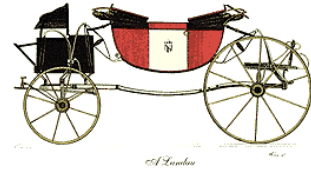


Regency Hero

Run mad as often as you chuse, but do not faint.



I have a confession to make.
If confronted, I will haughtily (and perhaps a little defensively) admit to enjoying Regency England in history and literature.

It is true that I have read and reread the novels of Jane Austen and played my DVDs of the adaptations so frequently that my husband speculates about the possibility of wearing them out.

And later I became fascinated with the period in which she lived, worked, and published and, history student that I am, I studied up on it. On my husband's recommendation (not A&E's), I read the Horatio Hornblower novels, which led to an interest in the life of Admiral Lord Cochrane (whose autobiography reads like a novel); an interest in Cochrane led to a general interest in the Royal Navy during the Age of Sail....and so on.

But that is not all: my secret is even darker than that, ladies and gentlemen. I so love this era that I even succumb to that most embarrassing of situations: I read Regency romances.

Yes, those silly little romances – *without any sex, and sometimes no kissing until the very end!* – which are usually comedies of manners and mistaken identities, the plots of which are often so flimsy that if

the hero and heroine *actually talked to one another instead of beating around the bush*, the story would be over in ten pages.

I like the genre to the point that I'm running a campaign set in 1793 – something of a cross between the Scarlet Pimpernel, Horatio Hornblower, and Jane Austen. I can admit to you here that I even sometimes throw in some elements of a Regency novel, but please keep this intelligence to yourselves.

My game is strictly historical, but it would be a very simple matter to introduce magic or psionics into a Regency campaign (though I shudder at the thought of telepathy in the ballroom). And who knows how the Peninsular War could have gone if Wellington had commanded super soldiers? Or, for that matter, if Napoleon had marched into Russia with otherworldly men who required neither food nor warmth to thrive?

But those are questions for a different forum, and I haven't been brave enough to venture to alt.history.alternative in a long time. Without further ado, ladies and gentlemen, I give you *Regency Hero*.



Shelley