, her viewpoint was not the only one to be used. Heyer's characteristic traits evolved gradually: in *The Masqueraders*, she used the heroine's viewpoint more than she did in *These Old Shades*, and it is possible for a female reader to identify chiefly with her, while in *Devil's Cub* the heroine's viewpoint is used throughout. The shift to specifically female romance was then complete, and subsequent books were to follow essentially the same pattern, becoming more and more formulaic as the pattern developed.

This pattern was to be become a sub-genre on its own, which has been called the "Regency romance", or "Regencies" in America, and it is a specifically female genre. The stories remain very similar to those of earlier historical romance, but the relationship of hero and heroine usually follows the pattern of *These Old Shades*, and there is less adventure and more social comedy — though the balance of these elements varies. Heyer herself inclined towards providing comedy, but Barbara Cartland, for instance, tends towards including a more significant element of adventure, or, at least, of danger. Though, as has been noted, their popularity has declined
since the death of Heyer, there are still significant numbers published. Why should this particular period have held such interest for female readers? The answer may help to clarify the interpretation of some of the favourite motifs of the genre, since it must of necessity consider the attitudes which women readers were likely to bring to the texts, and the kinds of meanings which they read there.

Regency England seems to have provided for women the kind of "myth" which Farnol's Georgian period provided for a more general audience a decade or so earlier. In one way it provided escape, but where Farnol's England comprised organic village communities in an idyllic landscape, Heyer's Regency world has very little countryside, only a succession of country estates from which most of her characters are anxious to escape as soon as they decently may. Her characteristic settings are urban; London during the Season, or Bath or Brighton. In particular, the London Season dominated her books, and it is because she was able to paint so convincing a picture of this narrow world that the Regency setting came to seem so attractive and so dominant.

This is a peculiarly female myth, since it is the world of the debutante, and the business of the Season is not war or government, the preoccupations of earlier historical romances, but getting married. The Season thus centres around the one moment in a woman's life when, as
Ann Rosalind Jones has pointed out her concerns are the undisputed centre of attention, and she has a moment of relatively free choice. It is also the moment when she moves from girlhood to womanhood; and the Season is a time dedicated to providing as wide a variety of choices as possible. A future which combines emotional satisfaction, wealth, and prestige seems possible. All this takes place in a context of glamorous activity, of balls, parties and picnics, and in a wealthy, aristocratic and idle society. The world portrayed provides a seductive opportunity for escape. Though obviously there were such Seasons in other periods, the Regency is far enough removed from the contemporary world of the twentieth century to enable the reader to forget the existence of day-to-day problems and the monotony of reality, while being close enough for the characters to seem real and comprehensible.

Another advantage of the Regency was that the detail of such a world was easily accessible and the illusion therefore lay ready to hand. It was to some extent familiar from contemporary novels - the world of Bath from Jane Austen, for example, and of the debutante's London, even though from a slightly earlier period, in Fanny Burney's Evelina - and from magazines such as the Lady's Magazine. Heyer herself compiled a formidable amount of detail about her chosen period from such sources as Pierce Egan's Mysteries of London. Her predecessors had
already helped to familiarize readers with such detail: Farnol's heroes, for example, learned to go to the fashionable tailors and Sir Percy Blakeney was to be seen at the most glamorous parties.

A reader of Heyer would gain a much more specific acquaintance with the world of fashionable London, however, and a fan would be able to discuss the rival merits of the tailors Weston or Schultz (or Scott for a military man), know the names of fashionable haircuts and styles of cravat, be familiar with chimp-hats, half-boots and flowered jaco net, and know the difficulties of obtaining vouchers for Almacks, or the perils of Whites or the newer gaming hells. Such specificity makes the world of High Society easy to imagine - even if one would be hard put to it to describe any of the items precisely - and the rules have their own fascination. They may impose limits, but they give security. For above all this is a small world, where the hierarchy is established and where everyone knows everyone else. To belong to such a world guarantees that a person is worth knowing, and worth being known by: to be accepted as part of it is the ultimate social arrival.

The rules of society, in fact, take on a central importance in these books. Whereas Farnol's heroes, when they entered society, were faced with moral problems - helping debauched younger men or rejecting the unnaturalness of society totally - the problems with which
Heyer's heroines - and, following her, the heroines of many subsequent writers - are faced are usually social, and most frequently involve some kind of confrontation with the rules. While the detail of entering and becoming familiar with the customs of a new world is fascinating, no doubt, in itself, it seems reasonable to suppose that the rules of Regency society, as imagined by Heyer, have their own interest which is specifically appealing to women readers.

In support of this, it may be noticed that the social rules, as put forward by Heyer, apply mainly to women, and that even the most trivial of them have some connection with the social role of women and with the relationships between the sexes. At the moment when the girl matures into a woman, when she is shown as having her greatest freedom to make the choices which will shape her whole future, she is also shown as most circumscribed by the limitations imposed by the social world.

This aspect of social custom is already to be seen in *These Old Shades*, in which Leonie is seen to confront the artificiality of the rules with her own more natural attitudes. Here, it is Lady Fanny and the chaperone, Cousin Harriet, who are seen as guardians of the rules, and very frequently it is influential older women, like the patronesses of Almacks, or the dowagers who line the walls of the private balls, who police society in this way. On the other hand, it is men who expect the rules to
be kept, at least by marriageable women, and, in their aspect of regulators of female sexual conduct, one can see that the rules work for the benefit of the men.

As is obvious from These Old Shades, men allow themselves far more liberty, and it is difficult, therefore, not to see men as the ultimate judges, licensing their own conduct, but not of their potential wives. This is an aspect frequently brought out by the Regency romance. It is also made clear that the differential treatment of men and women relates to property. This, however, is only one of its functions in the books, since the outcome of the stories and the attitudes of the chief characters show that keeping the rules combines with the notion of romantic love to provide a picture of a woman's role in marriage which is at least as relevant to women in the twentieth century as it is to the aristocracy of the Regency. Essentially, the rules therefore are seen as playing a vital role in maintaining male mastery over women's fate.

Thus, in Regency Buck, a novel which turns on a struggle for mastery between hero and heroine, the learning of the rules is an especially prominent theme. Judith, the heroine, who is making her first entry into society, has no less a person than Beau Brummel as her mentor. He tells her what things she may do and be accepted as merely eccentric and what things she may not do, on pain of expulsion from society. The climactic
episode involves a confrontation between her and the masterful hero, who is also her guardian (as, of course, Avon was Leonie's). Judith is driving herself down to Brighton in an open carriage - a phaeton, which is in any case a "daring" carriage for a lady. The hero stops her, to point out that to be seen driving on such a busy road is beyond the permitted limits of female behaviour: she may be seen and ogled at by all the young bucks who drive to Brighton in their turn. She has allowed self-will, he tells her, to lead her "into a scrape which might, were I not here to enforce your obedience to my commands, have damaged your reputation more seriously than you know ... you have been grossly at fault" 62.

Up to this point, the contest between them has seemed an equal one between two strong-willed people. This statement, however, shows this to be illusion. Judith does not question Worth's right to censure her conduct in this way for long. His attitude is undeniably unfair, since she knows from experience that he goes around the countryside kissing pretty girls: and that the avoidance of such situations by women is only made necessary by the outrageous behaviour of men like him. Women are expected to be guardians of morality both against and on behalf of men; the stories bring out the unfairness of this very clearly. None the less, they accept the unfairness implicitly: Judith admits that "There could be no defending her conduct" 63. Even Mary Challoner, the
heroine of *Devil's Cub*, tacitly admits the right of the outrageous hero - who has made her drunk to abduct her and only been stopped from raping her by a bullet through the shoulder - to upbraid her for showing herself in public while under his "protection" 64. Acquiescence in the right of men, however unruly their own behaviour, to manipulate the social rules in this way is thus expected of a heroine.

The rules therefore seem to help the maintainance of a female role which is limited by the needs of monogamy in a society informed by a double standard of morality, male sexual adventures being implicitly licensed where as complete chastity is necessary for unmarried females. Though Almacks and the rest of the meeting places form a "marriage market", so that it is important for the women to go about in public and be seen there, their behaviour outside the home is carefully regulated. Thus, at Almacks, waltzing, which permits physical contact between men and women, is strictly controlled: a girl may only waltz if she has been introduced to a partner expressly for that purpose by one of the patronesses. A female may not go down St. James's Street, where the gentleman's clubs are, since even the sight of a girl by men must be strictly limited: the reason usually given, like Worth's for Judith's not driving down the Brighton Road, is that she will be subject to "insult" from masculine ogling.

Clothes, too, must be cut according to the fashion,
which at once conceals and displays the female form. The loose, highwaisted dresses of the Regency suggest in any case an innocent and natural girlishness; but if a girl wishes to look more natural - in fact, almost "naked" - by damping her petticoat, she is thought sadly "fast". Men's clothes emphasise those parts of the body which suggest strength - broad shoulders and muscular calves - which may be padded: hence the tight fit of the coats across the shoulder and the elastic, knitted breeches.

The overt justification for circumscribing the female role is, of course that in the world of Regency aristocracy it was important that property should pass within the family, so that a man must know that his eldest son is indisputably his own. This is emphasised often by Heyer, and is an assumption which is never challenged; all her heroines accept that private property is in fact a family affair. Attitudes towards wealth in Heyer's novels are interesting in themselves, and will be discussed in more detail later. The effect of such an assumption on sexual mores is openly discussed in the books: the heroine's mother, or some well meaning friend, frequently takes it upon herself to warn the girl that absolute fidelity and modest behaviour will be expected of a young wife till the birth of an heir; after that more latitude in her behaviour will be countenanced. Men, however, may be allowed their affairs and the wife is expected to shut her eyes to this.
Attitudes such as these are exposed in the story because they need to be clearly stated in order to be rejected. They are a part of the Regency myth, displayed like some interesting savage custom for our interest and delectation, but essentially to be used as a contrast with other ways of thinking which the books implicitly endorse. The triumph of the heroine, seen from a "Regency" perspective (i.e., according to the attitudes of the imagined world), is to carry off the biggest matrimonial prize of the season: the hero is usually extremely wealthy as well as having charismatic qualities of intelligence, experience and authority. Her triumph comes about, however, not by seeking such a prize but precisely because she does not value wealth and power. On the contrary, she is only interested in establishing a satisfactory personal relationship with the man she loves.

In identifying with the heroine, therefore, the reader can enjoy the social and financial triumph while at the same time implicitly rejecting mercenary motives vicariously. Most importantly, the affirmation of the importance of love confirms that preference for the "feminine" and private world of personal relationships above the "masculine" world of public activity which has already been noted. One sign of this overt preference for "feminine" values over "masculine" ones is the stressing of love as a monogamous relationship and the rejection by hero and heroine of the sexual freedoms promised by the
marriage of convenience.

This may be seen in *Devil's Cub*, where Mary Challoner "catches" Dominic Vidal by persuading him of her essential respectability (by shooting him when he tries to rape her), but refuses to marry him unless she is persuaded that he loves her. She is made well aware that he does not when Dominic promises, as he proposes to save her reputation: "You may go your own road - I shan't interfere with you so long as you remain discreet - I'll go mine" 65. Though Dominic sees this as a partial concession to fairness, since it does away with the double standard, it is the wrong kind of relationship: Heyer comments "The prospect chilled Miss Challoner to the soul".

At the end of the book, Mary quotes Dominic's words back at him: "'And if I do marry you, my lord? You'll let me go my own road'" 66, but she makes it clear in her next words that this is what neither of them will accept: "'you'll coerce me shamefully, my lord'". He has just given her good reason to believe this, having fought a duel over her out of jealousy, so that such coercion is seen as a good thing: Dominic will expect chastity from her after as well as before marriage, and she is happy that this is so. Though it is not explicitly stated that he will remain faithful, it is implied. The socially acceptable marriage of convenience has been rejected in favour of a love-match. Though his intention is clear enough, Dominic hesitates to admit to such coercion,
presumably because it has unfortunate connotations of power. However, the heroine is willing to submit her will to his in the interests of a love-match, just as Judith allows Worth to win the battle of dominance between them. Subservience is seen as a small price to pay for love.

It therefore seems as though it is not the property rights of the nineteenth century landed classes which is in question in these books, after all. Marriage for money is not the real target; what is in question is the lack of trust and respect between individuals, and an overvaluing of other social relationships - even other family relationships - above that of husband and wife. What is at stake is the monogamous married relationship which is a pattern for the lower and middle classes of the twentieth century.

Such a relationship is made to seem the natural and right state of marriage, and its foundation is love. Love is seen in Heyer's work as a matter of affinity, rather than of physical attraction, though this is an element in it. Avon is fascinated by the quaint mixture of naivety, candour and bravery which makes up Leonie's personality, though he is also aware of the beauty of her shining red hair. In Devil's Cub, Dominic is more physically attracted to her sister than to Mary, but he begins to fall in love by first respecting Mary, then enjoying her company (she makes him laugh by her combination of intelligence, humour and common sense), coming to admire
her bravery and initiative, and finally finding "I'm devilish sure I can't live without her" 67. Worth kisses Judith at the beginning of Regency Buck as a sign of casual attraction; the halt which his guardianship of her imposes on his courtship allows him time to come to value her as nearly an equal, well able to handle all kinds of social situations and possessed of a will almost as strong as his own. Physical love is therefore seen as a crowning expression of this value for each other's individual qualities, rather than as an end in itself.

The rules of society play their part in developing this value for each other in hero and heroine, since it is by her attitude towards them that the heroine commonly demonstrates her individual qualities. Although, clearly, Heyer could not always use the expedient of putting her heroine into boy's clothes in order to give her a "masculine" freedom of action and strength of personality, her later heroines tended to be like Leonie in being more natural in their attitudes than the majority of debutants, and usually marked out by other unusual personality traits - strength of will, or intelligence and humour, or warmth of heart, for example. So marked a personality comes into conflict early in the romance with the dominant personality of the hero, and so the two come to know and, eventually, value each other's qualities. The function of the plot is to provide opportunities for them to do so.

Many of Heyer's heroines, because of their strongly
marked characters, conform to the popular stereotype of the girl of spirit whose daring constantly gets her into scrapes. This had been a popular figure for many years: both Doyle's Maude and Weyman's Henrietta belong to this type. From the days of Heyer onwards, however, it has become much more popular, to the point at which it could be said to be the most common type, one which by its very nature calls into question the position of women in society. This is because the heroine's scrapes arise usually from their provoking some form of masculine aggression, normally a sexual advance of some kind.

Even in the work of earlier writers this had been so: Maude is "rescued" (rather ineffectually) by Alleyne as she struggles in the Soeman's embraces, after she had disobediently gone hawking in his woods, while Henrietta finds that simply being alone in the countryside is enough to bring upon her the undesirable attentions of half the men in the neighbourhood. Regency Buck contains a similar motif: Judith Taverner goes for a brisk country walk (i.e., wantonly puts herself into a situation where she might seem to invite attack), and is taking off her shoe to shake out a pebble (is in a provoking state of undress) when Lord Worth comes upon her. He immediately kisses her, much against her will. The experience of these and other heroines follow a common pattern: the heroine engages in some activity which runs counter to the social rules, but which is perfectly natural, and sometimes
tomboyish. She then meets a man who attacks or insults her in some way, and reacts angrily; the difference between Heyer's use of the situation and that of earlier writers being that in Heyer's work the aggressor is usually the hero.

This is natural for the new kind of hero, endowed with qualities which previously had been associated with the villain; the importance of the change for the plot is that instead of showing the heroine as in need of rescue (and therefore unfitted for adventure), it brings the hero and heroine into an initial state of conflict which leads to mutual awareness, and so, eventually, love.

It also, of course, shows the hero as sexually active and aggressive, an important point in female romance, though not in earlier adventure stories; it displays the heroine's strength of personality; and it shows the damaging effect of natural behaviour for women. This is a world, it may be assumed, in which women are naturally the object of male sexual aggression. In such a world the rules are there to protect women's safety as well as preserve their chastity: the social code has taken over in the romances from the chivalric ethic of earlier books as an ameliorating influence in an unfair society, though, to judge by the number of stolen kisses, abductions and near-rapes in the romances, they seem equally unsuccessful in achieving this aim.

The transgressions of the "spirited" heroine,
however, do highlight the need for women to conform if they are to be protected. At the same time, as the girl's behaviour is usually quite natural and harmless, her anger gives expression to a feeling of injustice and of rebellion against the nature of a society which makes such codes necessary. The hero, who need not adhere to the strict limits within which the heroine must operate, can be seen throughout the book to be getting away with the most outrageous behaviour — as Worth, for instance, is never called to account for his impertinent kiss, while enforcing the strictest propriety upon the girl he has annoyed by it.

Yet, at the end of the book the heroine, however strong-willed and rebellious, implicitly affirms the "natural" authority of the male by forgetting all his outrages and falling into his arms. The unfairness remains: that is obvious. Love, it is implied, resolves all problems. Heyer's work contains little of that description of rhapsodic feeling so common in Barbara Cartland's work. Rather, love is presented as an admission of care: as Avon forgets his personal objective of revenge to bend all his powers to avenging the heroine, or as Worth is always at hand to rescue Judith from those situations he is not himself responsible for. Dominic simply realises he cannot live without his Mary. The hero has to admit at some point in the narrative that the heroine has become of central importance in his life, and
that this importance springs only in part from sexual feeling. "Love" in Heyer's books is a complete acceptance of the other person and a delight in their personal qualities.

To be recognised and valued by a powerful, charismatic individual is presented as so desirable that it compensates easily for the unfairness and injustice of society. Each heroine has to learn how to remain herself while accepting a "natural" masculine dominance. On his side the hero changes his own behaviour to accommodate his new feelings for the heroine. Thus the libertines, Avon and Dominic, for instance, become conscious of the proprieties (so that Dominic's unfair behaviour to Mary when she talks to Frederick Comyn can be seen as an early sign of love, as can Avon's "anger" with Leon at the brothel), while the rather selfish Worth begins to gain a sense of responsibility under pressure from Judith. In this sense the hero's admission of love is a sign of the heroine's victory since she has succeeded in changing him; but to achieve this victory she must accept his dominance.

The result of this can be seen in Judith's case, in a later book based on the Audleys of Regency Buck and the Alastairs of These Old Shades and Devil's Cub, An Infamous Army (London, 1937). In this, Judith is shown as happily married to Worth, and so much a supporter of the social code that she cannot accept the behaviour of a heroine even more rebellious than she herself once was. This throws some light on the role of women in maintaining the
very codes they themselves have once found too restricting. Barbara, the heroine, sees her manipulation of the fashions of the day (wearing "masculine" frogged jackets and damping her petticoats daringly) as self-expression, and resents attempts at control, but to Judith and other matrons she seems to be abrogating masculine freedoms and making an open sexual display - the danger of which is made clear to Judith by the damage a relationship with Barbara does to her brother's marriage. She recognises, though at this stage Barbara does not, that the only true road to female freedom lies through the restrictions of marriage.

This is something which Barbara herself has to learn during the course of the novel. Her lack of respect for the conventions both attracts and repels the hero, Charles Audley. He on his side has to learn to accept her with her "faults", while she has to accept a certain measure of control from him, since she cannot be happy without him. Her bids for freedom prove unsatisfying and she grieves at losing the respect of the man she loves and admires. She proves herself worthy of him in traditionally feminine behaviour: by showing bravery and feminine tenderness in looking after the wounded and dying in the aftermath of the battle of Waterloo.

The problem posed for women in the books is that "naturalness" can be seen as both good and bad, just as the limitations of society can. On the one hand, natural
behaviour is seen as good in itself; the ability to behave naturally being part of a strong personality whose sense of selfhood transcends conventionality. This is a point made strongly in a later book, *The Grand Sopay*, in which the unconventional and strong-willed heroine is seen to advantage by the side of the "villainess" (which is, perhaps, too strong a word for the role), whose petty-minded conventionality and moralising spreads unhappiness around her.

On the other hand, social convention is seen as necessary to the smooth running of society: however admirable Barbara might be in many ways in *An Infamous Army*, she, too spreads unhappiness through her lack of convention. Marriage is presented as the resolution to this problem: a husband provides someone to value the characteristics developed in the heroine's personality, while at the same time protecting her from the dangers of society, and, in particular, male aggressiveness. In such a setting, the heroine can be free to be herself without the kinds of danger which, as the books make clear, are attendant upon the condition of being female. Marriage for love therefore takes over the role of the social code to some extent, as long as the heroine herself is willing to stay within its restrictions; and because of this, the heroine who at one time rebelled against the conventions in order to express herself, later becomes a guardian of the very rules which once irked her.
In Regency Buck, self-willed Judith had come to recognise for herself the necessity of the social code, and even to accept the hero's criticism of her own conduct in breaking it. In the same way, Barbara, so wild at the beginning of An Infamous Army, is seen as revealing her true potential as she nurses the wounded so selflessly. When Barbara accepts Charles, she is clearly accepting a limited role for herself, though realising that she can find in loving and working for others scope for the qualities she has begun to develop. This acceptance of a role for women in marriage which is both limited and selfless, as well as of the social rules which limited their behaviour before marriage, is seen as a natural process of learning to understand society and themselves.

The period of courtship, which originally might have seemed a time for choices, can best be interpreted, perhaps, as a time of maturation through acceptance. Though society may seem unfair, in reality its rules help the heroine to achieve this by curbing her self-will. In this way, the injustices and inequalities of society towards women which are apparent are seen as natural and right. That this assumes men's right to exercise theirs, while retaining all the dangerous qualities which make social limitations necessary in the first place, can thus be pushed into the background. The basis of the argument has been adroitly shifted, and social inequality seems to offer a benefit to women rather than a limitation.

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Janice Radway has suggested that romances provide satisfaction for women by showing it to be within a woman's power to transform their relationship with a dominant, aggressive male into what all women truly wish for: the first relationship of all, that with the mother before the child becomes aware of other, rival claims. Women's need for this springs from the fact that, though their role in society is a caring, maintaining one, it is no-one's function to give the same kind of support to them. The vicarious experience of the novel provides a surrogate for this, though in Radway's view it is an illusory one, since only those males who have a potential for caring and tenderness in any case can be thus transformed. A study of Heyer's novels shows that the element of transformation does exist in her books, though it is not an inevitable part of the story. Charles Audley, for example, is already tender and caring by nature, and even for Worth, though the reader becomes more aware of his caring qualities in *Regency Buck*, there is less of a change of nature than a revelation of sides of it not at first apparent. Rather, the process on the romance seems to be the development of a mutual acceptance, and change is imposed on heroine as well as hero. Certainly, however, the nature of the changes within the relationship can be seen as reinforcing the *status quo* rather than confronting it, as the questions posed by the romance seem at first to suggest.
The appearance of the Heyer romance at a time when women were beginning in increasing numbers to see their destiny as housewives rather than as workers suggests that though on the surface the role was one they wanted because it allowed more time for those maintaining duties which had traditionally been their responsibility, at the same time they also saw it as a restriction. Reading romances of the Heyer type allowed women to express feelings of discontent with this restriction while at the same time it was presented as a natural part of life; almost a part of growing up, and one, moreover, to which a young woman might look forward with pleasure.

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It is interesting to note, in this connection, that the Heyer world has lost all that stress on the virtues of cleanliness and tidiness which was so marked a feature of the work of her immediate predecessors. One of the consequences - perhaps, indeed, the chief one - of Heyer's almost exclusive concentration on upper-class characters is that no-one ever seems to do any housework. A well-trained band of servants may be inferred in the background, but their work is never explicitly described, except for that of an occasional chamber maid or chimney
sweep, included apparently to display the heroine's warm heart and lack of snobbishness. One other exception is the cooking: and it is significant, perhaps, that though the mistress of the house is by courtesy seen as responsible for this, she often lives in awe of the cook, who is a professional and an artist, and almost invariably a man. The cook is master in his own kitchen, and if anything displeases him, he can always threaten to leave, since attempts are constantly being made to lure him into the service of other masters, no doubt with appropriately vast transfer fees. Cooking is thus seen as both a fairly free occupation and one which is high in status.

The important thing, however, is that the reader identifies herself with women who have no household duties, and who can therefore spend their whole time, with a clear conscience, in an exciting round of glamorous social activities. Moreover, instead of being alone in the house, or perhaps with their children, who, however much loved, may be thought of as restricting company, they can be seen as part of a close-knit community — and, indeed, as leaders by virtue of their fashion sense, allowed free play by their way of life, and their liveliness and attractive personal qualities.

This, together with the splendour of the surroundings and fashions, is, of course, the escapist element in the novels. It is an element fully developed in Heyer's work, often through the use of one of the most popular motifs in
historical romance, the introduction of an ingenue into society. This makes the lavish use of detail of the kind Heyer had found in her researches seem natural in the story, since it is an essential part of the heroine's experience: she needs to fit herself out in fashionable clothes, and learn all the fashionable lounges and resorts, if she is to function in society.

*Regency Buck* is particularly notable for this use of dense detail, which almost overloads the story. Almost every room in the Brighton Pavilion is described fully, for example, together with an account of the Steyne (with a "glazed red-brick pavement") and Donaldson's library ("card-parties and music were to be had there any evening during the season" comments Heyer, as though writing a guide-book to the place). Much of this, as in Sabatini or Orczy's novels, is very magnificent, as in the instance of the Earl of Worth's bed, "an extremely fine piece, supported by two bronze gryphons, and with crimson silk hangings caught up by a pair of smaller gryphons on pedestals." Such detail stands instead of the comments on political change to be found in Sabatini or Weyman. While the earlier books showed heroes who found their personal salvation away from the morally ambiguous world of public service as attitudes towards politics became less favourable and concern over their confrontative nature grew, Heyer's novels seem to have followed Farnol's in banishing them altogether from consideration. The
Napoleonic Wars form a background, but they are waged by professionals, often providing a useful introduction to life for the hero, or a social milieu in which a heroine can develop natural and masculine qualities of personality.

Only in An Infamous Army do they move to the foreground as the story of Waterloo is retold, and though the military detail is very complete - Heyer was particularly interested in military history - the rights and wrongs of the war are never discussed. In any case, Heyer could not afford to write many books like An Infamous Army; this, along with a handful of others such as The Spanish Bride and her "serious" historical novels like My Lord John, lacked the appeal of the conventional romances. Readers might take a certain amount of detail about new forms of agriculture, though not about the nascent industrial revolution. None the less, the messages carried by a Heyer romance are a reminder that the reader of these lived in the same society as the readers of romances by Farnol or Sabatini.

For instance, though developments in the capitalist system like the Industrial Revolution are never overtly discussed, the existence of a new, upwardly mobile middle class of merchants, industrialists and financiers is everywhere evident. The aristocratic world, indeed, is largely seen as an attractive one by virtue of its contrast with anything middle class; it is almost defined
through these differences. Mary Challoner, for example, in *Devil's Cub*, captures the serious interest of Dominic Vidal because she knows the social rules and is prepared to defend her right to live by them: and this is because she has been brought up as a lady. Her behaviour is markedly in contrast with that of her sister, Sophia, and her sister's middle class friends. Sophia, who has not been brought up a lady, can ignore the rules. Thus she can enjoy herself, and even give reign to her sexuality, which Mary cannot. When Mary pretends to behave like Sophia she forfeits consideration as a lady, and is treated by Dominic as he treated Sophia: that is, as a potential prostitute. She sees the result of her action as placing herself outside society: she will have to become a working girl, thus dropping out of the charmed circle of romance, in which working girls (such as milliners, dressmakers, nurses and other craftswomen; one meets an occasional governess or companion) simply do not exist.

The notional division between the wealthy upper classes, in which sexuality is restrained by the codes of society, so that marriages can be made and families with pedigrees formed, and the lower classes, lacking wealth and status, but in which sexuality is rampant, is particularly marked in this book. However, it is the rule-bound upper class world which is made to seem attractive - not in spite of, but because of, its restraints - while to belong to the demi-monde, for all its
freedoms, is presented as a fearful state, to be avoided at all cost. Since virtue is equated with female chastity, its socially and economically constructed status is thus exposed but made to seem desirable.

The importance of the family can therefore be seen as underlying the codes of Regency aristocratic society in the romances. Family relationships are very favourably presented in Heyer's work, especially those between mother and son - perhaps because she had a satisfactory relationship with her own son. Certainly, the attitude of a grown-up son towards a mother who loves and understands him is a marked feature of a number of Heyer's novels, such as *False Colours* (London, 1963), where the relationship has almost sexual overtones, *Devil's Cub*, or *Sylvester*.

Sons may be a trouble, but they can be friends as well. Daughters may become rivals. Arabella's mother, in *Arabella*, seems to have been loved by all her children, but, at the same time, they see her as old-fashioned; when she reminisces over her ball-gowns with their "quaint" bustles, she seems part of a past order, while the new generation is eagerly looking forward to the new one. The nature of the family as a source not only of mutual love but also of mutual rivalry is hinted at in such scenes, but the implications remain well below the surface. Though the family contains emotions which can split it apart, they cannot be presented as typical.
instead, the family must appear totally secure, the indestructible building block of society, just as, ultimately, it did in Weyman's work.

In addition, of course, the family is an economic unit, and one which endures through time, maintained by the property which must be passed from generation to generation through the male line if it is to endure. This is the economic factor which lies behind the rules, and which allows a loving relationship with the sons a mother is proud to bear. A daughter is not only a potential rival, she is also an economic white elephant, unless she can balance sexual attraction and rule-bound conduct sufficiently well to achieve a good marriage and begin or continue another, similar, economic unit. Thus the family, and the whole apparatus of courtship which is the subject of romance, is ultimately presented as the means by which the present state of society reproduces itself, seen as a natural and beneficent function.

Men's concern with the family (apart from marriage and fatherhood, of course) is usually with the continuation and repair of its fortunes. A praiseworthy route to becoming head of a family is through some kind of initiation into adult manhood epitomised by a test of bravery (being an officer in Wellington's army) or by an apprenticeship (learning to manage his estates), with a brief deviation through the pleasures of society, which also seem to be thought of as some kind of initiation.
Willingly or not, in the course of this he finds himself a wife, and settles down to the role of landowner, on whose prosperity the fortunes not only of his family but of a whole community depends.

This world of the landowner and his dependants is often no more than a hint in the background, but, from the masculine point of view, it justifies all the rest - family, courtship, female chastity and all. Though the social world may be the focus of attention, its actual uselessness is strikingly signified in An Infamous Army, in which polite society seems to have moved en masse to Brussels. Here, the contrast between the real suffering of warfare and the enjoyments and trivial preoccupations of the polite world, whose only function is to pass the time while awaiting the outcome, is very obvious. At the same time, our sympathies as readers are chiefly solicited for these "trivial" personal relationships and the pleasure parties and balls which are their forum, just as they are in Weyman.

In the same way, the world of the landowner is not portrayed as an attractive or fulfilling one. Often a hero will have to move from the first stage of his career (as does Adam in A Civil Contrast, London, 1961, or Gervase in The Quiet Gentleman, London 1951) to the landowning stage through an unexpected inheritance. It may well be that, like Charles in The Grand Sophy, or Adam, he may find his lands in disorder, and his fortunes wasted by
the gambling and extravagance of his parents. In that case, he will impose economies, seek to marry a rich wife, and immerse himself in the care of his estates. Adam, a child of his time, is fascinated by new agricultural techniques and methods and introduces them on his own estates. Even the disinterested Gervase is brought at last to care for his estates and the needs of his tenantry. The land is his by natural right, and he hotly rejects attempts by his radical father-in-law to make him feel guilty about this; but he recognises that it imposes duties. This is the positive side of the picture; the reader's interest does not lie here, however, but in the developing relationship between Gervase and Drusilla, or Adam and Jenny.

Though it remains in the background, the relationship between landlord and tenant is nevertheless clearly meant as another meliorating force in an unfair society. A good landlord, with whom things are going well, is good for the tenantry. Thus the wealth of the landowning classes is justified, and the reader can indulge her surrogate enjoyment of it without guilt.

Yet, as so often with these comforting assumptions, closer examination shows that the character of the genre, most of whose situations are set within town society and centre upon the spending of money rather than the making of it, undermines this picture by implying that so many landlords are actually bad ones, more interested in
milking their estates to support their vices than in caring for their tenants' interests. This impression is qualified, as in Weyman's work, by a sense that a new generation is growing up which is more ready than the old to take its responsibilities seriously, but the overwhelming impression of the country estates of the aristocracy is as a support to their magnificence. Certainly care for estates is not portrayed as attractive by comparison with the delights of town life. Whether seen positively or negatively, of course, the condition of life on a country estate is presented as completely outside the tenants' control, and so the ultimate effect is to confirm that sense of political quietism which has been noted in earlier romances.

In many ways, therefore, the new romance was not dissimilar to the old. The personal sphere was presented as being of greater importance than the political, and society is seen as a stable organism in which the individual does not have a great deal of power. Such power as he or she has is in the maintainance of society through maintaining its basis in the family. Social convention has a function in this maintainance, by restraining those anti-social aspects of human nature - such as sexuality, aggressiveness and violent socio-economic change - which might threaten its stability. It may be that such messages seemed especially relevant to women at a time when their lives, though easier, may well have appeared
more restrictive, lonely and powerless, and the new kind of romance offered an attractive compensation for this in the notion of marriage for love to a powerful individual. It was certainly a theme which was to figure at the centre of the new kind of historical romance.
Chapter Nine

Contemporary Historical Romance

Discussing the characteristics of Edwardian romance, Rachel Anderson drew attention to the differences between women's romance of the period and "male-centred" romance: "The fiction of such popular male writers as A.E.W. Mason or Rafael Sabatini, though in the general 'romance' class, centres on adventure, escapism and excitement rather than matters of the heart" 1. Of course, it was not only male writers who provided such fiction - Orczy, and Heyer at the start of her career, are examples of women writers who wrote adventure romances - but the quotation does point to an essential difference between the "cloak-and-dagger" story popular in the early years of the century and the female-centred historical romance which Heyer introduced. Once the heroine, rather than the hero, became the centre of attention, "matters of the heart" took a predominant role in the fiction.

The modification brought with it a pattern which Janice Radway was later to find dominant in the "ideal" romances of the nineteen-seventies: the transformation of the hero from aggressive to tender, and a rebellious heroine maturing into an acceptance of the conventional female role 2. The "transformation" element was not unknown in female romance: it appears, for example, in what Anderson has called the "desert-romance" 3, notably
in *The Sheik* by E.M. Hull. Heyer, however, showed that the theme was suited to a much less specialized form of romance, and in matching a powerful hero to a spirited heroine who was all but his equal, she reduced the element of female submission, a modification natural enough in stories with a large element of social comedy. This remained a characteristic of "Regencies" which followed the Heyer model. Historical romances in general retained a social dimension less prominent in general female romance. None the less, the relationship of hero and heroine remains dominant, and the presence of the transformation elements gives this a particular ideological charge, since the happy ending depends on what appears to be a common-sense acceptance of social realities by the heroine in order to find individual fulfilment.

In this chapter the ways in which historical romance of the present day presents these "social realities", as well as elements of the social background in general, will be considered. The account will show both how the focus of attention has shifted since the beginning of the century, and also how many familiar themes and situations remain. Inevitably, this is a far more wide-ranging account that those in previous chapters, since it aims to show that the conventions of the genre have not been simply a matter of individual style, but are almost more notable in the work of minor writers than in that of the
major ones. For the same reason, some overlap with material about the work of earlier writers, in particular Heyer, may be expected; but the recurrent themes identified in their work are here seen in a wider context in order to show how much conventional material is diffused from the best-selling works which first catch the public attention to more "run of the mill" examples of the genre.

Besides her direct imitators, other writers followed Heyer's lead in the production of historical novels for women, though with slightly differing emphases. The most notable of these has been Barbara Cartland. This writer began producing contemporary romances in the nineteen twenties but soon began using a past setting for her stories, since the project of her stories is the promotion of female virginity as a preliminary to a single, stable sexual relationship, and, as Rosalind Brunt noted, she felt that an acceptance of this would not seem natural in any heroine after the nineteen twenties. The nineteenth century is a particularly favoured period. Many of her books use a "Cinderella" motif unusual in Heyer's work, in which a poor or otherwise disadvantaged heroine marries power and wealth. The tone of her romance differs from that of Heyer's: instead of social comedy, the love-story itself is dominant and the feelings of the heroine are expressed in detail. Anderson has commented that in twentieth century female romance, "The state of being in
love became for the romantic heroine what the state of grace is to the Christian" 4, and this likening of love—especially at the moment of sexual consummation—to a religious experience well captures the tone of Cartland's novels.

From this concentration on the development of an ideal sexual relationship based on male experience and female inexperience come the characteristic motifs of Cartland's fiction. Like Heyer's, her novels often include an element of transformation in the hero, but the novels' major interest lies in the way in which the heroine's virginity is continually threatened. Abductions and near-rapes have therefore been revived as motifs from earlier historical romances, and a vestigial element of adventure, which had dwindled almost to nothing in Heyer's work, can be traced.

Contemporary writers of historical romances tend towards one or other of these models, though there is a good deal of overlap, and many writers combine features from both. One noticeable difference, however, between these later writers and Heyer is the nature of the readership. As was noted in chapter five, present day historical romance readers, though drawn from a wide range of social strata, are predominantly working class; they characteristically obtain their romances, (including historical ones) from libraries or by buying cheap paperbacks from publishing houses such as Mills & Boon. In
contrast, Heyer's work was mainly middle-class in its original appeal, as may be seen from its serialisation in a journal whose readership, according to the Hulton survey of 1954, was drawn mainly from the A, B and C1 social classes.

Now, her books take their place on the library shelves along with those of her successors. A librarian's opinion that most borrowers of Heyer's novels and similar fiction were older women who had acquired a taste for them in youth suggests that historical romance on this model is no longer dominant in the genre, and remains as a vestigial residue. On the other hand, despite new developments in the genre such as have been described in chapter two, traditional historical novels continue to be produced in large numbers, both under the Mills & Boon "Masquerade" label and as library editions by publishers such as Robert Hale and Hurst and Blackett. What is more, such books are bought, and are borrowed regularly from the libraries, as can be seen from the frequency of the date-stamps. If the genre is dead, it enjoys a flourishing after-life.

Traditional historical romances, in fact, remain popular both in the sense of reaching a wide readership and in their lack of literary pretension. The present-day romance is more formulaic than earlier romances, and, as was shown in chapter three, typically has the characteristics of a more "lisible" text, in Barthes's term
If this is true of the novels of the more notable writers discussed in chapter three, such as Weyman or Cartland, it is even more true of the general run. A contemporary of Weyman's such as Halliwell Sutcliffe for instance - a novelist of regional rather than national importance - wrote novels which made far greater demands on his readers than a present day writer does, as may be seen from a glance at one of his romances, Rycroft of Withens, written in 1898. The plot centres round the attempted kidnap of Bonnie Prince Charlie by a group of Doone-like outlaws who infest one of the Yorkshire dales. Interwoven with this story are two love affairs, the accounts of which contain a number of familiar romantic episodes - the abduction of the heroine, a secondary heroine disguised as a man, and the wounding of the hero, for instance. These could have appeared in any contemporary romance, but in Sutcliffe's book they are incidental to the main plot and are, perhaps, the least interesting part of it.

In later romances, of course, any element of adventure is subordinate to the love interest. At the same time, this is made more interesting in itself, as the motifs attached to it are increasingly close to the wish-fulfilment element of the book. Many of the stories contain the "Cinderella" theme noted in Cartland's work, for example. Other devices which heighten the interest are heuristic in nature: the lovers are kept apart by
mysterious circumstances, for instance, so that the whole relationship becomes a puzzle to be solved. The solution leads not only to love but also, frequently, to a rise in social circumstances for the heroine.

Consequently, although contemporary romance is about love in a way which would probably have been found boring or silly by earlier readers of historical romance, this does not mean that love is the only topic. The historical background itself makes this impossible since, as was noted in chapter two, a whole society has to be recreated on the page and some political aspects are almost bound to be included.

The way in which social and political ideas are presented in the novels is one area of individual difference. The formulaic nature of the stories means that such areas are few: this is, in fact, what makes a general treatment of them possible. Writers do, however, vary in the amount of overt social and historical comment they include in their novels, as well as in its nature. Such comment is likely to be made from an individual political standpoint. Rachel Anderson has commented on the naive way in which women's romance has dealt with politics. A similar comment might have been made about social questions.

The lack of any overt statement about such questions may be a further sign of an adaptation to a new audience. Traditionally, women have been considered uninterested in
public political and social issues, and though this is a stereotype, it has been endorsed to some extent even by feminist historians, though they have both modified the view and shown how women have been excluded from the public sphere where such concerns can be expressed. Janet Polasky's study of women in Belgian revolutions 7, for example, has shown that the generalization is not true of all places or of all times: but the difference between the Brabant revolution of 1789, when women took an active part and "drafted political treatises, co-ordinated clandestine meetings, led processions, and heaved stones from their housetops onto the retreating Austrian Armies below" and the revolution of 1830 when they seemed to view events as belonging to an "alien male world beyond their foyers" 8 highlights a phenomenon which seems to have been typical of Western industrialized society: a "narrowing of women's roles in periods of economic and social transition".

This pattern can be seen in English history, for instance in the way that women began to drop out of the Chartist movement in the 1840s. Sonya Rose 9 attributes this partly to the growing formality of Chartist organization, male fears of female rivalry in the workplace, and the concurrent growth of an ideal of domesticity among the working classes, but chiefly to the contradictions implicit in the female approach to politics, which was as followers rather than initiators -
most women Chartists were married to male Chartists, according to Dorothy Thompson, and saw political involvement as "mediated through their roles as wives and mothers" \(^{10}\).

Similar motivation may have been behind the anxiety to return to pre-war domestic routines noted among unskilled women workers after the second World War; Denise Riley quotes evidence from Mass Observation to suggest that it was only the idea of safeguarding their men-folk which gave meaning to such work \(^{11}\). Low levels of unionization amongst women workers in the period were also generally attributed to women's preference for the personal and local issue rather than wider political and social ones, and though Riley points out that this is only an interpretation made by historians who accept the stereotype, she does not contest its truth. The general picture of a political and social awareness which is mediated through personal and domestic concerns remains in essence unchanged, and fits in with the impression given by present-day historical romances which foreground personal relationships and show wider issues only insofar as they affect the personal concerns of the characters.

This "personalization" of history, however, is a change of perspective rather than a complete omission: women are, after all, affected by wider issues and, through the news media, almost inevitably aware of many of the same social and political concerns that men feel. In
the post-war years these have included notably, a sense of upheaval in moral and social values, and a search for new ones to meet new circumstance. The condition of society, which seemed to be progressing towards a stage of greater fairness and openness after the war, gave rise eventually to a sense of disillusion as the social hierarchy and the distribution of power in society seemed essentially unchanged. New prosperity, which was beginning to affect the working classes as well as the middle classes, and the new technology which had a particular impact on the lives of women (providing washing machines and vacuum cleaners, for example) was welcome, but brought a sense of unease as well. There was concern about growing crime figures, and the new wealth was sometimes seen as being spent on things less beneficial than vacuum cleaners: according to David Thomson, on alcohol, gambling and "striptease clubs". This was a perception which brought both disapproval and fascination as the success of Sunday papers like The News of the World shows.

Other attitudes were affected by new perceptions of Britain's place in the world, together with the development of alliances and enmities begun before the war. Both Thomson and Alastair Davies and Peter Saunders in Alan Sinfield's Society and Literature, 1945 - 1970 note a strong awareness of American cultural and economic domination, partly welcome and partly not.
Together with the "wind of change" which brought the final transition from Empire to Commonwealth, it seemed to spell the diminution of Britain's role as a Great Power. Yet, although many British were shocked at the witchhunts of the McCarthy era in America, there was little questioning of American foreign policy, supported by Britain and the other NATO allies; awareness of Russia as the enemy in the Cold War confirmed a tendency to see left-wing radical feeling as dangerous. The seventies and eighties, as Davies point out, have seen the growth of new social and economic attitudes, favouring individual competitiveness and less concerned with a fair society 15.

Many of these issues have a familiar ring: they represent attitudes which have been developing in the popular consciousness throughout the century and before. The particular nature of the readership means that they are, perhaps, less likely to be presented as directly as they are, for instance, in the work of Weyman and Doyle. None the less they can be seen to have an indirect effect on the ways in which history is presented in the novels, together with topics such as class relationships and money-making. In the foreground, however, are the more personal concerns with love and marriage which might be expected to interest a female readership for the various reasons given above, and the most overtly expressed social issue is that of the relationship between the sexes - in itself an important post-war issue in Britain.
Obviously, the factors considered above are very general in nature, subject to many exceptions and modifications. While it is true that both political and historical issues are not presented with any great degree of complexity, the individual writers vary a good deal in the explicitness with which they consider them. Like their predecessors, contemporary historical novelists express public issues in many different ways and use the past for a variety of purposes.

The way in which a traditional romance uses history is likely to be different from the way in which it is used in some of the new developments in historical fiction outlined in chapter two. Sagas like the "Dynasty" saga of Cynthia Harrod-Eagles, for instance, show historical events affecting different generations. In these books historical change and development becomes an important theme. Another is the presentation of upwardly mobile characters who found or restore family fortunes: a theme which is perhaps particularly apt for the eighties, given the climate of opinion mentioned above. A more serious novelist like Kathleen Herbert, winner of the Historical Fiction Prize in 1985, is, on the other hand, likely to take the holistic view of a period described as a more "modern" use of history in Henry Harrison's *Versions of the Past* 16.

The impression aimed at by many romancers is to give an illusion of living in a glamorous past with no more
sense of historical change than those who actually lived during the period would have had. Some sense of hindsight is in actual fact inevitable: those characters in Heyer's stories, for example, who think of themselves as innovatory are presented as representatives of genuine forces of historical change and there are no dead ends. In this way the past may be seen as a preparation for the twentieth century; the way in which the younger members of society, in An Infamous Army, (London, 1937) for instance, see themselves as daringly innovatory in sexual behaviour suggests that to live in the Regency was to have the same sense of increasing permissiveness which, as Thomson noted, a part of society at least felt in the nineteen twenties and which many have continued to feel since. The reader might well imagine a line of continuous development in manners and morals from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the latter part of the twentieth; in fact, a sense of stricter morality intervened in the Victorian period.

Much of the sense of historical change in Heyer's work is to some extent illusory in this way. Even the farming improvements made by Adam in A Civil Contract give a distorted impression, over-emphasising the discontinuities of agricultural practice in this period and promoting the idea that the "Agricultural Revolution" was a purely aristocratic affair. The general feeling is that historical change was
inevitably beneficent as mankind progressed towards twentieth century society. Its operation is not overtly significant in her novels, however, as it was, for instance, in those of Weyman.

Most of Heyer's followers tended to show historical change in the same way, though undoubtedly it is more important in the work of some novelists than in others. Dinah Dean's *The Briar Rose*, (London, 1986) for example, has as a major theme the effects of the dissolution of a monastery on a neighbouring community. The hero of Sheila Bishop's *The Phantom Garden* is much concerned about the ways in which the countryside is changing, with parks and country houses "springing up behind every bush" 17. Through his thoughts the reader is given much information about historical developments in eighteenth century England. "Using the new good turnpike roads", he reflects, "the nobility and gentry were now able to move between London and their country estates more comfortably and swiftly than ever before." "Improvement" of the landscape, affecting the lives of rich and poor in the eighteenth century, is an important theme in this novel. New methods of manufacture as precursors of the Industrial revolution and arising from a new kind of expansionist finance are important in Mira Stables's *Golden Barrier* (London, 1981). It is perhaps significant that the kind of progress shown most favourably is technological change of the kind which until recently could be viewed less
ambivalently than changes in moral and social attitudes; in fact, the novels as a whole tend to show the morals of a period as unchanging certainties, however quaint they may seem now, and this may also be part of the books' appeal.

The writers noted above certainly see the presentation of significant nodes of development as an important part of their role: some of their comments and explanations would not be out of place in an examination answer. Sometimes, as with earlier writers, the structure of society itself becomes an issue, as in the novel by Shiela Bishop quoted above. Here, the fact that the heroine identifies herself as lower class and the hero as an aristocrat provides much of the conflict and tension within the story and allows the author to interpolate a fair amount of social comment. Like Doyle before her, Bishop shows herself aware of the abuses arising from inequalities within society, as does Eva Macdonald in Cromwell's Spy (London, 1976). Social comment of this kind is relatively rare in the novels, however.

Most romantic writers are content to present the past as a glamorous ideal with superficial flaws. If, as in Heyer's Arabella (London, 1949), or Cartland's The Wicked Marquis (London, 1973), a character concerns him- or herself with the ills of society, the reader certainly feels that this is a sign of progress and should be commended, but the effect is of a kindly paternalism (or
maternalism) rather than of a radical questioning of the social structure.

Yet historical romances still function as the "inverted utopia" of Harry Harrison's description, and, inevitably, a social structure is presented for the reader's approval or disapproval. Its construction rests upon implicit assumptions and its presentation tends to confirm these. Just as, in the early years of the century, Jeffrey Farnol introduced into his escapist form of historical romance a picture of a homogeneous village society which seemed wholly English, and Heyer found a desirable milieu in the London and Paris of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, so present-day romancers present their country-house parties, their London Seasons and their Cook's tours as autonomous and delightful social worlds. The experiences which the heroes and heroines meet within these, however, raise issues about the relationships between men and women, or between different social classes, and about attitudes towards topics such as money, war and violence, just as more socially concerned novels such as Doyle's or Weyman's did. The attitudes implied in the romances about such issues may indeed be more potent through being unstated, and presented simply as commonsense ones.

A general review of a selection of contemporary historical romances lays bare, therefore, structures of meaning of which the authors themselves may not always
have been aware: structures more concerned with power in society and the fears and hopes which flow from the nature of its location and implementation than with the romantic love which is the apparent focus of interest, as was the case with earlier novelists such as Farnol, equally uninterested on the surface in contemporary social issues. Many of the attitudes, indeed, are familiar enough from earlier romance; but there are differences in female-centred romance. The impression is of hearing a familiar tale told from a different view-point. This is most significant in the aspect of sexual relationships.

On the surface female historical romances centre on the one moment in female life when traditionally the woman is predominant, the time of courtship and marriage choices, and examine the options and limitations which lie before the heroine at this time. Specifically, the project of the books is to recommend marriage for love in preference to other options which are offered, apparently as possibilities of female fulfilment: marriage for money, love without marriage and spinsterhood. The nature of these alternatives, however, is such as to make them seem nothing but straw opponents, Aunt Sallies made to be destroyed with ease. The way in which they are presented leaves no serious alternative but romantic love; but this victory is constantly undermined by the kind of contradictions and paradoxes which, according to Pierre Macherey, constantly subvert such projects and reveal the
untenable nature of our ideologically constructed social attitudes.

The case for love and marriage is, of course, argued often enough in the work of Heyer, but she tended, perhaps, to take the notion of marriage more for granted than a contemporary novelist would and to show her heroines as maturing towards marriage more than considering alternatives. One gesture towards changing attitudes towards sexual matters and marriage in society in what is in other ways a very conservative form is the way in which a number of present-day novelists spell out the alternatives in some detail. This is the case, for example, in Dinah Dean's *Briar Rose*, where the alternatives of marriage and spinsterhood are considered. The heroine's fears paint a telling picture of the bleak future she must face if she does not marry; "a gradual growing old in poverty, tied to her cantankerous father". In Mira Stables's *Golden Barrier* the heroine argues with her aunt; at this stage the heroine, Kate Martenhays, does not want to get married, while her aunt Julia is anxious to point out the disadvantages of a single state. Julia advocates marriage because, whatever the motivation, it is the only tolerable fate for a woman. A spinster's life is dreadfully restricted. Travel is impossible because of the Napoleonic war. "Good works" offer a possibility of occupation, but can only take up a small proportion of a woman's time. "Every cultural opportunity"
has already been enjoyed by Kate (as though culture were a strictly limited commodity which Kate has used up), so consolation cannot be found in that. Kate agrees: the only value of a spinster is to be exploited by her family. "Useful and put upon, their comfort little considered", they are put to use by looking after "their more fortunate sisters' children".

Other heroines, like Kate, may consider remaining single for a short time, but only because they are disappointed with the suitors on offer. "I would rather die an old maid than marry either of them", says Lucinda in Caroline Courtney's *Love Unmasked* (London, 1979), speaking of a couple of eligible though unromantic suitors; but it is clear from her tone that she is unenthusiastic about the prospect. Marina Oliver's Sophie (in *Lord Hugo's Bride* London, 1980, and *Lord Hugo's Wedding*, London, 1981) does not want to get married and opts for adventure instead: but the mood soon passes.

Sophie changes her mind because she falls in love, but in general it is accepted that any marriage is better than spinsterhood, and, as in the cases mentioned above, the reasons are social and economic rather than romantic. Only marriage can give a woman security and adult status: a spinster has, as the financially minded Kate Martenhays points out, no value of her own. This is a point which will be discussed in more detail later: for the moment it is sufficient to note that spinsterhood is not put forward.
as a serious alternative to the romantic marriage.

It is the "convenient" or arranged marriage, undertaken for momentary and not romantic reasons, which is the usual focus of interest: it may indeed explain the fascination of certain periods, like the eighteenth century or the Restoration, that such marriages could be portrayed as a norm against which the heroine rebels. Literary forms such as the comedy of manners in these periods give justification for such a view. What a heroine desires above all is to marry for love; what she fears is that her marriage should be viewed simply as a financial transaction, either to bring money into the family or because she herself brings wealth with her. Kate Martenhays, in Golden Barrier, again expresses this strongly. She is an heiress, but rejects the idea of being married for financial gain; on the other hand, she clearly believes that it is natural for financial motives to be paramount with everyone, so that if she is to be married for herself, with no thought of her fortune, she will never marry. It is for this reason she wishes to stay single, not for love of the spinster's estate. Her fortune is the "golden barrier" of the title, since though she falls in love with the hero because he will not consider marrying her for her money, this means, paradoxically, that he is the last man who will offer for her - until driven to it out of jealousy.

Many novelists use an "escape" motif to show how the
notion of an arranged marriage disgusts the heroine, as when the hero comes across a girl dressed in male attire in a stage coach, in Clare Darcy's *Elyza* (London, 1977). In an extreme case, Caroline Courtney has her heroine in *Love Unmasked* locked in her room until she agrees to marry the unpleasant suitor her father has chosen for her. She escapes through the window to join her lover. In Eva MacDonald's *House of Secrets* (London, 1980), the heroine is nearly forced into marriage with a half-animal near-idiot—a Frenchman, at that.

If the motif is not found in its pure form, it is often present with a twist of some kind. One favourite variation is one in which the heroine discovers a preference for the rejected suitor, after all. In Dinah Dean's *Briar Rose*, the heroine turns down her father's choice (rightly: her father was only thinking of his own comfort) and runs off to London to rejoin her lover. The lover rejects her brutally; after which the virtues of her other suitor become more attractive. This is a favourite situation in the work of Margaret Stewart Taylor: the heroine returns to a previously rejected lover in both *The Wayward Jilt* (London, 1974) and *The Rejected Suitor* (London, 1982).

In an allied situation, the heroine finds that she loves her husband, or is loved by him, after a marriage of convenience. This is a favourite situation in Barbara Cartland's novels. In both *The Bored Bridegroom* and *The
Proud Princess, love comes after marriage; while in *Kiss the Moonlight* (London, 1977), the hero and heroine discover after their secret love match that they have married the very partner selected for them in the arranged match from which each was escaping.

The Ruritanian motif of a substitute bride (bridegroom in Anthony Hope's original, of course) is another popular motif. Barbara Cartland makes use of it, and so does a lesser-known author, Rowena Tenet. In books by both writers, the hero falls in love with the heroine after marriage, even when he discovers he has been tricked by her. In reality, a partner with whom he can fall in love has been substituted for the "arranged" bride. The opposite motif, of finding oneself trapped in a loveless marriage of convenience, is more rare, since then the final union with the hero has its problems; historical romances turn their faces even more firmly against divorce than do ones with a contemporary setting. Marina Oliver, in *Restoration Affair* (London, 1975), solves the problem by using another well-tried romantic motif: the marriage is illegal because the clergyman who performed it was a fake.

If the advantages of a love-match seem obvious to the heroine, however, there is a strong suggestion in many romances that such an attitude is unusual, and that marriage is generally seen as a financial institution. Frances Lang comments, in *The Filigree Bird* (London,
1981), that marriages within the society dealt with in her novel (seventeenth century France) are seen as a "merger between families" which is "based on finance" 18. In such a case the heroine may seem self-indulgent in preferring to marry the man of her own choice, and a familiar conflict is set up between love and duty.

In Clare Darcy's Gwen, Jane, the heroine's sister, has to choose between being faithful to the man she loves, but cannot marry because he is too poor, or helping her family out of their economic difficulties by marrying an extremely rich marquis, whom, however, she does not love. There is no doubt in her mind that if she acts according to what is right she ought to marry for money: "'She was going on about her duty'", complains her sister 19. Only her sisters think she should follow her heart, and they are romantic. "Romantic" is an ambiguous term in this book; though some of the most sympathetic characters could be described by it, it seems to have connotations of stupidity and illusion: Jane's mother is "a hopelessly muddle-headed romantic". And even Jane's sister Gwendolyn, a "romantic at heart" has doubts about the morality of encouraging Jane in a love-match: if Jane passed up the chance of fifty thousand a year, "her family, she felt, would have every right to censure her severely if Jane ... was obliged in the end to wed a husband far less desirable from a worldly point of view" 20. The situation is resolved by Gwendolyn's marrying the
Marquis: for love, of course. However, the match is financially advantageous enough for the other sisters to indulge themselves by marrying for love too.

It seems clear, therefore, that the primary project of the books is to deny the validity of a marriage based on financial considerations: an odd theme to fascinate a twentieth century reader, in a culture in which arranged marriages are now almost unknown. Twentieth century concerns about the growth of materialism, however, have already been noted, and on the surface at any rate the theme seems to protect the woman's traditional realm of personal relationships from corruption by materialist values. In addition, of course, marriage for money is in itself a kind of straw man, an aim to be rejected in favour of marrying for love, as Heyer's heroines rejected it. It remains, however, a highly significant possibility in a number of contemporary romances.

Sometimes, indeed, the heroine seems willing to enter into a marriage of convenience from choice: Oliver's heroine had been glad to marry her parents' choice when the Plague left her an orphan. In the same writer's Highwayman's Hazard (London, 1983), Sarah is resigned to marrying her cousin and uniting the divided wealth of the family; and in Frances Lang's The Filigree Bird (London, 1981) Jeanne looks forward to marriage with her uncle's choice. In both cases an abduction intervenes and the heroine learns to love her kidnapper.
Of course, there would be no story if the heroine tamely acquiesced in plans for her future; but the writers use the motif to enhance the status of the heroine and to define the nature of love, both of which are closely interconnected. To marry the man of her choice means that the heroine's will is triumphant; she is able to challenge over-restricting conventions, since the arranged marriage is seen as submission to parents, and through them to society's established authority; and she rejects the reification implied by the marriage of convenience. To marry for money means, for the woman, to become a commodity, as the language of the texts makes clear. Anne Laver, for example, the villainess of Restoration Affair, is described disapprovingly as "prone to sell herself to the highest bidder" 21; and the heroine, Cally, says of just such a marriage as Anne was contemplating, that she had no "value" for it 22. The same notion of a marriage, or a bride being a commodity with its own price is implied in Frances Lang's The Filigree Bird. Here the heroine has hopes of a "loving companionship" 23 from her marriage of convenience, and only gives up the match when she is convinced that her fiance values a filigree bird more than he values her. The filigree bird is connected in his own mind with the son he had lost - lost too soon to love him: he represents a "survival of the family line and influence" 24. The heroine realises that her mistake was in hoping too much
from such a match; marriages within that society (seventeenth century France) are seen as a "merger between families" which is "based on finance" 25. Even Jeanne is not wholly drawn to the match by love; she is also influenced by the prospect of having the right to sit on a stool at court, while other ladies sit on the floor. The absurdity of the detail suggests that a certain ignobility of motive lies behind even a match based partly on mutual affection.

In some cases a precise monetary value can be placed on the bride. In Caroline Courtney's Wager for Love (London, 1979), the heroine simply substitutes herself for a £70,000 draft; at such a figure, she may have felt that she was worth more than Jeanne, with her stool at court. In Mira Stables's Golden Barrier, Kate Martenhay's father praises love, but in terms of "worth". "Trust" with its ambiguous connotations ("trusts" have already been mentioned in the financial sense by Kate, who believes that an ideal father would not set one up for his children as it would make them shiftless and lazy) is an indulgence, to be avoided if possible. A suitor without money is a "sham"; the suitor who wants Kate for herself, and who offers love in return for money, is alone "honest" 26. The vocabulary of striking a bargain perhaps comes naturally to Martenhays, the banker; but it adds to the impression of love, as well as marriage, being firmly based on economic principles.

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Such details and vocabulary show that some of the writers at least were aware of the implications of their writing, and were consciously rejecting the equation of women with money. In doing so they are clearly asserting women's right to be valued for their personalities and not for what they can bring their husbands.

Love in marriage is therefore based on the hero's appreciation of the heroine's unique qualities, a feature noted in Heyer's work from *These Old Shades* onwards. These unique qualities are inward ones, and, as in the case of Heyer's Leonie, the heroine is someone out of the ordinary whose naturalness and unusualness can pose a threat to social convention. The hero thus demonstrates his superiority by valuing them.

Physical appearance alone is not a basis for love; in this, contemporary romances differ from their predecessors. Kate, in *Briar Rose*, attracts both the hero and her caddish lover Amyas, though she feels she is plain and "a brown mouse". The favourite motif of a substituted double, too, suggests the relative unimportance of a woman's looks. Sophie is so like her cousin in Marina Oliver's *Lord Hugo's Bride* that the hero abducts her in mistake. He later tells her father that he had been attracted to Philippa, the cousin, but that this was in no way like the feeling he had for Sophie, even when he thought she was Philippa; he had been unable to understand his sudden passion. In both Cartland's *Love*
Leaves at Midnight and RowenaTenet's Bewitching Imposter
one look-alike relative is substituted for another in a
marriage. In both cases, the bridegroom is astonished by
his sudden change of feeling for his bride. Alexis, the
hero of Bewitching Imposter, finds a "hint of magic" in
Shauna's eyes 29, where before he had seen only "pride and
wilfulness" 30 in his bride.

If the attraction is neither due to beauty nor money,
then it must be called forth by something more intimately
bound up with the lovers' own self; and it is this
concept of love, as one self recognising and feeling a
unity with another, which may be seen as the novels' contribution to raising the readers' self-esteem, as well
as placing them within the traditions of Romantic feeling.
In Briar Rose, the heroine dreams that she is the quarry
of a court hunt, in the shape of the "mouse" she has
compared herself to; but almost immediately the quarry
changes to a thrush, which she associates with the hero
31. She is recognising a likeness between them at an
unconscious level, since at the time of the dream she is
in love with someone else - someone, in fact, who would be
taking part in the hunt. Other books contain images of
unmasking, and therefore of recognition: the title of
Courtney's Love Unmasked is significant. It is a motif
which has been in favour for a long time in romances and
links with the general theme of disguise which is so
frequent in them.
If love depends on the nature of the two lovers, and in particular, perhaps, that of the girl, it follows that the girl's personality must be seen to be worth loving. Weak, submissive heroines are unusual in romance. Hugo, in describing his love of Sophie as a "charm" which "suddenly came to me" (Lord Hugo's Wedding), adds that "I came to appreciate her courage and her wit" - her essential characteristics. The Marquis, Sophie's father, expects Hugo to "deplore" Sophie's upbringing and adds that it has been "unconventional". Hugo replies that he cannot deplore anything which "has made her what she is"; and "what she is" is clearly what he has fallen in love with. Sophie shows in an extreme form many of the characteristics particularly favoured for heroines. Perhaps most important of all, she is open and natural, having been brought up in "freedom" and "consorted with all sorts of people". She is brave and intelligent, and has a magnanimity unimpeded by convention: like a number of other heroes and heroines, she is something of an outsider (a French girl in English society) and hence can be seen to challenge convention with impunity. It is possible to deplore the fact that she uses "words no well-bred English girl would know"; but, rightly seeing in this the expression of an untramelled spirit, Hugo thinks of this as one of her "endearing characteristics". Her lack of respect for the rules allows her to show magnanimity where other girls might be shocked; her
attitude towards Hugo's bastard daughter takes her mother "aback". She finds it a recommendation in Hugo that he is "so kind, so loving" to her, adding that it is "not many men" who would make themselves responsible for a love child. Her natural magnanimity may be paralleled in other heroines, such as Clare Darcy's Letty in her romance of that name, whose nature is signalled by her "lovely generous mouth". But meanness is something no heroine suffers from.

This generosity fits in with a sense of independence to be found in many of the heroines. On the one hand, the heroine's independence provides a way of testing out the conventions of society by setting them against an alternative and more natural code. Thus Heyer's "grand Sophy" drives up St. James's Street, which is taboo for a lady, putting her mean-minded rival Eugenia to shame. The heroine of Caroline Courtney's A Wager for Love disobeys her husband in going to Vauxhall because she is helping her husband's ward. The heroines risk social ostracism because they have broken very trivial rules, when measured against their generous motives. On the other hand, there is a spark of antagonism between the hero and an independent and spirited heroine which provides the conflict necessary to the story. The heroine of Patricia Veryan's A Perfect Match (London, 1979) (again, significantly titled), for instance, tries to hit the hero over the head with a poker on their first
meeting, and this not unnaturally gives rise to a number of amusing misunderstandings.

With independence goes honesty and openness. Caroline, in Eva MacDonald's *House of Secrets*, has "steadfast eyes", which could "make the guilty flinch" 37, and the hero's sister tells her she values her for her openness even when she has made the hero unhappy by rejecting his suit: "I abhor the dishonest" 38. The hero admires her "independent spirit" 39, first shown in her insistence on carrying her own luggage from the station. There is a natural, open quality about the manner of many heroines which is contrasted very favourably with the hypocrisies of lesser characters, even when it leads them into trouble. Joanna, in Patricia Ormsby's romance of that name, insists of going bathing in her underclothes, however much her more timid cousin tries to dissuade her; it is not surprising that she later feels threatened when the villain starts to spread scandalous stories about her freedom of behaviour at home. Shauna, in *Bewitching Imposter*, has "grown up free of fashion's constrictions"; in fact, she has memories of "running barefoot and free over the marshland with the village children, speaking their broad brogue, feeding poultry and tending the pigs" 40. She is apt to surprise her fashionable guardians by demonstrating how she chased a pig from her ancestral castle, standing astride and pulling up her skirts immodestly. Yet her "untamed and ill-taught" nature is

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attractive, because she has retained her freshness and responsiveness. She is able, for example, to give her Prince "one expressive glance" during the marriage ceremony, and this attracts him to her. He likes "the quivering lips of innocence," too, with which she responds to his kiss 41.

Shauna, like other heroines, has something of the tom-boy still within her. Sophie enjoys dressing up in boy's clothes (Lord Hugo's Bride) and likes the freedom it gives her to go adventuring. Another of Marina Oliver's heroines, Sarah, in Highwayman's Hazard, also dresses up in boy's clothes to help her friend to escape. The use of boy's clothes to give freedom of action is a carry-over from Georgette Heyer; her heroes seem to have been particularly attracted to transvestites, but in later novels it seems to be the adventurousness which appeals to the authors. One heroine even goes to war. Sophie can shoot and go climbing. The heroine of Restoration Affair faces with equanimity the task of single-handedly assisting the captain of the ship taking her across the channel when all the crew have either killed one another or fallen overboard when overcome by drink. Such heroines are apt to contrast with a bitter sense of unfairness the limited roles which society imposes on a woman with a man's freedom of action. Sophie's brother Paul says he wanted to enjoy himself before settling down, going into the army, and it is assumed, flirting with a large number

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of women. Sophie complains that her aims had been the same ("apart from the army"), though her enjoyments would be slightly different; yet no-one seems to expect such feelings in her, when they seem quite natural in her brother. In Caroline Courtney's Love Unmasked, Lucinda compares her situation with that of her brother: "like herself, he craved excitement and adventure" 42 and finds it by running away to the army. "Why should I not be granted my freedom too?" the heroine asks herself; she, too, fancies running away to the army to serve under her lover's command, though her idea of army life is an oddly innocent one: "in the evening there would be gatherings round the camp fires and sing-songs" 43. The heroine of De Winter's Passionate Rebel (London, 1981), actually does join the Napoleonic army to serve under her lover, but there are no sing-songs.

This, then, is the romantic heroine as she appears in many historical romances: brave, truthful, open, resourceful and natural. The spirited heroine is not merely a way of testing out the rules, but an important element in the projection of love as the romancers see it: an affirmation of the heroine's selfhood and an implicit promise that in marrying a man who loves her for what she is she can continue to be herself. This is not all love is, of course, and there is an important physical element in love which woman may fear. Romances give assurance of the deeply satisfying, even spiritual, nature, of this
experiences.

In women, this is seen as a response to men's sexual lovemaking, and the kiss has a central role in the novels because it gives opportunity for this response and signifies the moment of the heroine's sexual awakening. From that moment the woman knows her destiny, which is to seek fulfilment in a single loving relationship. This fulfilment is of vital importance, its needs over-riding all other considerations; if the heroine's other aspirations are to be destroyed, its compensations need to be overwhelming.

For this reason, the pleasures of the kiss are often described rhapsodically, and in romances of married love, they become the prelude to an even more rhapsodically described sexual union - though perhaps "suggested" might be a more accurate term than "described". This is particularly true of Barbara Cartland's novels, where the scenes follow an almost ritual pattern. The hero longs to see the heroine with her hair down; he begins to unpin it, lets it lie loose on her shoulders (a detail connected, perhaps, with the preference for the natural over the artificial); he then undresses her, and finally takes her in his arms, to take her with him into the glory of the sunset, or the starlight, depending on the time of day and the weather. But this moment of apotheosis does not take place until the couple know that they love each other as companions, all misunderstandings are cleared up,
and there is a relationship of openness and honesty in which all artificial pretences have been destroyed. Cartland understands the importance of this, and makes sure that the proper sequence is adhered to; novels in which physical union comes before a promise of happy companionship, or where some misunderstandings remain, (Tenet's Bewitching Imposter and Stables's Lissa (London, 1974), are cases in point) there is an uneasiness about the final relationship which is ultimately unsatisfying; the heroine's nature is condoned, rather than recognised and approved. This may explain the paradox in Peter Mann's findings (The Facts about Romantic Fiction, Mills & Boon, 1974), that readers of a form which concentrates on the preliminaries to sexual intercourse nonetheless like "clean" books with "decent" heroines: "Many other ... books bored me and often annoyed me with their four-letter words and descriptions", as one respondent said.

Women are fulfilled in marriage, therefore, because of the pleasures of the physical relationship, but this in itself is based not simply on physical attraction but on a mutual valuing of the other partner's individuality. In itself, however, the promise of this may not be enough in the nineteen eighties to compensate for what is seen in the novels as being given up by women. After all, the hero can have both an active life and love as well. Some novels suggest strongly that women are fitted by nature
primarily for a home-making role. In *Golden Barrier*, Kate Martenhays longed to make a "useful and successful life" for herself 45. Her father points out that "there could have been no place for her in his workaday life" and suggests that marriage would solve her problem (though his language is curiously tentative: it "might well fulfil" her aspirations) 46.

If it does, it is because women are natural homemakers. Kate certainly is. She begins to fall in love with Dermot, the hero (as proved by a kindly thought: that he "should find himself an heiress") 47 when she finds herself planning the furnishing of his new home. When Dermot finally proposes, it is not because of any sexual attraction, though, as he explains, his love for her had made her seem beautiful in his eyes, but because she is "economical" and "really interested in his concerns" 48. If this sounds unexciting, it is certainly true, and shows Dermot to be aware of the particular qualities in Kate which needs an outlet: though the reader may wonder whether marriage would fulfil all of Kate's hopes.

Moreover, the reader needs to be convinced that, given the limitations it also imposes, marriage can also be regarded as an exciting adventure, and a richer, fuller life. Otherwise too much will have been given up: to be part of "all that is going on in the world today" for Kate Martenhays; 49 adventure, for Marina Oliver's Sophie. It
is for this reason, for example, that the heroine of Caroline Courtney's *Love Unmasked* hates the idea of a "sensible, suitable marriage" 50. For her, the hero is "her great adventure" 51. Other heroes offer excitement through their aggressiveness, unconventionality and arrogance, even when the conflict between hero and heroine has been resolved.

Free choice, domesticity and excitement are therefore important aspects of a marriage which tries to resolve the paradox of the need for a stable relationship and for an adventure. There is an ambivalence, however, in the way many novelists regard even the most promising marriage. If in some ways it offers fulfilment, sexual experience can also be seen as destructive. On a surface level, Clare Darcy's novels show the heroines as unable to think of what happens after marriage, and some of the imagery suggests that it may be seen as abolishing the participants just as the reader "abolishes" the characters in a novel after finishing the book. An example of this is the connection suggested between marriage and the destruction of the bride in *Gwendolyn*. This is first introduced by Gwendolyn's sister Campaspe's first naive description of the hero, Lyndale, as "a Bluebeard", because he is believed to have owned a harem in Morocco 52. Gwendolyn, at this moment disinclined to believe in Lyndale's harem, none the less links the idea with Bluebeard in saying "he hasn't had so much as one other
wife, far less murdered her". The idea of love or marriage as a combat in which man is the victor, woman the destroyed victim, though denied at this point, is reconfirmed later when Gwendolyn talks of her engagement to Captain Belville. She observes "one never gets beyond the wedding in one's mind. After that, it's like having to imagine what happens to the characters after you've read the last chapter of a novel. That is, if they aren't dead ..." 53. Even without the last odd addition, marriage is presented as unimaginable; and destructive, in that what happens to characters when a novel is finished is that they cease to exist, if only in the imagination of the reader. And, of course, the double irony here is that this is precisely what is to happen to Gwendolyn: married on the last page of the novel she ceases to exist almost immediately afterwards. Already the reader's expectations are likely to have prefigured such a fate.

Before she suffers this, a little battle must take place between hero and heroine; the imagery supplies it. Gwendolyn is "shaken" by her lover's embrace, but still "manning her defences". He "takes unfair advantage"; and she is defeated 54.

No such combat occurs between Campaspe and her fiance. However, she too may be said to be destroyed in a way. Certainly, all her ingenious plans for her family's good, are diminished by Neil by his reference to "that silly disagreement" 55, and all her opinions are swept...
away by his "masculine logic". She and Gwendolyn are happy in being united with their lovers, but only at the cost of having their wishes, ideas and initiatives ignored.

Rowena Tenet's *Bewitching Imposter* contains a series of images and ominous incidents which suggest anxiety about sexual experience on a deeper, less conscious level. As Shauna's marriage develops and changes, its locations change, the descriptions pointing up parallels between the places and the course of the marriage. Shauna has come from the natural marshes of her Irish childhood to the stiff artificiality of London; but she has always had dreams of a happy marriage to a man she loves. An illusory quality in marriage is suggested by its taking place in Tusshar, so beautiful on the surface - a "fairy-tale palace" - but also, "a place of deception and lies" 56. On the wedding journey to her husband's Principality, they stop for a picnic in a pleasant dell, whose natural surroundings are the context for a brief idyllic interlude. Shauna is pleased to find her assertive, frightening husband had so pleasant a side to him, and he tells her that this had been a favourite spot during his childhood, which he had made "his domain". For him, clearly, the place reflects something essential about his nature, just as Shauna's marshlands did about Shauna.

Yet as soon as they reach Hanaria, the Prince's country, she hears him "shouting along the corridor in a

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hectoring voice after some unfortunate underling” 57. Hanarians have a reputation for harshness; aware of it, Alexis takes of his Hanarian medallion before he takes his Princess in his arms so that he comes to her "no longer a Hanarian" 58. The castle where the couple are to make their home is described in harsh, almost phallic, terms: a "stark fortress", "bleak within ... threatening without, dominating ..." 59. Most sinister of all, as soon as they are married, Alexis embraces Shauna for the first time in the wedding carriage. Her bouquet is crushed, and "a blood-red petal lay on her skirt. For some inexplicable reason the sight disturbed her" 60. She is to suffer a fairly violent deflowering herself, not very different from rape. When Alexis casts her off, brutally, his aggressiveness is emphasised again by phallic imagery: he "began absently to stroke the jewelled handle of a small dagger" 61. At the sight "her body ached for his touch", so that it may be assumed that she had found the aggressive love-making satisfying.

The rhapsodic descriptions of kisses often hide or soften a pattern of dominance and submission characteristic of much of the love-making in these romances. Alexis, "throws Shauna forcefully on the bed" and pins her arms behind her back 62. In Love Unmasked, the heroine finds the hero's gentle kisses romantic, and they create in her "a flame of ... longing" 63, but when overcome by passion, he rips her bodice away and "she
writhe helplessly in his grasp", there are hints that she prefers such handling: his lips "swept her headlong into ecstasy" and rouse in her "a wild, consuming desire". The message is presumably reassuring: one allows one's body to be desecrated, but it's worth it.

This inequality is something which women are shown as accepting, and even enjoying, so that it seems natural. In Stables's Golden Barrier, for instance, Kate begins to realise as they become engaged that Dermot will be a "possessive" husband and not let her be "free" 64. She gives a "small ecstatic shake" at the prospect.

Mira Stables is not alone in suggesting that what women want from marriage is a loving domination - similar sentiments are expressed at the end of Heyer's Devil's Cub, for instance - but she makes the prospect seem less attractive than most writers do by underlining the element of power-struggle in her courtships. In Golden Barrier, for example, whereas Kate becomes attracted by Dermot when she begins to think of organizing his home for him, Dermot (portrayed as an unusually liberal and kindly man) dislikes Kate on first meeting her because she has seen his poverty, mended his tapestries, and found the jewels which have made him comparatively wealthy. This puts him at a disadvantage, and it is only after the episode of the tinkers, when she is put in the wrong and embarrassed, so that he can "save" her, that he begins to feel "more in charity with her" 65. "It seemed to make matters better.
that he had seen her taken completely at fault". Kate finds him "highhanded", but leaves the tinkers "meekly" at his bidding. Once he can see her as "sweet and gullible" he can begin to find her "rather charming". This scene is presumably intended to have elements of the "merry war" common in historical romance from Mason and Weyman onwards, but the effect here is to stress the gentleman's pride and need for dominance.

More striking is the situation in Quality Maid. Piers and Clemency are suited to each other: they have the same taste for adventure, the same stubborn pride, the same interest in the woollen industry. Yet on first meeting there is an antagonism, each resenting the other's arrogant ways. In particular, resentment is sparked off in Piers because he thinks her one of an army of "importunate females" who stop him from doing what he wants (in this case, going out shooting; in the same way Dermot had been irritated at his first meeting with Kate by having to interrupt his hunting to rescue her after a fall from her horse. In each case, what is life and death to the girl is an annoying interruption of sport for the man; there seems an implicit comment in this). It is made clear that, had she been "humble" and made an "open appeal" Piers, though unsympathetic to male scroungers, would have been sympathetic. As it is, her "defiant" attitude provokes in him "a calm assumption of authority" which infuriates Clemency to a point where she slaps his
face for his rudeness. He now begins to assert physical power against her, catching her by the wrist so "there was no option but to obey" 67. He now begins to enjoy the situation and is determined to get out of it without loss of face: "there was only one thing to be done". He kisses her roughly; it is not an expression of affection, but a display of raw power. Clemency is shattered, "her childish pride humbled, her newly emergent womanhood bewildered and astray" - an effect of humiliation made greater by the fact that she is described throughout in terms appropriate to a young adolescent, though at twenty-two she has managed her father's house for years. Piers, for instance, felt that the "minx would be all the better for a sound spanking". If there is something a little disturbing about this reaction, it becomes more evident in his reaction to the kiss: "the feel of the soft little creature struggling so frantically in his arms aroused a primitive" (natural?) "desire to conquer and subdue".

Yet despite all this, Piers is presented as a worthy hero: "honest" in his relationships ("Honest" is a key word in this book, despite the fact that most of the characters seem to be in a conspiracy to deceive each other for their own good) and basically kindly and generous. The villain, on the other hand, is intended, according to the dedication, to be really "evil", and shows this through his rape of a servant girl, Elsie. The description of this, made as horrifying as Stables
presumably thought her audience could stand, emphasises the sadistic element in Pelly's feelings, the gratification of power: Elsie feels that "powerful hands forced her to the ground" till her "frantic struggles ceased" 68. The vocabulary is noticeably similar to that of the description of Piers's first kiss: whereas Pelly's hands are "powerful", Piers's have "a steely strength"; 69. Clemency struggles "frantically" as Elsie does; and the end of both episodes is to leave both girls shattered and humiliated - Elsie by far the more so, of course. The cases are different: Piers regrets what he has done to some extent, and the nature of his kissing changes from an expression of power to "warm and beseeching" but what excites him is dangerously close to what excites the sadistic Pelly: "small and young and terrified is what he likes" 70.

In many other novels, the notion of rape is kept in the reader's mind, and is described in terms not very different from the hero's kisses. Miles in Love Unmasked, saves Lucinda from rape by two rogues, as she struggles helplessly in their grasp; and later he knocks Lucinda's unwelcome suitor when he is carried away by his feelings in a walk by the river. At that point her arms are "pinioned" as her lips receive his "hot, moist kisses" 71, as earlier she had been "pinned to the ground" by the rogue and received his "hot, sour breath" on her face 72. This is not really very different from Miles's own
behaviour, and her struggles are as unheeded by him as they were by the rogues. Another of Courtney's heroes, the Earl of Saltaire, makes sure that he will get no further disobedience from his wife by making her feel frightened and helpless: "he pulled her to him with a force that brought the breath rattling unevenly in her throat" (A Wager for Love) 73. In Eva MacDonald's Cromwell's Spy, the hero forces a kiss upon the heroine after she had been "pinned to the bed" 74.

The parallel between rape and the hero's kiss, together with the frequency with which the heroines are almost raped, suggest that this is part of the exploration of sexuality in the novels. The difference between villain and hero is, simply, that the hero is willing to draw back. Men's sexuality is seen as unproblematic, always heterosexual, their sexual feelings easily aroused by a low neckline, an immodest movement in a girl they know to be modest. Women have no defence against them: not least because their own sexual feeling, which appears to have a strong masochistic content, betrays them. What differentiates the hero from the villain is that the hero abstains from rape - just. What holds him back is not compassion so much as a feeling that to rape the girl he loves is to make it impossible to marry her, since heroes are as insistent on virginity in their wives as they are ready to take advantage of every other woman. That the double standard is unfair and works to women's detriment
is hinted at by some of the novels, but rarely openly stated. The heroine of *A Wager for Love* marries a rake, who "flaunts" his mistress, while telling his wife "my wife, life Ceasar's [sic] must be above reproach" 75. He refuses her permission to go out, and makes her invite his mistress to their own ball, while refusing her permission to invite a friend of her own, Lord Andover. He makes a scene in public when, having been attacked at Vauxhall, she is seen walking with her rescuer, Andover. Yet he is actually having a little supper with his mistress in one of the boxes at the time. The heroine goes so far as to point this out: "'If you will excuse me, Saltaire, we will leave you to your' - she gave Juliet one brief, contemptuous glance - 'pleasures'" 76. The authoress may have felt she had gone too far with this kind of underlining, since it turns out that Saltaire had actually given up his mistress some time before; but Saltaire's treatment of his wife has undeniable brutalities, which are quickly forgotten once he admits he loves her.

In any case, the mistress comes out of it worst of all; and in general women who chose the option of satisfying sexual feeling outside marriage are given little sympathy, despite their notional usefulness in giving the hero the experience they need to make a satisfactory husband. Rosalind Brunt says that Barbara Cartland divided women into two classes: "As well as the women destined to fulfil their vocation as wives", there

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must always be those destined to be the focus of man's "experience ... there have always been enough 'Liliths and Eves' for men to practice on" 77. Lady Hester in Clare Darcy's Letty is a typical example. She provides a contrast with Letty, her "over-blown figure" 78 contrasting with that of Letty, "spare and slender as a boy's" 79. The sense of decay in that "over-blown" suggests what is in fact the case, that Lady Hester is a disagreeable figure. Also, she is not merely mature, but at a point in life when she would like to settle down, presumably knowing that her attractions will soon be on the wane. She wants to marry Harry, but Harry distrusts her free behaviour: "Why, I should have to lock her into her bedroom to be sure the brats are mine! ... Hester has not missed the joys of the marriage bed", adding "to my certain knowledge" 80. Lady Hester will be completely in his power, and he never questions his right to exercise it. There is more than a hint of possessiveness in "the brats were mine". And, of course, he has been a partner (not unwilling, the text suggests) in those very activities which now make him condemn her, but without the hint of insatiable sexuality that is applied to Lady Hester. The reader may be aware of unfairness here, but this awareness brings with it no sympathy for Lady Hester, whose masculine manner with Letty (tilting up her chin with a finger and commenting on her looks in a patronising
way) would be enough in itself to make the reader feel that Letty is justified in her resentment.

Even more unpleasant is the Lady Hester of The Bored Bridegroom by Barbara Cartland. At twenty-eight, she is "sensational" but "insatiable for love" 81; the hero, himself something of a rake, "sometimes thought Lady Hester outpaced him" 82. At the end of the book, with Hester safely discarded, the Marquis tells the heroine "while a man likes a sophisticated woman to amuse and entertain him, he wants his wife to be pure and untouched - except by him" 83. On the other hand, he has a dislike for inexperienced girls. "If there is one thing which bores me it is unbroken horses, immature wine and unfledged girls!" 84, he says. Apart from the (perhaps deliberate) offensiveness of that equation (reinforced by the error of the "one thing"), there is certainly a confusion in his mind; since if he required a virgin wife, he was making it exceedingly difficult for himself to find one. Lucretia, the heroine, is forced into the ludicrous gambit of acting the part of a woman of the world; even so, the pretence nearly wrecks her marriage. Yet without it she would not have had a chance of commanding the Marquis's attention.

Oddly enough, prostitutes are more sympathetically presented than mistresses. Heroines in Heyer's romances used to tease their brothers about their "opera dancers" and "birds of Paradise" or "barques of frailty". Mlle.
Forel, for instance, the highclass courtesan in Clare Darcy's *Letty*, and the mistress of the villain, is attractively portrayed. Her manner is extrovert and has a kind of innocence. She has a "dazzling and expectant smile" and walks "buoyantly" 85, and she has a "ready ripple of laughter" 86. Clearly, she has no sense of guilt; instead, the words suggest a kind of childlike hopefulness. Even her monetary approach to love seems attractive when it is owned openly and without shame: "For these diamonds I would stay with the devil himself" 87, she says, fingering the necklace which Marius, the villain, had sent her. Letty is half-impressed by "this entirely practical approach to the problem of relationships to members of the male sex." Ninette proves to be a good friend, warning Harry of Radoczy's plot and later writing to Harry's grandfather on Letty's behalf.

In the same author's *Gwendolyn*, the idea that the hero might at one time have had associations with eastern courtesans seems on balance to add to his attractiveness, even though such approval seems to imply acceptance of the idea of women as the possessions of their menfolk. Moroccan sexual customs are contrasted favourably with British relationships when the hero, Lord Lyndale, who has lived there, comments upon dinner-table conversation in England. He disapproves of the flirtations going on at the English dinner-table, he tells the heroine, adding that: "there would be throats cut ... if half as much of
it took place in Morocco" 88. Moroccans "unfortunately
did not place a great deal of emphasis upon the
conversational properties of their wives." The
implication is that women are valued in Morocco not for
their personalities but for their ability to please their
sexual partners; and that Moroccan men are strongly
possessive about their women and are violent in the
protection of their rights. The connection Lyndale makes
with the British conversationalists implies, not so much
that British men do not share the Moroccan view (since it
seems to be sexual pleasure that is on offer) but that
they are more careless of their rights.

Curiously enough, the notion of the harem does not
shock the heroine, for all that she comes from a society
where women are apparently more highly regarded. Gwendolyn
does, it is true, mention Lyndale's "certain" possession
of a harem in his Moroccan days as a drawback in a husband
for Jane. None the less, she is fascinated by the idea.
"Do tell me about them!" she begs the surprised Lyndale
at the first opportunity 89. She seems attracted, not so
much by the idea of the women being owned by the possessor
of the harem , but by the suggestion of sexual licence
conveyed by the idea of a harem. It is as though, trapped
within the constraining limits of an over-modest society,
she is wistfully contemplating the lot of women whose
sexuality is openly recognised. True, it is regulated as
well as allowed in context, but it may be that she feels
there is an honesty in such a state of affairs missing in hypocritical England with all its covert "ogling and sighing". She seems to agree when Lyndale says he finds this unattractive, and later (perhaps with a back-reference to Lyndale's own supposed harem, a point which is never cleared up) she seems to think none the worse of him when she reflects that he obviously "did know" women. The picture given of Morocco does not suggest he has met many at the dinner-tables of the sheikhs, and the reader is left to infer that his relations with Moroccan women were more than merely conversational.

In a similar way, although Barbara Cartland's Neoma (Light of the Moon) is shocked by the behaviour of the prostitutes who frequent her host's dinner table, in The Magnificent Marriage the heroine is rather attracted by the description of her lover's ex-mistresses when told of them: "You have never seen anything so exotic or so exquisite" says her informant. Goldie, for example, had "hair like gold. Skin just touched by the sun". Later, thinking of one of the mistresses, Perfect Pearl, Dorinda finds the picture "alluring". The names here are perhaps significant. These women are undisguisedly thought of as something to be bought and sold, a decorative adjunct to life, but with no rights, no feelings to be hurt. Cally, in Marina Oliver's Restoration Affair, is betrayed by her husband who has "a doxy" in the city. She is merely a possession of his; we are told nothing further of her,
and the heroine seems to bear her no ill-will for the fact that her marriage is no more than a mockery.

Such a difference of presentation seems significant: it suggests that women may be forgiven for satisfying men's sexual desires for money, but not to satisfy their own. Taken in conjunction with the central importance of virginity in so many of the novels (as in Cartland it has "a narrative, function" 92, it seems to imply either a strong distaste for female sexuality or an overly respectful attitude towards money. Prostitutes represent experience for men without threat to the heroines (there is never any suggestion of venereal disease, for example). The corollary is that women of experience do offer a threat - perhaps because they usurp a masculine prerogative. The readers of romances, it seems, would rather think of women as decorative adjuncts to a male life which can be bought and sold than as free beings who can take their sexual pleasure when they want to. This is more reprehensible than to marry for money, since, as we have seen, a girl may be nobly sacrificing herself if she is entering a marriage of convenience for the sake of her family.

In fact, part of the enjoyment of romances seems to come in large measure from an actual pleasure in contemplating the double standard which allows sexual experience to men but not to women except in marriage, and from the maintenance of virginity which is therefore
imposed upon the unmarried girl. This is made clear by the fact that suspense in these novels comes so much from situations which threaten the heroine's virginity, or, at the very least, her reputation as a virgin. Like the spirited heroine's challenge to the rules, which ends with an acceptance of them, the romances seem to go out of their way to underline the unfairness of sexual opportunities and power relationships between men and women, while make this inequality seem natural and even ultimately desirable.

Two general points emerge most clearly from a survey of attitudes towards love and marriage in contemporary romance. One is, that both love and the social rules are used in some way to redress the unfairness of society, rather as they are in Heyer; but whereas in Heyer's work the social rules were paramount, and the heroine, however spirited, "matured" into an acceptance of them, in contemporary romance the message is less certain, and there is a tendency to revert to a more enduring romantic project in exalting the power of love. Secondly, although love is supposed to be more valuable than money, in actual fact the picture of love presented has an economic basis: the very nature of the genre requires it. In any case, love of the kind described in the romances even at its most disinterested is a symptom of that romantic individualism which lies at the heart of the bourgeois capitalist enterprise, so that in a way, even while
celebrating love, the books are also celebrating economic competitiveness within society.

The social rules which circumscribe women's freedom of action, as noted above, can be seen operating in their traditional manner in two novels by Clare Darcy, a close follower of the Heyer tradition. Yet their operation seems more contradictory than in Heyer's stories. The chief characters challenge the rules more seriously than Heyer's do, perhaps because Darcy's heroes, in particular, are often "outsider" figures who observe society with an unprejudiced and often critical eye. In Gwendolyn, for example, Lord Lyndale is not part of the heroine's society, but comes from somewhere vaguely Arabian ("Morocco? - Algeria?") which is "quite out of the way of civilization" 93. His "brigandage" 94 with the sheikhs (which is made to sound like typical Arabian behaviour) results in his being seen as a potential anarchist within English society; and he makes a symbolic challenge to that society when he threatens Gwendolyn's abductor, Lord Wilfred, the very type of an "insider", since he is a member of the "Bow-window set". This means that he is one of the makers of the social rules - at least, those of fashion.

What Lyndale is implicitly challenging is the hypocrisy of English society: since the rules, taken as a whole, are supposed to protect young women from just such dangers as Lord Wilfred himself represents. Instead, to
fall foul of the rules can destroy a young lady, while the aggressor does not suffer. While this is an implicit criticism of the double standard in sexual morality, it tends to confirm as well as call in question the power of the rules when properly operated, since the danger to both Gwendolyn and her sister Campaspe, which provides the suspense in the book, comes from stepping outside them. This is typical of the stories of a large number of contemporary romances.

In the same author's Letty, the difficulties which beset a heroine who wishes to preserve an open and natural personality and at the same time bring herself into the safe harbourage of an acceptable marriage are more clearly spelt out. The values expressed are very much the same as those of Gwendolyn, in that generosity and initiative which tend to challenge society are preferred to a sense of propriety which can co-exist with hypocrisy, meanness and greed. Letty, the heroine, is not an outsider in the society of the novel, but she is as yet a neophyte; and so sees it with an innocent eye. In doing so, she presents the same kind of challenge to it as Lyndale did in Gwendolyn. These qualities, symbolised in the first description of her by her "lovely generous mouth" makes her a suitable mate for the hero, whose leading quality has been described as "irreverence". Despite this he attempts to make Letty conform to the rules for her own protection: a project which nearly brings both to grief,
since in misconstruing this as a sign of dislike, Letty nearly does destroy herself by falling prey to a trickster who wants to decoy her into a mock marriage. The freedom she allows herself, also, enables her to save the hero's reputation, since he has been falsely accused of cheating at cards. In this way, the heroine's need for protection is both questioned and re-affirmed: her challenge to the rules allows her to help the hero, but on the other hand had she actually "married" the scheming Radoczy she would undoubtedly have made herself very unhappy.

The novel therefore turns on the plight of a young girl surrounded by men who will undoubtedly condemn her for breaking the rules, while at the same time trying to tempt her into breaking them. In this situation she must come to maturity, understand her growing sexuality, and find some way of fulfilling it within the conventions of society and at the same time bring herself and the hero into a safe economic harbour.

The unfairness of such a situation is underlined by the way in which Darcy draws masculine characters in general. In Gwendolyn, for instance, the men in the book are, with a few notable exceptions, appalling. Quarters, Gwendolyn's father, has only two interests in life: horses, and maintaining possession of his property. For this Jane, his eldest daughter, must be "sacrificed and sold" to an unwanted suitor. Their neighbour, the Duke of Tardiff, is both rude and aquisitive; although his part
in the book is not extensive, he is none the less important since his shadow broods over the plot: it is he who wants to get his hands on Brightleaves, the Quarters' home. Lord Wilfred, his horrible heir, is a notorious womaniser. Even Belville - prudent and priggish - wants to marry for money.

In many of the romances, it is the profligacy of the men which precipitates the heroine into a marriage of convenience, as though a daughter or a sister were simply viewed as a draft on the bank to help pay one's debts. This happens in Caroline Courtney's Duchess in Disguise, for example, or her A Wager for Love, or in Barbara Cartland's The Magnificent Marriage. In such a context, happiness is marrying the least unpleasant man; and the heroine's reward for unselfishly sacrificing her own interests for the men who are seen as unscrupulously using her is to marry someone who puts her interests first and cares as little for the rules which circumscribe her action as she does. Hence the popularity of the "outsider" figure.

This was noted by Hewison in a recent review of a group of contemporary historical romances. The particular books he reviewed were parts of family series: that is, belonging to a new trend in historical fiction. None the less, some of their spirit seems to have found its way into traditional fiction. Social rules maintain their fascination as a self-contradictory means of protecting
the women they imprison in the context of unequal power-sharing between the sexes; but the real protection is given by finding an "outsider" hero who transcends the rules to fall in love with the heroine. This is one reason for the popularity of nabobs such as the heroes of Cartland's *The Magnificent Marriage*, or Darcy's *Elyza*. Lyndale himself, in *Gwendolyn*, is a sort of nabob; while the Piers of Mira Stables's *Quality Maid* is a rich colonial, an allied figure. It seems, therefore, as though the older kind of romance is struggling to adapt its message to a new ideology, though maintaining the old, however discredited.

None the less, the implicit rejection of what are projected as unacceptable masculine qualities echoes a theme familiar in historical romance, which is the need for a "feminization" of society. Rules perform some of the function of guarding the victims of anarchic individualism from its worst excesses, but because they are essentially inadequate for this function, controlling good natural behaviour into a mean-spirited convention-bound timidity, the real answer lies in changing the nature of the powerful. Hence the importance of drawing out the tender, caring qualities of an aggressively powerful male hero through love for the heroine: something that has been a notable quality of this kind of romance since Heyer wrote *These Old Shades*. The way in which the aggressive behaviour of Piers in Stables's *Quality Maid* is tamed so
that he becomes entirely protective towards his Clemency is typical. And, though Dermot Winfield in the same author's *Golden Barrier* only begins to fall in love with the heroine when he is certain that the balance of power is on his side, he, too, is careful and protective of her. Nothing else is changed, however, the power-relationships within society, with their implicit dangers and unfairness to all but the lucky individuals who form the subjects of these tales remain intact.

Essentially, in fact, the power of the hero is an important factor in the happy ending; and while the power of most of Georgette Heyer's heroes was social, the power of the outsider hero is economic. The heroines are not only happy at the end of the story because they have married a caring man, unusual enough to appreciate their individuality, as the stress on love suggests; they are also happy because by marrying they have become rich. Rosalind Brunt has shown 97 that Barbara Cartland's work, while apparently promoting the importance of romantic love and virginity, has secondary meanings which run counter to this. By constantly referring to love in financial terminology, or valuing the hero according to his wealth, an impression is given that economic considerations are in fact more important than romantic ones; while the use of such plot motifs as a "waiting" episode in the consummation of the heroine's romance has the effect of giving her virginity an increased worth according to
masculine values. The way in which marriages for love are described in financial terminology has already been noted. That the match should have a decided financial advantage for one or other of the partners is usual in historical romance, and this is one of the wish-fulfilling pleasures of the text.

One of the reasons for reading such texts is, alongside the enjoyment by proxy of a disinterested romantic love, the imaginary pleasures of upward mobility. This pleasure relates to what Hewison called a celebration of "getting on" 98, a celebration which he found in all the novels he reviewed in the article mentioned above. He felt that the novels showed an ambivalence towards industrial society, rejecting it by retreating to a past time in which its effects were less noticeable, while at the same time showing sympathy with the capitalistic individualism which accompanied, and to a certain extent produced, the Industrial Revolution. This is a feeling which was not especially noticeable in Heyer's work but can be found in a number of contemporary romances.

This is particularly the case in the work of one contemporary author, Mira Stables, and may be seen at its most explicit in a book already mentioned, Golden Barrier. Praise for the man who is upwardly mobile through his own efforts is one of the book's most notable features. The heroine, Kate Martenhays, explains her attitude to her unsuccessful suitor at the beginning of the story. The
suitor, Lord Sandiland, expects to support his wife, but not having the means to do so, proposes to do it on her money. Kate also expects her husband to support her, if only in modest comfort, but he must make, not marry, the money to do it with. Her husband will not despise "honest toil" but will "work and study" for prosperity 99. Both Kate and Sandiland agree that such a husband would be an ideal, a "paragon"; though Sandiland clearly intends to stay as far away from "honest toil" as he can, he none the less acknowledges its value. In the same scene, Kate clarifies the meaning of "toil" in this context: her husband will be "hardworking" because he will "set the money to work to make more", and he will also set his children to work.

This Smilesean attitude belongs to a Regency heroine who has more in common with the nascent manufacturing world than with the life of a "frivolous society damsel" 100. Her father is a banker, now living the life of a country gentleman but anxious to put his capital to work; the hero, also a country gentleman, wants to make modern improvements on his land which will enable him to run it more profitably, but is anxious to provide alternative work for any redundant labourers by building a knitting mill; a venture which will also bring new wealth to him and to his partner ("No reason why you should not show a respectable profit") 101. It sounds an ideal situation. It is certainly likely to please Kate. Like the hero, she
is aware of new economic developments: "all that is going on in the world today" 102. She declares herself "proud" of what her father has achieved: that is, to amass wealth as a banker.

If wealth, built up through financial dealing or by manufacturing, is admirable, poverty is certainly something to be ashamed of. The heroine's grandparents had been poor. Facing bankruptcy, they refuse to consent to the marriage of their daughter with a socially inferior banker, though the bank would have "bought them up ten times over" 103. They are not credited by their son-in-law with the disinterest one might expect; Martenhays seems to feel they should be condemned as snobs, and also - which is interesting - as impractical. The impression is given that it was their duty to rescue themselves from poverty in whatever way they can, especially since they are "poverty poor" 104.

There is also a group of poverty stricken tinkers in the story. Ungenteel poverty is worse than if it were among the middle classes; these tinkers are a dreadful group. Two of them prove to have been stealing, so it is clear that they are all scroungers, putting on an act in order to con the unwary into giving them food and shelter which they are too lazy to work for. Kate herself falls into this trap, but the discovery of the thief makes her realise how wrong she was; she is in fact embarrassed at being found helping such an unworthy group. The discovery
in the first chapter, that an earl's son and daughter can be unscrupulous, does not make her similarly embarrassed about consorting with the nobility.

The outstanding omission, here as in other romances, is any attempt to give the viewpoint of anyone below middle class rank. The tinkers are given value according to a middle-class scale of values; their own view of the world may have been instructive. There is, it is true, one sympathetically portrayed lower class character: Hilda, the hero's housekeeper. She feels loyalty to her employer because she feels he is worth it; he works hard to redeem his own more genteel poverty. "'Mr Winfield is always there where the work's heaviest and hardest'" so "'you don't fancy standing on your rights and saying it's no part of your job.'" 105 This distinctly non-union attitude gains her the affection of Kate - though it is interesting to note that the dusting, which is what Hilda is talking about, doesn't get done: "the dust lay thick on surfaces" 106.

All this praise of hard work is undercut by one of the principle incidents of the story: namely, that the hero's wealth is restored, not by being "where the work's heaviest and hardest", but by the discovery of the hero's lost family jewels, and by hiding the fact that they have been found from the last owner's wife, who might also have had a claim to them in law. In other words, it is not honest toil, but chance and questionable honesty, which
brings the wealth necessary for respect.

It may be added here that luck, rather than effort, is the usual way in which romantic heroes and heroines become wealthy. This is certainly true of the Longden family in another book by Mira Stables, *Quality Maid*. Like Kate's grandparents, the Longdens are poor, though they deserve our sympathy because they try to find employment to relieve themselves of their poverty. *Quality Maid* is an earlier book than *Golden Barrier* (1973 as opposed to 1981), but the same preoccupation with deserved wealth, escape from poverty, and the contemptible nature of those who will not help themselves is there. Ill fortune has robbed the Longdens of their wealth: the mother, who was the one with the money, having disappeared four years' earlier leaving her money untouchable until she can be officially presumed dead. Since Mr. Longden is blind and has lost all his money in an unfortunate speculation, the Longdens are almost starving. In the end they turn to the sale of jewellery to bring them in the money they need to live: but the need to do so is removed by the happy chance of Mrs. Longden's discovery: having lost her memory after a murderous attack by a highwayman, she is living in York.

In this book the happy chance of finding the family jewels is matched by that of finding a lost wife: the inter-changeability of jewels and wife as bringers of fortune being emphasised by the way Mrs. Longden is simply
exchanged for jewels as a provider of money. Both jewels and woman function as a kind of Hitchcockian McGuffin, a device, whose exact nature is unimportant, for bringing good fortune to the deserving poor.

As to the undeserving, they are parasites upon society at best, and at worst dangerous elements within it. Piers, the hero, was once naively idealistic and tried to help the unfortunate, just as Kate tries to help the tinkers in the later book. What alerts him to the true nature of many of those he tries to help - "brash, idle, glib liars" 107 - is an attack upon him by a "plausible rogue" of a convict he had tried to help. His sympathies are now reserved for those who live in "primitive homes" in Australia, where he has been living, who are forced to employ "women convicts" as servants 108. It is noticeable that these people belong to the employing class, and that Australia is presented as a land of opportunity as well as hardship. Piers has made his fortune there, and it may well be that his friends endure hardship for the sake of eventual wealth. His attitude towards the shiftless, more anarchic characters is justified in the story by his attitude to the half-gypsy stable boy, Will, to whom he refuses another chance after he has lost his job at the stable. Will has too much of his gypsy father in him - a "smooth-tongued, cheating rascal" - and is not "steady and reliable" 109. He goes off to join a gang of robbers, thus proving the rightness of Piers's patronage, which turns
him from a criminal to a loyal servant; and his new loyalty reinstates him into society as Piers's servant, firmly integrated into the social hierarchy instead of being an anarchic element on its periphery. This is an important element in the happy ending.

The intended message is clear enough; but the contradictory chance elements in the story undercut the praise of hard work and the benefits of honestly won wealth. In each of the two books the use of luck as a turning point of the plot gives a fairy story atmosphere: in *Golden Barrier*, for instance, the heroine's father remarks that it is only "right ... that your rescuer should receive your hand in marriage" 110 - and the equivalent of half the kingdom with it, for a "modest fortune is to be settled on Kate at marriage, and the whole of his fortune will come at his death. The hero or heroine has the traditional luck of the youngest son, which may or may not be accompanied in folk-tales by virtue. In these stories the lucky characters are also deserving since they are at least willing to help themselves. This is, perhaps, their escapist element, for it suggests that though the world is really run by chance, there are times when the rewards go to the right people. However, the effect is to temper the self-help gospel very considerably.

The same kind of contradiction can be found in a good many contemporary romances. The overt message of Mary Ann
Gibbs's *A Most Romantic City*, London, 1976, for instance, is very like that of *Golden Barrier*. The hero is a banker, and if at first he appears cold and calculating - he proposes to the heroine as though suggesting a business venture - the reader soon learns that in his business life he is kindly and paternalistic. His patronage of the young aristocrat, Barnaby Tilvertont, shows the sympathetic side of his nature: he allows the young man an overdraft to pay an unavoidable debt to his old nurse, takes him on holiday and eventually gives him a post as a bank-clerk with the aim of becoming a partner in due course. His scrupulous honesty is almost quixotic: when the bank is robbed, he offers to make good the loss through his personal fortune, and he refuses to sack a delinquent clerk who had helped the robbers because of his difficult home circumstances.

The reality of business, as carried on in his bank, is contrasted with the general impression of finance as sharp practice. The hero's father had made a fortune with his wife's money, which had remained a grievance with her relatives ever since: as her husband had agreed that the money should remain her own, his fortune seemed to them the result of a kind of cheating. The hero points out to his uncles that his father had scrupulously paid back every penny of the money his wife had advanced, and the fortune had been made entirely honourably. His offer to pay back the bank's losses himself convinces his uncles.
ultimately of the good faith of the Pitboroughs.

The kindness of the hero is contrasted, too, with the thriftless extravagance and egoism of the heroine's mother, who makes her daughter into little more than a drudge. Honourable money-making in this novel can co-exist more easily in this novel with humanity and value to society than more "aristocratic" attitudes can.

Yet here, too, the novel's values are undercut by a "magical" solution which seems to suggest that the financial world is little more than play. It is not the hero's fortune, fruit of his own and his father's hard work, which saves the bank in the end, but the accident that the major loss was of securities which had never been in the bank at all. They belong to an absent-minded eccentric who had sent them in a parcel to his sister instead of a promised dress-length, which was in the stolen package. The relativity of financial values, suggested by this easy transposition, is underlined by the sister's reaction: the package of securities is just so much dirty paper to her, worthless in comparison with the dress-length. Yet though the securities are thus presented as valueless in any real sense, their discovery is enough to save both bank and fortune.

Ironically, too, if the hardworking Charles, the hero, had taken charge of them when they were first entrusted to the bank he would have discovered the mistake and the real securities would have eventually found their
place in his vaults, ready to be stolen in earnest. It is only because his lazy and irresponsible cousin was in the bank at the time that the mistake which was to save them was never discovered.

Such paradoxes reflect the fact that it is difficult for a romance to show money-making in a wholly approving manner, while at the same time the attitudes expressed about financial morality, and the virtues of hard work and thrift, by authors such as Stables and Gibbs are perhaps closer to the overt attitudes of the readers than the aristocratic system of values which the romances often put forward. The result is that the presentation of economic and social values in the romances is by no means a simple matter.

Part of the fascination of historical romances of the present day is their presentation of a rich and glamorous style of living. At the same time, characters who use wealth irresponsibly - the extravagant father or brother who wastes the family fortune, for instance - are usually presented as egocentric at best, and certainly to be condemned. The making of money, for instance by a rich marriage, or by trying to put one's estates into order, or both, is admirable in such circumstances. Yet to set out to make money for its own sake is greedy, and can be as selfish as irresponsible extravagance. These considerations give rise to a number of contradictions within the novels and demonstrate an ambivalent attitude
towards money-making which appears to be characteristic of the genre. An account of ways in which characters finance their luxurious ways of living is instructive, since it shows the various ways in which the authors attempt to come to terms with this ambivalence.

Inherited wealth is, of course, the most respected form of wealth in the novels and gives entree into the tight social world portrayed. Even if a family has become poor, as in Stables's *Quality Maid*, or Georgette Heyer's *Arabella*, the fact that in the past it had been wealthy, or is a branch of a wealthy family, is enough to make it respectable. Such connections give the characters a claim to enter society and an entitlement to repair their fortunes by ways which in other circumstances would have been frowned on - such as marrying for money. It is as though a connection by birth with wealth gives a right to its possession. The circle of wealth thus becomes self-perpetuating. The heroine's father hints at such an attitude in *Golden Barrier* when he condemns his in-laws for not trying to enrich themselves, as though they had a special duty to do so which those born poor did not. The idea that the gently-born are a different species, easily recognisable even though poverty-stricken, is one which figures prominently in Heyer's work and has been inherited by her followers: Harry, the hero of Clare Darcy's *Letty* recognises the heroine as a gentlewoman when she accosts him in the street at night because of her look of inborn...
refinement.

Since inheritance is so important, the theme of many of the novels is the struggle to maintain or restore it. Disputed inheritances form the central motif of a number of romances, such as Clare Darcy's *Rolande* and *Letty*, Caroline Courtney's *A Wager for Love*, or Eva MacDonald's *House of Secrets*, while in Patricia Veryan's *A Perfect Match* and Marina Oliver's *Highwayman's Hazard* the hero is trying to regain an inheritance rightfully his. The foundations of such wealth are so far in the past that the family is no longer tainted with the stigma of money-making. In becoming wealthy they have changed their nature, as though the money were internalised and flowed through their veins in a golden tide.

This is not so with fortunes made in trade. Though Mira Stables held up her heroine's father as an example of a good business man in stirring times, historical romances on the whole refer to men who have made, not inherited, wealth in denigratory terms. In this, the authors identify with the viewpoint of their aristocratic heroes; and though this is sometimes criticised, the criticism is sympathetic, and the reader is invited to share the hero's point of view to some extent. Heyer's *A Civil Contract* shows an aristocratic hero trying to come to terms with a father-in-law who has made a fortune, and who is shown as a good-hearted but pushy vulgarian; though the hero's attitude is not condoned, the vulgarity remains
unpleasant. The aristocratic family in Heyer's *An Unknown Ajax* is shown to be shiftless and snobbish in contrast to the hero, who has been brought up by his wool-manufacturer grandfather, but the hero's acceptability comes ultimately from the fact that the grandfather has confirmed his "golden", gently-born qualities by sending him to Harrow and keeping him as far as possible from contamination by his northern peers. There is even a hint at a kind of aristocracy of labour in this book, but it remains a hint, referring to a situation kept firmly off-stage. The hero's views are widened by his membership of two worlds, but he remains an unconvincing figure. Cartland's Marquis in *The Bored Bridegroom* feels as overwhelmed by the over-generosity of his rich father-in-law as does the hero of *A Civil Contract*; the older man has bought all the marquis's family treasures which a thriftless older generation has had to sell off and is now giving them back to the Marquis via his daughter.

The message is, not that such men are without taste - and they are often seen as more valuable and possessing a truer outlook on life than the more profligate of the aristocracy - but that they are cut off from the aristocratic world by a difference of outlook and behaviour which is insurmountable. Though this may suggest that historical romances express attitudes of approval towards bourgeois capitalist activity, this in fact is rarely seen as having value in itself, but as having its
most important function as a support for the aristocratic world, maintaining the agricultural estates from which the aristocrats derive their wealth. Capital is thus put into service to maintain a more feudal form of society, and also to keep in being the inequalities of fortune which enable such a society to continue.

The implication is that the aristocrats do not generate enough wealth through their estates to finance the luxury to which birth entitles them. Plots are frequently set in motion by an aristocratic family's need for money, as in the case of Cartland's The Bored Bridegroom, The Magnificent Marriage, and The Devil in Love. While this may be seen as an acknowledgement that society is changing, there is a strong preference for the older form. Trade, manufacturing processes and finance are rarely described, but new methods of agriculture are often given in detail, as is the case in A Civil Contract. Even in Golden Barrier, which appears to provide a critique of such attitudes, the finance and industry which are mentioned with approval are scarcely described, but details of farming practices are given in detail.

The children of tradesmen and financiers have a chance to become part of the aristocratic world, since their wealth comes to them by inheritance; often, too, they have a connection by birth with the aristocracy and so with more respectable wealth. The heroine of Golden Barrier has a mother who was an impoverished aristocrat;
both she and the hero of _The Unknown Ajax_ have been brought up among "Quality" at a good school. Mary Challoner, in Heyer's _Devil's Cub_ is typical; with a raffish but aristocratic father and a vulgar mother, she has been brought up with the Marquis of Vidal's cousin and knows better than to wear puce. She is a proper focus for the reader's interest and sympathy, unlike her sister Sophia, who remains intransigently "trade". Little hope is extended to those who choose to remain within a middle-class environment; some romances even suggest that such a choice, with its intimate connection with vulgarity of manner, also implies immorality. This is certainly the case with Sophia; and in Marina Oliver's _Restoration Affair_, though the heroine, Cally, is an acceptably aristocratic heroine who can take her place at court with ease, her behaviour is sympathetic only because she is distanced from the trade which made her father rich. She is the daughter of a wealthy wool-merchant, but one who has become a country gentleman through the purchase of a small Cambridgeshire estate, which Cally has inherited. Her husband, John Cobden, has a "doxy" in the City, the home of trade and finance. No sympathy is extended to her, though her behaviour is very similar to Cally's: it may after all because she has become a courtier's mistress that Cally retains the reader's sympathy - Sir Richard Weston is a landed gentleman.

Though in _Golden Barrier_ the notion of profit is
spoken of with approval, this is not the usual attitude of romances towards this aspect of trade and finance. In Dinah Dean's *Briar Rose*, it is the new man, Richard Rich, wanting to make what he can for himself from the dissolution of the monasteries, who is the villain. The heroine belongs to an older world; she feels it is wrong to take money for her services as a healer and wise woman, though her stepmother (an inn-keeper, or tradeswoman) contests this. The latter, too, is an unsympathetic character. The novel portrays a society at a moment of change, when the monastery which had been the raison d'etre of the community is swept away and all its wealth disappears into private hands. Rich and the inn-keeper are presented as typical of a new spirit in the world - that of capital and private profit - by which even the hero is influenced, though he represents profit humanized by respect for tradition and for the feelings of those at whose expense the profit is made.

A similar situation arises in Eva Macdonald's *Cromwell's Spy*, where the hero, one of Cromwell's officers, is contrasted with a greedy brother officer, out to enrich himself from the war. The latter tries to steal the heroine's family silver. As in *Briar Rose*, the hero obtains the heroine's family home and estates when she is turned out, but is willing to share them with her. Such a financial compromise to a political disagreement is not uncommon in historical romances and can be found, for
instance, in D.M. Carlisle's *Straws in the Wind*.

In *Cromwell's Spy*, as in *Briar Rose*, the situation of the ordinary people whose happiness and prosperity depend on the activities of the great is presented sympathetically. Macdonald suggests that it is the Parliamentarian cause is the logical one for the people to support, since the king cares nothing for their interests. Prince Rupert is called the "robber prince", and though his influence in the novel is on the whole benign, the connotations of the name are never denied. Yet it is not for the lower classes to act in their own interest. Their role is to serve those who will act for them. Loyalty to one's master is the most highly prized quality in lower class characters; as can be seen from the approval given to the heroine's loyal servant, who dies trying to save the family silver. It is not her silver, after all, and the approval of her act seems to fly in the face of the author's expressed sentiments about the need for people to follow their best interests. The attitude, with its central contradiction, seems close to that of Weyman's portrayal of the Crocan revolt in *The Abbess of Vlaye* at the end of the last century.

In general, therefore, it seems as though romantic authors see the function of the common people, whether poor or wealthy, as supporting the aristocracy, maintaining a world they can never share. This view is closely associated with disapproval of capitalist
attitudes, and denigration of profit. As for the poor, the ambiguity of Macdonald's attitude is comparatively radical, and even she, in House of Secrets, expresses a more wary view of popular action: in giving a view of a "free" society, one of the characters says, apparently with the author's approval, "It is only free while its citizens do as they are told" 111. It is as though the benign society of Weyman's vision, in which a law-abiding lower class entrust their interests to disinterested state servants, were already in operation.

There is a general omission of lower-class characters from the novels, and when their point of view is represented the difficulties of reconciling it with the romantic attitude is clear. In Sheila Bishop's The Phantom Garden, for instance, the heroine identifies herself as lower-class and speaks for them. When Charles, the hero, thoughtlessly compares the bad behaviour of the County at the Race Balls to that of servants, she reprimands him: "Servants ... know very well how to conduct themselves in public and generally do so" 112. She questions the priorities of a society which can accept herself, a singer, but not a jockey although "it is harder to reach the winning post than top C?" 113 She suggests that to argue that jockeys would not be happy in upper class society is a comfortable upper class rationalization; and when Charles protests that he at least frequently ate with his servant when they were

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travelling she calls his attitude patronizing: he would not do so in English society. Her attitudes are contrasted with those of the villainess, Helen, who ruthlessly moves a whole village to improve a view. Charles himself realises that the excuse for this - that the new houses offered in place of the old are better - is "not valid" since it ignores the wishes of the villagers themselves, and, in particular, the old people who would be leaving a life-long home.

These points are not answered in the novel, which seems to be giving a critique of eighteenth century society. They are, however, invalidated to a great extent by the outcome of the love-story and its implications. Since the hero has to learn to overcome fears of a misalliance before he can propose to the heroine, it seems that the transcendence of class barriers is an important theme. In actual fact, however, the heroine, though lower-class by birth, has become a member of the upper classes in all but actual status. Because her parents' employers made a favourite of her as a child, she knows the ways of the aristocracy, and has assumed them more and more as she succeeds in her profession. Now, as the hero notes with approval, she can hold her own in aristocratic society: she even has the right kind of embroidery to occupy her time in the country. The message is not so much that class barriers should be overturned, as that it is possible in a competitive society for a few exceptional
individuals to become upwardly mobile: the reader might well be left with a feeling that Charles was right in noting a difference between Celia’s social position and that of the jockeys. A book which sets out to point out the injustices of society towards the lower classes ends by revalidating the competitive society. Given the wishfulfilling nature and upper-class settings of romances, it is difficult to see how it could be otherwise.

The lower classes, therefore, rarely feature in the romances except in the roles of loyal servants, or as the objects of aristocratic patronage. The hero and heroine of Heyer’s Arabella decide who, among the suffering poor of London, is to benefit from their help: the chamber-maid and the chimney-sweeper’s boy are acceptable, though they have the faults of their class (not minding their manners, for instance); but the bar-maid in the gin-shop (suspected of prostitution) is not. Such a character is past redemption and can never find a place in the respectable world, whereas the little boy remains malleable and becomes in the end a loyal servant—rather as does the gypsy boy in Quality Maid.

The more radical Cartland shows a socially concerned heroine, Orelia, converting the hero to awareness of London’s poor in The Wicked Marquis, but this is presented as little more than a courtship ploy. The Marquis begins to make Young England-like speeches in the House of Lords,
but social concern is more interesting as an aspect of the heroine - like having red hair - rather than for its own sake. More typically, radical concerns are portrayed as ridiculous in Heyer's *The Quiet Gentleman*; the ducal hero explicitly rejects the levelling attitudes of his prospective father-in-law, who in any case never allows his radical principles to interfere with his comfort. Of course, the Duke has a sense of responsibility to his dependants, because a chap must do his best for those under his care, but he will not tolerate any monkeying about with the laws of property.

In all these novels, it is noteworthy that social concerns are touched on, and even foregrounded, and despite the fact that the actual under-dogs make little appearance in the novel, there is sometimes an awareness of the unfairness and inequality of a society which can allow such differences of wealth and such suffering. Yet the tendency of all the novels is to support the continuance of such a society. The most that can be hoped for is amelioration, through the actions of the concerned aristocracy, even though the inequality seems too firmly embedded to allow of much change by such means. The heroines of both *Golden Barrier* and *Arabella* find some problems intractable; there are people who cannot be helped because they cannot be changed, and the implication is that their character is not fit for decent society even if it is socially created. Since little is seen of such
characters, the reader has to take the author's view on trust. In the end, the most compassionate of heroines finds that there is little she can do to change society - such concern being in any case often portrayed as youthful naivete - and gives up the notion. Not many characters turn to political action to solve the problem; it may be all right for a Marquis of Ryde to do so (The Wicked Marquis), but for ordinary people to take up political activity is seen as dangerously revolutionary, or simply foolish, as in The Quiet Gentleman.

Indeed, to change the structure of society would be to spoil the imaginative experience, which is of belonging to a secure and glamorous world of insiders. The existence of the poor emphasises their comfort and privilege. The middle classes, aspiring to become members of the aristocracy in their turn, are outsiders whose unfulfilled hopes underline the pleasure of belonging by right. Without the middle and lower classes, separated from the upper by an impassable gulf, the vicarious enjoyment of a rich, secure aristocratic world lacks half its power.

There is an insoluble tension, therefore, in the novels, between disapproval of wealth and inequality and enjoyment of it. Romantic writers use various methods to try to resolve this. Trade itself, for example, can be made glamorous if it is sufficiently removed from the world it maintains. A nabob, for instance, may be just as much a vulgarian as a British wool-merchant or financier, but
it is possible to present someone from such a far-off world as socially acceptable. Maxwell Kirby's prospective in-laws, it may be inferred from Cartland's *The Magnificent Marriage*, could be forgiven for expecting him to be a rank outsider. Instead, he is a Regency Corinthian: a capable horseman and sportsman, a charming companion and a figure of distinction. He is supposed to be one of the men who created the port of Singapore (with Sir Thomas Raffles), and his trading activities are seen as beneficial - indeed heroic. He understands and appreciates Eastern culture, an appreciation manifested in his collection of fine Chinese painting and jade carving. This he keeps hidden in a secret room. The same situation - a secret collection, this time of a Marquis's family heirlooms - is presented in *The Bored Bridegroom* as an embarrassing attempt to possess the Marquis's culture and tradition, even though the collector is himself knowledgeable as well as rich. In Kirby, however, a similar activity shows the fineness of his nature. It is as though the Chinese culture had no existence unless a sympathetic Westerner can appreciate it and act as intermediary between east and west. The Marquis's heritage, on the other hand, is only truly valuable if it is in the hands of the Marquis's family. From the point of view of the reader, Kirby's collection offers a chance to enjoy the exotic without the challenge of coming to terms with the alien; far from destroying its cultural significance, Kirby domesticates
it and gives it value.

The foreign merchant, therefore, presented as neither greedy and destructive but as beneficent and heroic, becomes a merchant prince, an aristocrat in his own right. Nabob-heroes are not confined to Cartland's work: the hero of Clare Darcy's *Elyza*, London, 1980, for instance, is accepted by society as long as it is supposed that he is a real nabob. In a curious reversal of the normal rules of historical romance, the acceptance is removed when it appears that, though rich, he has not made his money as a merchant himself, but by inheriting it from a real one, whose clerk he was. Only the realisation that he had been gently born is enough to reinstate him, bringing different rules into operation.

Eastern trade, therefore, is acceptable, partly perhaps because it has an exotic glamour of its own, and partly because it represents a sort of adventure and heroism. It may, perhaps, enshrine a lingering nostalgia for the expansionist spirit current at the close of the last century. Piers, the hero of Stables's *Quality Maid*, is not a nabob, but his account of life as an Australian wool-farmer and merchant is enough to stir the romantic feelings of the heroine, and there is no doubt that his business is seen as a spread of civilization into the wilderness. Manufacturing and finance in this country, however, though necessary, is commonplace, coming, perhaps, too close to the readers' everyday lives to
provide escape.

This may be the reason why, when poverty forces a hero or heroine to turn to work, their unfitness for any sort of employment is stressed. Young men may sometimes become soldiers, but usually, whether they choose the army or a profession, they are unable to act on their choice for lack of funds. Any possibility of finding their own way out of their difficulties is therefore impossible; the nature of the stories demands that financial rescue should come from rich marriages or fortunate chances. This is what happens to the hero of Stables's Golden Barrier, who finds lost jewellery, as does the hero of Patricia Veryan's A Perfect Match. Heroines are particularly useless when it comes to earning a living. Many find it difficult, or impossible, to obtain posts as governesses or companions: they lack both the training and the ugliness which appear to be necessary. Any employer would rightly suspect them of being heroines, and therefore unemployable on sight. A little job has to be found for Clemency in Stables's Quality Maid out of sheer kindness, since she has no qualifications, and Larisa, heroine of Cartland's The Devil in Love is not really fitted for a post as governess. In both Cousin Kate and The Devil in Love the heroine's lack of training is a useful motif for setting in motion a "Gothic" plot, since it means that the heroine is constrained to accept an unusual, perhaps sinister, position: in both these cases, involving
looking after an incipient maniac. An independent heroine, such as that of Eva Macdonald's *House of Secrets*, who runs a tea-shop, is unusual; and not only is it stressed that she has an independent income and no need to work, but also she is enriched, first by an inheritance which comes to her through a chance meeting, and then by a rich marriage.

Chance, with its associations of surprise and possibility of a turn in the plot, is preferable to trade, work or financial speculation in providing wealth. A fortune won by gambling is more acceptable than one amassed through trade, though the authors never suggest that they could condone making money through the misfortunes of other people. Occasionally, as in Heyer's *Regency Buck*, the hero finds himself winning money from his own ward, a situation which horrifies him. In Caroline Courtney's *A Wager for Love* and Cartland's *Light of the Moon* the hero wins money from the heroine's brother, thus causing the family to face ruin. The heroine's sacrifice is the only thing that can save the situation, as is the case also in Heyer's *The Convenient Marriage* and *April Lady*. But although the evils of gaming are thus implicitly acknowledged, to make money through gaming is acceptable as long as whoever loses to you is not so completely ruined as to destroy himself.

Indeed, the notion of gaming is one which fascinates romantic writers. A taste for "play" is part of the equipment of Heyer's heroes; the starting point of
Devil's Cub is an incident in a gaming saloon, and Faro's Daughter is set in one, as is Clare Darcy's Letty. The climactic episode of Marina Oliver's Highwayman's Hazard is a game of piquet, and though the manner in which the hero has gained the wealth which enables him to figure in the fashionable society of Harrogate is never explained, this, too, presumably came from gaming. Certainly he seems to do no work, yet he assures the heroine his money came to him by honest means: that is, presumably, not by highway robbery. Highwaymen are romantic figures themselves, of course (the hero of Heyer's first novel, The Black Moth, took to the road through sheer boredom, and love of excitement led the heroine of The Wicked Lady Skelton, by Magdalen King-Hall, to both gambling and highway robbery: the appeal of the two is very close), and in Highwayman's Hazard the more acceptable but still exciting activity is simply substituted for the less acceptable one.

This wish-fulfilling pleasure in enrichment through chance also explains the serendipity element in the books which has already been noted. Whatever misfortunes the hero and heroine may have to suffer, a happy chance will save them and make them wealthy in the end. A chance association with a friend's lover results in the heroine's becoming his heir in Macdonald's House of Secrets, inheriting one of the best tea-shops in Victorian London. The fact that this comes to her through two sudden deaths is not important in comparison with her good fortune. The
author comments, "Miss Bates was, indeed, a fortunate young woman to have fallen, metaphorically, so pleasantly on her feet." and the reader is presumably expected to share her pleasure; though the nice Miss Bates does shed a tear or two at the sight of the dead man's shoes she shows no regret at having stepped into them.

The "chance" elements in such stories often contradict their overt values. Independence and the ability to fend for one's self through hard work and honest dealing is celebrated in the major characters of many romances. It is a virtue in the heroines of *Quality Maid* and *The Devil in Love* that they are willing to find work for themselves, despite their marked inability to do so. It is Miss Bates's independence, shown in the way she carries on the work of her cousin's tea-shop despite the small annuity which makes it unnecessary for her to work, which fascinates the hero of *House of Secrets*. The way in which her honesty is stressed has already been remarked. Her reward is to find wealth and happiness in marriage. Her character is contrasted with that of the secondary heroine, an actress of far less sterling quality and independence. "She was always ready to accept the assistance of a gentleman" (the heroine has previously turned down the hero's offer to carry her bag), and she turns out to be hiding a good deal of important information. Her dreams of wealth turn out to be groundless, and she finally has to put up with marriage to

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a private detective, having previously scorned the love of a French policeman.

This careful stress on hard work and honesty can be paralleled in other romances, such as those by Stables, Mary Ann Gibb or D.M. Carlisle. It is usually undermined, however, by the role of fortune in making hard work unnecessary. Even in Stables's novels, it is not hard work which brings wealth, but chance discoveries. The effect is to display the random nature of reward within society, for all the apparent valuing of hard work and honesty. The effect is to enhance the wish-fulfilling function of the stories, as they offer a vicarious share in the happy turns of fortune's wheel; but such pleasure co-exists uneasily with the picture of an unfair society.

This analysis of a range of contemporary romances has shown that there have been changes in the way writers of historical romances have presented their themes between the end of the last century and the present: but, despite this, the picture of the world which all the books present does not vary so very greatly. Contemporary writers do not foreground their pictures of society in the way that an earlier writer such as Doyle did - they do not even choose important moments of history, as Weyman or Sabatini did. None the less, the reader can find between the lines of today's romances a familiar picture of the operation of history and the nature of society. The past may be quaint in many ways and gain its attractiveness from its
differences from the world of today; none the less, even
the most critical pictures of periods in the past show
disinterested members of the upper classes becoming aware
of the injustices of society and playing their part in
putting these right. Even though the aim seems to be to
reclaim the past rather than to show its movements, the
general attitude towards history is progressive.
Reassurance is given that the processes of history will
put right the injustices of society, without the need for
uncomfortable political action on the part of the lower
classes. Instead, the mechanics of the historical process
are put in motion by the goodwill of upper-class
individuals.

In a similar way, the books seem to go out of their
way to point out the unfairness women's role within
society, and to create heroines of spirit and intelligence
who clearly deserve better treatment than their world
affords. The popularity of the Regency period may well
arise from the opportunity it gives to see the rules of
society operating most severely to circumscribe the
activities of these heroines. Yet, as Janice Radway has
pointed out, the ultimate message for women is not a
radical one. The transformation of aggressively
masculinity through love - a theme which has, in fact,
been notable in one form or another even in the male-
centred romance of Weyman and Mason - carries with it the
suggestion that love itself is enough to right the ills of
society for the individual heroine, and this is sufficient to provide a happy ending even though it leaves the nature of the patriarchal society unchanged. Furthermore, the transformation of spirited heroine into acquiescent female is presented as a process of maturation, rather like the change from tomboy to young lady in books for teenagers.

The general impression given by the romances, therefore, seems to be that despite the manifest unfairness of society, nothing need be done about it since compensations more than counterbalance its evils. As with earlier historical romances, however, the message of the text is expressed through stories which tend to counteract its major themes. The portrayal of heroes and heroines as disinterested and benign influences within society is undercut by the way in which they profit by its inequalities, just as praise of such virtues as thrift, honesty and independence is contradicted by the lucky chances which bring wealth to the deserving and which are offered for the reader's vicarious enjoyment. Love is portrayed too ambiguously to be convincing as an answer to the problems of power relationships between the sexes; moreover, the nature of the love presented is shaped by a sense of the paramount importance of the individual, the very keystone of a competitive society.

These contradictory aspects are those which are chiefly conveyed by the elements of the story itself: those familiar motifs which, as has been noted, form an
important part of all plots of historical romances. The way in which they are expressed by the motifs is the subject of the following chapter.
Chapter Ten

Conclusions

Have the situations of historical romance changed their significance through time? Any answers must inevitably be tentative, since meanings are in part a creation of the individual reader. None the less, it is possible to trace in the recurrence of popular motifs certain kinds of preoccupations: that these can be interpreted as reader attitudes seems likely from the fact that these novels - from the time of Heyer onwards, certainly - are so precisely aimed at a target audience.

Because of their mixed nature, combining an imagined past with a story of love and adventure, historical romances convey their meanings in different ways. On one level, like any other historical fiction, historical romances create an imagined world which purports to be locatable in a real past. The differing ways in which the authors considered in this study have used the past will be considered in more detail later. To some extent, however, these have been analysed in the accounts of the individual authors. The stock motifs, on the other hand, have changed little in form, and though their effect in undercutting some of the historical world-pictures created by some of the authors has been noted, a detailed account of the kind of message given by these situations has not
seemed appropriate in any individual author study. In this chapter, therefore, there will be a brief consideration of some of the kinds of meaning which may be inferred from the romantic stock situations before the ways in which the use of history and the motifs work together to promote ideological effects are finally drawn together.

If the stock situations are to fulfil their function in the story (providing a happy ending, for example, or adding a moment of suspense or danger to the story) they must draw upon assumptions and attitudes in the reader which arise ultimately from the nature of the society in which the reader lives. A retreat into private life cannot even pass as happiness at the end of a Weyman or Sabatini novel, for instance, unless it is read by someone with a certain distrust of the public sphere of action.

In general, the situations of romance draw on attitudes which relate to power in society, status, and economic organization. In particular, many of the situations of women's romance arise from attitudes towards the role of the sexes, the relationship between men and women, and male and female sexuality. Whatever the relationship of motif to reader's assumptions, the effect is sometimes different from that of the more overtly expressed attitudes which can be gleaned from the texts.

The manner in which the motifs gain significance can be illuminated by posing a question: why, if the texts
are supposed to be escapist and wish-fulfilling, do so many of the situations which compose them involve some kind of deprivation or suffering? Can we really enjoy identifying with an abducted heroine or a hero in danger of death? Or with a situation like that of Weyman's de Marsac, who scarcely knows where to turn for money and is the subject of general ridicule?

In part, of course, the answer is that the motifs have a structural function in the plot, and provide the element of suspense. Yet the very familiarity of most of the situations suggests that they perform this function inefficiently. The reader is virtually reading the same story again and again; and even if suspense can survive such familiarity, how can we explain the pleasures of re-reading a book where the detailed mechanics of plot resolution are known, as well as the nature of the individual situation? There must be something in the nature of the situations themselves which gives pleasure despite the fact that they seem, on the surface, to offer an unpleasant experience.

At least part of the attraction, therefore, may be that very experience: they appear as negations of a wished-for state, and by so doing call it into half-imagined existence. The shadow of a happy resolution already anticipated by a reader who knows the nature of
the genre - is cast over each hardship. Pleasure comes from exaggerating unhappiness when one knows it will give place to a happy ending. The function of the situations is, therefore, to disrupt the happiness and prosperity of the characters as much as possible so that this anticipation can be savoured. It is the nature of this happiness which can be related to social values in a number of ways.

Thus, a hero deprived of his inheritance, shamed and exiled, or a heroine brought up in poverty when wealth and social status are hers by right, are in an enviable state because their very discomfort promises that they will gain what they lack at the end of the story. The more unpleasant their circumstances, the more enjoyable, paradoxically, they appear.

But this is only the most obvious manifestation of a motif whose ambiguity has already been noted: that of disguise and the discovery of a true identity. Though it is, of course, possible to find romances which do not turn on some form of this situation, its popularity is such that it is almost a characteristic of the genre.

The various manifestations of the motif which have been noted in the foregoing analysis fall into two main groups, as described in chapter three: the situation of the declasse hero or heroine who wins back a rightful position in society, and the use of the "mask" metaphor, which is more general: the hiding of the true personality.
beneath a deceiving veneer.

The second is the more pervasive: a hero may hide his nature from necessity, but more often because he wants to. In Sabatini's *Scaramouche*, the hero is a play-actor because he needs to hide, but the author makes clear that throughout his life he has been acting a part. The role of Scaramouche, assumed when Andre-Louis joins the players, may indeed be said to reveal him, since it is true to one aspect of his nature, the intriguer and opportunist: but that aspect itself hides a genuine idealism, which his Scaramouche-personality is designed both to protect and to facilitate.

In the case of Andre-Louis the notion of the mask is clearly exposed, since an actual one is a necessary part of his Commedia del Arte role. But masks and acting-roles, both real and metaphorical, are ubiquitous in the genre, and may be assumed as much by a powerful leader of society as by an outlaw like Andre-Louis. The Scarlet Pimpernel is of course a master of disguise, but his wife thinks of him as a man behind a mask, playing a part, even in his private life. Here again, the role-play hides the identity of a man who operates outside the law, but also hides emotions he dare not reveal lest he should be made to suffer unbearably through them. His identity is hidden from his wife because he dare not trust her; but the scene at Richmond shows how much of his true self he hides from her as well.
Apart from such classic examples, even a little-known romance plucked almost at random from a library shelf, such as Constance Heaven's *Castle of Eagles*, uses the imagery of the mask to show the heroine's awareness that the hero is a man who hides his feelings from the world. Only in love can he drop the guard at last; and a love based on mutual trust is the usual resolution to a situation where the wearing of a mask is presented as disrupting the natural, right relationship between individuals, which ought to be open and free.

The mask, role or disguise in romance is, therefore, a more general manifestation of one of the most widespread themes in literature: that of appearance and reality. What makes the romantic usage individual is that whereas in comedy disguise typically conceals the rogue, and in tragedy the villain, in romance what is hidden is often the idealism and emotion which renders the hero vulnerable.

That wearing a disguise makes the hero interesting is partly due to the workings of Barthes's "hermeneutic" code, as was described in chapter three: the hero becomes a man of mystery, a puzzle which the reader must solve. But it also has social implications. As noted above, disguise appears to be a disruption of a desired norm: an openness and trust in human relationships which would only be possible in a utopian state of social co-operativeness. The resolution of the situation - the discarding of the
disguise - suggests that such a state is possible, but only partially, since the mask can only be laid aside in the setting of a private relationship.

The wearing of the mask, after all, implies danger: if the hero is vulnerable and needs its protection it can only be because the nature of society is far from open and co-operative. If the hero is experienced and intelligent (a mark of the later romantic hero: the intelligence of Andre-Louis is frequently stressed, for example), he will be readier than others to acknowledge this and to act accordingly. The assumption of the mask is therefore a mark of his intelligence and sensitivity. This has two implications: the individualistic nature of society is at once condemned and affirmed.

First, it may be seen that the interest of the mask theme arises from the concept of a "true" individual nature, distinct from its social appearance. This "true" nature is, mainly, the seat of the emotions; the function of the intelligence is to protect it against society. The dichotomy between society and individuality which this presupposes, and the identification of individuality with feeling, is an essentially Romantic notion, a reaction to developments in capitalist society which seem at once to threaten and to enthrone the individual (through the increasing mechanization and complexity of industrial society on the one hand and through the rewards of capitalism on the other, sought for through individual
self-interest, without which the economy could not operate).

This is the secondary implication: that society is dangerous because it is competitive, composed of individuals who are all striving for advantage. The sensitive individual who remains open and trusting may therefore be harmed. Self-interest - essentially economic and social - is presented as a corrupting factor in relationships. Percy Blakeney fears Marguerite because he distrusts her; the basis of his distrust is that he sees her as a part of this mutually destructive society. It seems as though, given the opportunity, she was willing to destroy the Marquis de St. Cyr as he had been willing to destroy her brother when he had the power to do so. Until she can show that she acted in innocence, Blakeney will not drop his guard. In the same way, Andre-Louis Moreau discovers, first, that his mother never acknowledged him because she feared social ruin if she did, and secondly, that Aline, the girl he loves, is willing to marry for money a man for whom he feels an absolute contempt. Hence his apparent hardness and unconcern, which, it is made clear, is assumed. In such circumstances, love and trust have only led to disillusion and suffering; mercenary and socially opportunist motives have spread corruption into the very heart of those very institutions which should protect the individual from them: marriage and the family.

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On the surface, the implication of such a presentation is that the Hobbesian society which the reader can infer from the situation is one that must be deplored, and the resolution of the situations in *The Scarlet Pimpernel* and *Scaramouche*, by showing that things were not what they seemed, gives hope that hero and heroine together will find a more open, trusting relationship which is a model of what society should be. None the less, this implication is not the only one. The utopian relationship which it suggests is a very private one, and does not affect the nature of society as a whole; and, more tellingly, the relationship itself can rarely free itself from a Hobbesian taint. However much author and reader may desire a complete resolution, there are usually factors which prevent it: perhaps a need to present a "realistic" solution, which is the more wish-fulfilling because it does not sacrifice credibility.

Whatever the motive, this modification of the resolution is certainly apparent in the two instances mentioned above. Marguerite Blakeney really did denounce the Marquis de St. Cyr out of revenge, however understandable the circumstances. Aline considered marrying the Marquis de la Tour d'Azyr not only because she thought Andre-Louis was lost to her, but also because she was flattered by the attentions of a great nobleman and saw a brilliant future opening before her: while Mme. de Plougastel may have been genuinely fond of Andre-Louis,
and the reader may sympathise with her circumstances, but she really did refuse to acknowledge him as her son from fear of scandal and loss of prestige. The corruption, however understandable, is real. The happiness of the ending is incomplete.

If such actions are to be forgiven completely, it can only be by accepting the standards of the characters, so that the reader shares the anger of Marguerite, the fears of Mme. de Plougastel and the hopes of Aline. The pleasures of exercising power and the attractions of wealth will excuse them because, after all, these are written into the text as much to give pleasure to the reader as to motivate the characters.

The rewards of the competitive society are, in fact, a necessary element in the pleasure of historical romance. It is noticeable, for example, that Farnol's heroes often turn their backs on a life of wealth and idleness, in order to live simply among the common people in a cottage. The reader may well feel a vicarious sense of virtue in contemplating his actions. None the less, to be happy, the hero cannot stay in the cottage. Sam must take up his identity as Lord of Wrybourne; Jeremy must turn from the open road to a rich marriage and a fortune; and Peter must forsake his blacksmith's forge to marry Lady Sophia and accept his rejected inheritance. Their fate is typical: the happy endings of historical romance are based on wealth as well as on love. If the competitive
society has its rewards, the hero must win them.

So strong is the attraction of triumphant individualism and success in the competitive society that even when the author is trying to promote a utopian picture of a society ruled by disinterested public servants who ensure universal equity and welfare, as Weyman is in *The Abbess of Vlaye*, the glamour of the unregenerate individualist prevails. The way in which the champion of justice, des Ageaux, is forced from the struggle with the anarchic Captain of Vlaye, so that victory goes to the almost equally anarchic and self-interested Duke of Joyeuse, has already been described in chapter six. Weyman was surely right to switch the centre of interest from des Ageaux, a conscientious but grey figure, to the glitter and dash of Joyeuse. No doubt such a character would be unacceptable in Weyman's just society, but he is really much the most interesting character in the book, because of the very flaws which nearly imperil his cause. The reader may be expected to approve the more virtuous character, but to enjoy the one more suited to success in an imperfect society.

If, therefore, the attraction of the mask is that it protects the vulnerable hero against corruption and self-interest, it is a protection against something which has its own pleasurable aspects. The more obviously social form of the motif - the declassé or ruined hero - has similarly ambiguous associations. What makes his
situation interesting is his claim to wealth and power through membership of a privileged family. The image of the family in historical romance is, however, not a clear one.

Superficially, the family is presented as a valuable institution. In *Under the Red Robe* Weyman shows the family loyalties of the Cocheforet family in a very positive light. It is in fact the happy family life of the ladies of Cocheforet which touches the hero's heart and begins his regeneration. Here, the idea that family values are an essential part of a healthy society seems to suggest a readership which placed a high value on the institution. Elsewhere, the desire of heroes and heroines to prove their membership of a family suggests its attractions: as a basis for a sense of identity, as a forcing house for personal relationships and as offering a road to wealth and power.

Such an interpretation is in line with the nineteenth century picture of the family as the building block of society and the fount of social values; an idea which is by no means outdated today despite changes in family structure. How far the notion of the traditional family structure was itself a social construct can be seen from such studies as Sonia O. Rose's "Gender at Work", which examines the way a working class ideal of domesticity was developed in the nineteenth century - one which was far from being a representation of typical reality. In
particular the wage-earning wife was banished to a large extent from working class consciousness; though few families could afford to do without women's earnings, it was the man who was increasingly seen as responsible for the family income. In addition, patriarchal work patterns, developed in the home, were reproduced in the factory during the industrial revolution. Thus, although the home was no longer the typical work-place, patterns of family structure which had been appropriate for domestically based work were confirmed as natural and desirable, perhaps in response to employment threats posed by women workers in industrial society, perhaps partly with a middle class model in mind.

In historical romance the attraction of the traditional family is pre-supposed, and many of the situations flow from it. None the less, the attraction is an ambiguous one. Many of the situations in which a disguised hero tries to win back his rights show the family in a far less favourable light than might be expected. Sabatini's work offers a number of examples. Andre-Louis Moreau is horrified to find himself the son of his greatest enemy, the Marquis de la Tour d'Azyr, who is equally dismayed by the relationship. Both understand that "normal" family feeling - the love which, it is implied should exist between father and son - is impossible between them. Sir Crispin, the hero of The Tavern Knight, finds it impossible to strike up any sort of relationship
with his long-lost son, Kenneth, while Justin Carryl, in *The Lion's Skin*, feels it to be ironical that it is his half-brother who is trying to kill him. Though his brother is ignorant of his identity, had he known he would only have hated him the more.

Membership of the family - and especially the headship of one - is in fact closely guarded; not because it is a source of intimate and loving relationships or because of its educative function, the aspects presented in *Under the Red Robe*, but because it is an economic unit. This is a source of greater fascination than other aspects, with the result that family feeling is more often presented as hostility than affection. Resentment between relations is often shown as arising from inheritances and property rights: a popular related motif, particularly in post-war romance, is that of the disinherited heir who poses a danger to the head of a family who proposes to marry. This is the theme of Cartland's *Love for Sale* and of Clare Darcy's *Victoire*, for instance.

Inherited characteristics are almost as great a source of the family's fascination as inherited wealth, however. The notion of an inborn aristocracy lies at the heart of many romances. In some, heroes and heroines can be recognised as aristocratic on sight. Even at night the hero of Clare Darcy's *Letty* recognises that Letty is gently born as soon as she puts her hood back, by the refinement of her features. Piers may kiss the heroine of
Mira Stables's *Quality Maid* under the impression that she is some kind of servant, but this is because she is wearing an old hat which covers her face: he realises his mistake as soon as he can see her properly. The hero of Patricia Ormsby's *Joanna* can see the heroine quite improperly when he finds her swimming in her underclothes. He affects to believe she is a village girl, but this is simply his delicacy; he recognises her as "quality" on sight. There is thus a strong suggestion that the nobility and gentry are almost a different species from the rest of the population; their doings may be alien but there is no need to envy their wealth and privileges, which are theirs by right. Romances offer the pleasure of vicariously belonging to this group and enjoying their lives without any sense of uncomfortable discontent or deprivation: such delights are not for ordinary people.

The aristocratic nature of the romantic world is of course one of its typical characteristics, as was noted in chapter two. Its very alienness allows the reader to accept some of the bizarre incidents which otherwise might seem incredible; though historical romance is also distanced by the historical setting, as has been noted. If aristocratic characters form an important part of the romantic effect, the importance of the aristocratic family as a theme is obvious.

It has another function, however, more ideological in nature. Family likeness is a favourite theme in romance.
Often, this takes the form of virtual identity of appearance. Of course, the function of this situation is to give rise to opportunities for disguise and misunderstanding. Its very popularity suggests that it has an intrinsic interest, however. "Anthony Hope's" Prisoner of Zenda is the classic example, and many of the romances use this kind of plot: Cartland's Love Leaves at Midnight, for instance, or Rowena Tenet's Bewitching Imposter. But the situation is found in less sensational forms: a twin takes the place of his identical brother in Heyer's False Colours to make an offer on his brother's behalf for an heiress, and a girl capitalizes on her likeness to her twin in Caroline Courtney's The Masquerading Heart to win herself a London season.

An essential part of the interest of these situations, however, is not the mechanics of the plot, but their implications of masquerade and their connection with the notion of individuality. Look-alikes are nearly always opposite in temperament in romance; it is the point at which the notion of inherited characteristics breaks down. If one is tough, the other is tender: responsible Kit takes the place of feckless Evelyn in False Colours, for instance, and the outgoing and adventurous heroines takes the place of her more timid sister in The Masquerading Heart. Typically, it is the more virtuous look-alike who is the masquerader.

This opposition has a Jeckyll-and-Hyde aspect, the differing temperaments representing alternative
possibilities within a single nature. This is certainly the effect given by the opposition of the identical cousins in Farnol's *The Broad Highway*. This might suggest a psychological interpretation; in fact, the clear preference in the texts for one of the characters means that the motif has more social connotations. The reader is expected to endorse values which are very pointedly promoted. The look-alike is a common enough motif: it fulfils the function of doppel-ganger, mirror-image, shadow or alter ego in a number of fantasy and Gothic texts such as Poe's *William Wilson*. In such texts, the double represents, like Farnol's Maurice, the socially and morally unacceptable side of human nature. It is to be feared: yet the path to health, as in Ursula le Guin's *Wizard of Earthsea*, may lie in embracing and acknowledging it.

Perhaps for this reason the double is sometimes shown as attractive as well as hateful; Charmian's attraction towards Maurice is no accident. It suggests the complexity of her nature, allowing her to express her sexuality while at the same time, in turning to Peter, she remains pure. At the same time, the kind of man represented by Maurice is established as attractive, even though the conventional image of women suggested that they would be attracted to his chivalrous cousin. In Heyer's work, and after, the "Maurice" character is, by inversion, made the hero.

One function of the double is, therefore, to allow
the presentation of the less acceptable aspects of human
nature; another is to reinforce the importance of
individuality. Similarity can function like the mask in
hiding the "real" self: the doubles take part in a
masquerade, as Caroline Courtney's title suggests. The
heroes and heroine can, however, be recognised and
differentiated from their doubles by their lovers because
their essential qualities shine through. Whereas the motif
suggests a concept of personality which is the seat of
warring emotions, with currents of desire and repulsion
within it which the individual might not always care to
own, its resolution - when the good double is preferred -
is reassuring, reaffirming the individual's control over
the warring currents of personality and giving assurance
that the personality is in reality unique and indivisible,
its actions springing from an unchanging core.

Thus, in The Broad Highway, however much during the
course of the story Peter may be tempted, in the end he
proves to be essentially good, and incapable of a wicked
action. Maurice, as incapable of good, deserves to be
destroyed, and Peter deserves his reward. This concept of
personality validates the element of competitiveness
within society which is necessary to provide the happy
ending. The relationship of Peter's reward to his
"goodness" is made clearly evident by the fact that he
owes his inheritance to his marriage, and his marriage to
his chivalric self-control. Similar reasons for rewarding
the "good" double are spelled out in other books which use
the situation.

The connection between desert and financial reward has been discussed at some length in chapter nine. Family inheritance, such as forms the starting point of *The Broad Highway* is a topic at the centre of many romances, from *The Castle Inn* onwards. Like buried treasure, an unexpected inheritance allows the good character to be rewarded; there is no suggestion that such rewards must be worked for, as one might expect from books which often express approval for hard work. Quite the contrary; hard work presupposes a desire for money, and the mere wish for it is evidence of unheroic greed, anti-social and to be deplored. A number of romances show heroes and heroines renouncing money or property for the sake of love, as, indeed, Farnol's hero does. Some of Sabatini's heroes, like the "Marquis of Carabas" do the same. The reader is obviously expected to approve their unworldliness; yet, at the same time, is assured that the hero will not suffer financially. The reader can thus have it both ways: greed and the individualistic, competitive spirit which inspires it, can be renounced, and, at the same time, reaffirmed.

These motifs, which depend for their interest on assumptions about the nature of the individual, attitudes towards wealth and desert, and the role of the family, seem to have a relatively stable significance, despite their obvious ambiguities. They refer, it appears, to aspects of society which have changed little since the end
of the last century. Other motifs, however, have dropped in or out of favour, or seem indeed to have actually changed their significance through alterations in the detail of the situation, as the audience has changed. The most obvious case is that of sexual relationships: motifs which are concerned with these have varied as romance changed from male- to female-orientated.

In male-centred romance, no-one seems to question the motivation behind marriage. That one marries for love is taken as given. Even Clyne, for example, in Weyman's *Starvecrow Farm* comes to love his Henrietta, even though he had seen her at first merely as a housekeeper and a mother for his child. Yet the effects of love are rarely described. Sabatini shares Agostino's first natural stirrings of sexual feeling with the reader in *The Strolling Saint*, but this is rare; the state of being in love, though important, is usually implied rather than stated. Wogan's strong feeling for Clementina, in Mason's romance of that name, is suggested by a vision of Königsmark. In other words, the feeling at the very centre of the novel, which instigates the plot, is presented more as a potentially shameful dilemma than an emotion, and even then indirectly. Similarly, the reader is assured that Weyman's Count Hannibal or de Marsac love their respective mistresses, but their actual feelings are left to the reader's inference.

The case is far otherwise with the female-centred
romances; many of situations seem to be used essentially to exploit female emotion. The stolen kisses of the hero may infuriate the heroine, but - in post-Heyer romance in particular - they awaken her sexuality, and the reader is given her feelings in minute detail. The real importance of the fact, noted in chapter nine, that the hero's behaviour to the heroine is often almost as close to rape as the villain's, is that the heroine may feel a scarcely acknowledge pleasure from the hero's embraces and a repugnance to those of the villain. This may well spring from a buried concept of love as a kind of magical attraction, inherited from earlier romance; the heroine recognises her affinity with the hero even in these extreme circumstances. At the same time, the situation suggests that romantic writers of the nineteen-eighties can conceive of a coexistence of innocence and sexuality in women, and accept sexuality as a natural part of women's nature, as Sabatini had earlier seen it as a part of man's.

Threats of rape and abduction are of course much more central to later romance than in earlier ones, but here again the significance seems relatively stable. Weyman's use of threats of rape in The Castle Inn and Starvecrow Farm shows how far the heroine is at risk once she steps outside the normal restraints of society and makes a bid for independence. The way in which social constraints came to be of central importance in exploring the paradox of
female fulfilment - that she must retain her natural personality and at the same time conform, if she is to have any hope of a happy marriage, presented as the only hope of a limited freedom - has been noted at some length in chapters eight and nine. In the permissive 1980s, near-rape may be described more graphically, and may indeed be consummated in some books (though rarely when the heroine is threatened, in British romance); but the attitude which makes this an acceptable situation has remained essentially the same since the 1890s.

In the same way, the contemporary romance may well include prostitutes among its characters, sometimes sympathetically portrayed. The effect is to highlight the heroine's essential innocence by contrast and reinforce the impression that female sexuality is not something which develops naturally, though it is natural, but must be triggered by the "right man" - the hero. This at once acknowledges female sexuality in a way unthinkable in earlier books and ensures that the acknowledgement retains the difference between the sexes which leaves traditional power-relationships intact.

Essentially, therefore, responses to the recurrent situations of historical romance are conditioned by the state of society as a whole. There have certainly been superficial changes; but where social relationships and the state of society which underlies them has remained constant, the significance of the motifs has remained very
much the same.

This is true even of those motifs which depend upon a complexity of attitudes and emotions. That of the "wounded hero" has been seen to be, in the works of Weyman, a device for bringing out the "womanliness" of the heroine so that she can stand for "true" family values within society. It can still be seen to perform this function in Georgette Heyer's _An Infamous Army_ in 1937. It seems to gain its particular edge of excitement, however, from the juxtaposition of the powerful hero-figure of the later romances with weakness and vulnerability. The contrast highlights and enhances the hero's power. At the same time, it offers the reader a sense of vicarious superiority. Since the basis of the hero's power is in part his masculinity, this feeling may even have a sexual element, akin to sadism. The wounded hero features in romances where no heroine is available to nurse him, such as Sabatini's _Gates of Doom_ and Dorothy Dunnett's _Lymond_ series. The motif is a complex source of enjoyment, therefore; yet it is also clear that it derives its basic elements from the power-relationships of contemporary society, just as other motifs do.
The assumptions which lie behind the romantic motifs are not, however, the only kind of significance which has been noted in this analysis of romantic historical fiction. A number of different structures of meaning can be found in the texts. The images of the past offered by the books may vary, but they hold a message—conscious or unwitting—for the present. The significance of the romantic elements is sometimes in conflict with these messages. Many texts thus present two opposing sets of values, both of which may be accessible to the reader, whose interaction with the text is never a simple one. It is intended in the final section of this study to examine the kinds of meaning characteristic of the genre, and to note the ways in which they interact.

Because of the ways in which the genre has changed as it has developed, although the basic romantic content has remained stable, it forms a useful basis for studying the ways in which popular fiction, in the words of Christopher Pawling, "intervenes in the life of society" 1.

The ideology of a historical romance can be seen most clearly in three of its aspects: history as "utopia", history as "myth" and romance as a reflection of the social system. When these aspects are combined, the effect can be complex, and characterized by omissions and contradictions, in the way that Pierre Macherey showed the work of Jules Verne to be 2. These features are in
themselves testimony to the unwritten assumptions which flow from and confirm ideology.

Thus, Weyman presents a picture of the state as evolving through time to become a centralized power operated by disinterested officers (a new "Mandarinate") for the benefit of the common people. Such a vision is presumably reassuring. It is accompanied by a stress on the importance of private life and the pleasures of simple, retired situations (Bearn, or "the greenwood") where true personal honour may be found. Taken together, these themes rest upon values to which a nineteenth century reader could easily give assent.

Such a picture of the evolving state fits in well with Swingewood's bourgeois capitalism, seeking legitimation through consent. If force is employed, it is against anarchic elements which threaten the whole body politic - government and populace together.

That this is an ideologically changed picture can be seen in the way in which the forms of narrative through which it is presented collide with the intended significance. The happy ending requires the hero's return to society, to take up the position which is his by right of birth or good fortune. If such a return is not possible, this "happy" ending seems less satisfying. In Under the Red Robe, for example, de Berault's retreat to Bearn is associated with prison-like imagery; indeed, for him Cocheforet literally is a prison. Though the reader is
clearly intended to be aware of a happy paradox, the prison-gloom clings a little about this ending.

The world-picture constructed by the author thus comes into conflict with the motifs of the plot to create a significance of which the author was presumably unaware. The retreat, with all its purity and simplicity, must be discarded in favour of wealth and power - the Governorship of the Armagnac, for example, in A Gentleman of France. A similar confusion occurs in many of Farnol's novels. He is not concerned, as Weyman is, to portray a "utopian" state. Yet he, too, shows a retreat from society (into the Arcadian countryside of The Broad Highway or The High Adventure, for example) and his heroes, too, turn their backs upon Arcady in the end. Though the historical concerns of these novelists are very different, they have values in common, and in their books the conventions of the genre run counter to these values in much the same way.

The inference is that the reader is content with a double set of values, enjoying a sense of the virtues of simplicity and the pleasures of vicarious wealth with no awareness of contradiction. On the surface, one seems more wish-fulfilling than the other but both pleasures derive ultimately from that stress on individual fulfilment which has been noted as a feature of industrial society, fragmented and competitive as it is.

Despite these common features, the historical picture
given by these writers differ considerably. Weyman, like many more ambitious novelists before him, uses the setting of the past to show how society has developed, and to reaffirm the values of the present. Farnol and later writers emphasised romance at the expense of history.

None the less the picture of an idyllic past is an important ingredient in the effect of Farnol's novels. His Georgian England has been called a "myth", bringing to mind Roland Barthes and his definition of "myth" as a higher-level semiological system: "in myth there are two semiological systems ... a linguistic system ... and myth itself" 3. The text thus functions as a sign on two levels: firstly, as a linguistic sign, from which meaning can be extracted by the operation of the semantic code, and, secondly, as a mythic sign, which can be grasped by the reader, as Geoffrey Bourne comments, "on the basis of more than simply linguistic knowledge". In other words, a reader must bring into operation his or her knowledge of social relationships and attitudes, and relate them to the text through an awareness of its connotations.

History's status as myth has already been touched upon by those critics who have examined the parallel developments of historiography and historical fiction in the nineteenth century. It is worth attention here because it was against this background that late Victorian and twentieth century notions of the past developed. Andrew Sanders 4, for example, traces the notion of history as

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being charged with significance to society back to the Jewish compilation of the Old Testament as a record of a developing relationship between God and his chosen people. In the nineteenth century, he noted Carlyle's cyclic view of history, with the Hero representing the will of the times and moving forward within the cycle, and Hegel's vision of the spirit of time struggling to manifest itself through the passing of the years.

In particular, he saw the Victorian attitude to change as influenced by other ideas, such as that of evolution, so that change became identified with progress. The task of the historical novel was, then, to show how progress leads to and encloses the present. In this he echoes the view of J.H. Buckley that it was in the nineteenth century that the notion of time gained particular importance. Thus, the important new sciences of the period - geology, nebular astronomy and evolutionary biology - were "governed by temporal methodology". As a new generation of historians ("literate and laborious") enlarged historical knowledge, they looked for meaningful patterns or for analogies with the present. The "quite unprecedented awareness of time" which, Buckley says, John Stuart Mill noted in the Victorians could be seen also in the private measurement of time. One example is the way time-discipline can be seen to have affected working practices within the framework of the developing factory system by historians such as E.P. Thompson 6. Indeed,
time consciousness, both public and private, has increasingly been seen as an important element of the Victorian consciousness.

While some writers stress that to Victorians the sum of time and change was progress, and that most writers preferred the idea of, in Buckley's words, "organic growth through time" to the Hegelian (later Marxian) dialectic, others are more interested in signs of a more radical attitude. Raymond Chapman, for example, notes a sense of "modernity" among many Victorian writers: an awareness of the way in which the past differed from the present. He sees a divide between those who, like Dickens, believed that the past was essentially worse than the present, though its mistakes afforded valuable lessons, and those who wanted to recapture the values of a past age: the ideal, for example, of Disraeli or Morris. The sense of the present as an age of transition and the breakdown of some of the old certainties under the pressure of new theories and positivist temper, led to doubts and a loss of a certain sense of direction: the result could well be nostalgia.

Victorian historical novelists were well-placed to speak to such moods through their subject matter. For all Ainsworth's sensationalism, the buildings which formed the subject of so many of his books - The Tower of London, for example, or Windsor Castle - were presented seriously as living embodiments of the vicissitudes of the past.
Bulwer Lytton's Harold lives on in spirit, an embodiment of the old, true England: a good example of historical myth taking shape. Wiseman's and Newman's presentation of the early church may be seen in a similar light: an idealized moment of faith was called on to redress the doubts of the present. The tendency to imagine an idealized moment in the past and present it as a model for the present is one aspect of the "mythic" element in history. Of the writers considered in this study, Doyle (the most clearly "Victorian" in form) is perhaps the writer who does this most clearly. He sets up the ideals of a romanticised "medieval" chivalry in place of the religious beliefs to which he could no longer give unquestioning assent.

All the writers, however, were characterized to some extent by this tendency. The way in which revolutionary movements are dealt with in the novels is a case in point. While some Victorians, according to Buckley, saw revolution as a process of healthful change, most, including Morris (whose "Nowhere" is a product of revolution) preferred to think of it as productive only because it was the recurrent clash of essentially stable forces within society. Ambivalence and a certain fascination characterize the attitudes of many writers towards revolution; perhaps because of the fascination it became a recurrent theme, as it is in Dickens's historical novels.
At the end of the century, Weyman and Doyle stressed the tensions which could lead to revolution. Doyle saw the Peasant's Revolt and the Monmouth rebellion as the expression of a whole class's aspirations, and beneficial in the long term. Weyman presented the Crocan revolt and the disturbances at the time of "Peterloo" as inevitable but unpleasant: discipline was necessary to restore order. Though their expressed attitudes differ, however, the image of revolution which both present is essentially the same and may be compared with that offered by Dickens: the horrific aspect is uppermost, and seems to confirm that fear that the populace expressed by Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy*. The effect was to highlight current social divisions as well as give a vision of the past.

Victorian historical fiction, therefore, reflected Victorian attitudes towards history when a strong awareness of time and change informed all views of society. History has not always been seen as so crucially important to the spirit of the age, however, and the ways in which historical fiction adapts to changing historical attitudes is of particular importance, since it demonstrates the genre's capacity for myth-creation even when its subject matter was not a central part of the period's consciousness.

One such change in a sense of the importance of history has been charted by David Cannadine in a recent *Past and Present* article. He sees the period from the late
1940s to the early 1970s as "a golden age for professional British historians". English history was presented during this time as a series of revolutions which, when they succeeded, were beneficial. This was especially the case when, as with the Tudor Revolution, it "came from above and was carried out by due process of law". When revolution was avoided, as in the nineteenth century, change none the less took place through a process of reform. Essentially, "it was the old Whig History ... dressed up in Butskellite guise". As he remarked in a "Timewatch" programme, this was the "noble and successful" story of Britain presented to children by writers such as L. du Gard Peach in the "Ladybird" series, while professional scholars of the 1950s and 1960s were retelling the same story for "The new comprehensives and campuses of the welfare state".

More generally, this retelling of the national story was of general interest in a world where the industrialized nations had followed a path similar to that taken by Britain, and developing new ones appeared about to do so. Cannadine felt, however, that national decline in the last decade or so has led to a marked change in historical attitudes. The change from world power to "Little England", uncertainty about diplomatic alignment, and the destruction of the "welfare-state consensus" has been accompanied by ever more myopic scholarly investigations and a fragmentation of history as an
academic discipline; a change which suggests that it is reflecting a lack of national purpose and sense of identity - reinforcing the idea that national identity is an ideological construct

Cannadine's view must be placed in a context of an increasing interest by some historians in conserving the past, so that the word "heritage" has become a commonplace of environmental planning. Many historians certainly did move away from "telling the national story" in the 1950s and 1960s to examine the mechanisms of history on a macro-level. More recently, a certain polarization is noticeable between a return to "story-telling" in different form (in life-histories, for example) and a minimalism which aims to reassess, through detailed study, elements of the broader picture presented in the 1950s and 1960s.

History is, therefore, sensitive to the national mood, just as popular fiction is. It can be used as a tool of ideology, too, building a sense of national identity or harnessing this identity to a particular political standpoint. In the seventies and eighties of this century, the image of the past portrayed by many historical fiction writers shows just such a use of history. The books of Mira Stables which have been analyzed, for instance, express attitudes which are no doubt appropriate to her chosen period, the early years of the nineteenth century when the process of
industrialization was at its height. They are also attitudes which might win easier assent today than in the days of "Butskellism". Even a critique of such values, such as those presented by Eva Macdonald or Sheila Bishop, shows how much they now occupy the foreground of attention.

History or historical fiction: both help the reader to reinterpret the past, in order to form a suitable basis for currently fashionable views of the present. The historical aspect, therefore, is an important factor in the operation of the romances.

It is not, of course, the only one. There is a strong link between this function of the historical setting and the significance of the romantic motifs of the plot. Although Cockburn was referring to Farnol's portrayal of Georgian England when he talks of The Broad Highway and its like as popular myth, it was its romantic as much as its historical aspect which he had in mind. Farnol, he pointed out, had filled his "historical" frame with the stereotypes of romantic fiction ("Bucks" and bullies and spirited heroines). Interpretation of such stereotypes must be made on the basis of the reader's social experience. If they are attractive, it is because they make contact with elements of that experience. Barthes's notion of myth as a super signifier is as relevant to romance as it is to history.

The creaking machinery of romantic plots may seem
laughably unrealistic. None the less, such situations are known to address important social concerns, however indirectly. Umberto Eco, for instance, speaks of "intertextual archetypes" meaning apparently, something akin to a stock situation - and says that they can be defined as a "standard situation that manages to be particularly appealing to a given cultural area of a historical period".

Popular fiction can function like this in two ways. Firstly, the situations portrayed may represent a utopian ideal. They thus provide a mirror-image of life as it actually is. Cockburn speculated that the readers of The Broad Highway were not being merely escapist in enjoying the picture of a secure and peaceful Georgian England. Instead, their enjoyment testified to the depth of their actual fears in a period of war scares and "unprecedented industrial upheaval". Similarly, Janice Radway's informants may realise that the aggressive heroes of their favourite literature are not really likely to display a "nurturing" side to their nature, as the romances suggest; rather, the romantic situation allows them opportunity which does not normally come their way to affirm a "feminine" set of values. Even the sado-masochistic elements can be seen as a fantasy which allows the reader to experience and control her deepest fears in safety. If the situations are wish-fulfilling, they are also connected with an appreciation of reality.
Secondly, the texts may draw upon a system of values which the reader can accept as holding society together. These values may be articulated in the discourse of the text, but, more commonly, they may be seen in what is taken for granted. Such unexpressed assumptions are drawn upon by the connotations of stock situations. Thus, when the Scarlet Pimpernel says "'I am a lover of sport'", his words seem puzzling and irrelevant to Theresia Cabarras, whose culture is Franco-Hispanic.

"She frowned, really puzzled this time.

"'I do not understand', she murmured" 13.

To Blakeney, however, there is "nothing to explain"; he is drawing upon a whole world of values which can easily be understood by any Briton, even if they are difficult to articulate. Another Briton would read into the phrase a notion of fair play, the care of the strong for the weak, a love of challenge and the spirit of adventure.

In this way, Orczy uses a few words to draw upon and define a complete code of values - and, by the way in which it is presented, manipulating our attitude towards it. Even if we do not share the code, the fact we can "read" it disposes us in its favour, and the sympathy we feel for Blakeney (as opposed to the villainous Theresia) completes the process.

The effects of this are two-fold. In the first place, though we need not as readers share the whole code, we may well find in it echoes of our own values, which are
thereby confirmed. It is reassuring to feel our values are not only shared, but actually taken for granted. Secondly, the values presented may be alien, but we learn to give some assent to them. If we give assent for the nonce to an unacceptable scale of values, we may be impelled to question our normal principles.

Wolfgang Iser has said that a valuable text can make us reassess our attitudes. By implication, this does not apply to popular literature. However, the difference between "literary" and "popular" is not as great as this statement suggests. The effect of a romance may be to reassure the reader rather than to give rise to conflict and reassessment. None the less, this may come only after an extensive questioning of current values. Thus, in The Abess of Vlaye, the reader is led to regard the revolting Crocans with sympathy: in Starvecrow Farm, to feel angry on behalf of Henrietta. Yet in the end conventional attitudes and relationships are reaffirmed.

Popular texts vary in the intensity with which they put forward alternative points of view. It tends to be a feature of "partially realistic" texts such as those by Doyle or Weyman. A more romantic writer such as Orczy might give a perfunctory suggestion that the French Revolution, for example, might have been provoked by aristocratic behaviour, but is is scarcely noticeable. In a more modern instance, Elspeth Couper draws a portrait of a liberally-minded heroine who goes to live in the Cape
Colony. She finds the treatment of black servants repulsive, but is told they need to be treated with firm authority if order is to be maintained. The argument is never developed. The heroine is rescued from a fire by a black, and in her turn saves him when he is ill, which suggests an anti-racist message. It is oddly noticeable, however, that she never speaks to him directly: all her dealings with him are through a Boer intermediary. Nor are the servants on whose behalf she is concerned, black, but Malay. The villainess is coloured, and the hero almost aggressively English, with fair hair and blue eyes. This is very much a personal romance which uses the Cape situation simply as a frame. The appearance of liberalism may seem to contribute to the racial question, but in fact there is little in the portrayal of the heroine that would shock the majority of English readers, and in fact her apparent liberalism is almost completely undermined.

The more romantic the novel, then, the less likely it is to flirt with contrary viewpoints. When others are suggested, they are usually undeveloped. Most give the impression that only one world-view is possible, an understanding of simple issues. The question remains: if one coherent attitude is presented, and that one is unacceptable, where is the pleasure in reading the book? How can a reader brought up in the centralist consensus of the 1950s and 1960s enjoy Georgette Heyer's High Tory attitudes, for instance? Or a professional woman, proud
of her career, identify with a Cartland heroine whose happiest moment is found in the arms of the man she loves?

It seems possible that a part of the appeal of such fiction lies in the opportunity it offers for the reader to enjoy unacceptable attitudes, such as racism or male dominance, uninhibitedly without assenting to them. The very unreality of romance and the historical distance of the setting make this possible. The reader suspends disbelief, but at the same time "sees through" the illusion produced. Repressed possibilities - of living for love, or giving all for one's country - may be activated without any sense that the reader wants to experience these in reality. Indeed, having had the opportunity to experience them vicariously a reader might find actual attitudes and life-choices confirmed. More questionable alternatives - love for a brutal, outrageous hero for instance - can be indulged without harm to the actual personality.

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This particular aspect of romance - the sense of a fixed, unchanging personality - is one of its reassuring features. The romantic world, moreover, is one where all actions are meaningful and fates are pre-determined. There
are none of the inconsistencies, doubts and ambiguities of real life.

Personality, for instance, is, as has been noted, shown as something inborn, an attribute like red hair or a good figure for a Weston coat. A hero or heroine may learn a good deal in the course of the story, but his or her fundamental nature will remain unchanged. Any apparent change in the hero, as was argued in Chapter nine, is less a transformation than a revelation of the inner core of his nature.

But the effect of living in a meaningful world is more widespread in the text than the identification with a coherent personality. The way in which the structure of the novels, in particular the "formal realism" of the text, helps to give a sense of actually living through the story has already been noted in chapters two and three. The books offer an opportunity to experience the events of the novel as though they were happening in real life, with the security of moving through the situations to a predetermined end. Thus, they have the uncertainty of actual events for the reader, while being part of a constructed pattern. It is the pattern which makes each even more meaningful than situations in "real life". The impression is given of living in an ordered world in which the most trivial occasion is charged with significance.

It is this quality in popular literature which led Cockburn to call its most potent manifestations "the very
best opium" 14. Opium, he points out, was to the Victorians something which healed real sickness and gave hope (however illusory) which allowed people to endure intolerable situations. This was the more favourable interpretation of Marx's famous definition of religion as "the opium of the people". In an age when religion rarely is that, the secularist romance may well have taken its place to some extent as a giver of hope. Cockburn sees this as good: Radway, more suspicious of female utopian fantasy in a patriarchal world, is less sure. None the less, the potency of popular fiction in giving a sense of direction in a doubtful world cannot be underestimated.

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It has been suggested that modern romances offer an opportunity for expressing resentment at the unfairness of an unequal society: in Janice Radway's words "minimal but none the less legitimate form of protest" 15. What is most noticeable about all the romances, however, is the different kinds of pleasure they offer. The past is seen as colourful, compensating for a grey present. The situations of romance are more meaningful than the day-to-day concerns of everyday life. Attempts to suggest the virtues of honesty and hard work are undetermined by the
importance of luck and chance in the stories. In the same way, the praise of marriage for love is undetermined by the fact that the heroines at least usually find themselves the wealthier for their marriages - just as the heroes of earlier romance usually found they gained power and status from their adventures.

Above all, the romance is a celebration of individual fulfilment. This pleasure is placed at the very heart of marriage in present-day romances and public service in earlier ones.

These pleasures compensate for all the dangers and deprivations of the story. Their connection with institutions of modern life, such as the family, helps to glamorize them; the unfairness which the stories demonstrate are not only made tolerable by association, but almost pleasurable. In this way, romance can be seen as validating the status quo, making it seem not only natural but acceptable.

The messages of the romances have changed through the years: the public mission became less desirable and private satisfactions more central. Yet all the themes can be seen to have some bearing on the reader's perception of present-day, as well as past, society. Above all, the readings of historical romance in any age can be seen to be, not a passive acceptance of an escapist text, but an active response which can prompt reflection upon many aspects of society. This has always been an important
element in the effect of the genre; and though traditional romance seems increasingly to be giving way to sagas, with their gospel of "getting on", it seems likely to remain so.

Finally, if the function of the motifs is to celebrate the status quo, their continuance is understandable. It is the function of the historical aspect which has changed. The presentation of the past as the crucible in which the present was forged was, perhaps, more important when a society which had been relatively stable for some decades began to come under threat. The role of history in building a sense of national identity was important as an element in the imperial dream in the days of adventure stories, and in national morale when the country was first faced with threats of war. The genre responded sensitively to such changes in attitude as the century progressed; but as a sense of nationhood began to lose importance, it was the past as a setting for romance which allowed the genre to survive.

It is this aspect, indeed, which may be seen as essential to the genre, since it lies close to the heart of its dual nature. The past can be perceived as a natural setting for fantasy, as evidenced by those vaguely medieval illustrations to fairy stories so popular at the beginning of the century, or in the settings of pantomime. Yet history - an animated museum, verifiable to the last knick-knack and furbelow - is real. The bizarre situations
of fantasy can thus be located in the "real" world to speak to the heart of the reader's concerns. An image of society based on individual relationships and family values has been held up as a positive throughout the development of the genre since the end of the last century, often in opposition to "corrupt" public values. What is particularly interesting about the genre's blend of history and romance is that it can on the one hand combine aspiration and criticism in this way, while at the same time - perhaps inadvertently - demonstrating the compensations which the present state of society can offer and which the individual reader would find it difficult to forgo. It is this blend of functions which has given the genre its power, and accounts for the fact that though historical romance may change, it does not die out altogether.
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Chapter One - References, continued


22. C. Pawling, op. cit., p.4.


33. C. Cockburn, op. cit., p.4.

Chapter one - References, continued


37. C. Pawling, op. cit., p.4.


40. C. Cockburn, op. cit., p.4.

41. C. Pawling, op. cit., p.4.


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2. see pp. 5 & 7 and p. 637 above.


5. ibid, p.66.

6. ibid, p.66.

7. ibid, p.2.


9. ibid, p.32.


18. ibid., p.25.


Chapter two - References, continued


27. For details of sales by these writers, see R. Williams, *The Long Revolution*, London, 1961, p.73.


30. R. Williams, *op. cit.*, p.73.


34. *ibid.*, p.36.


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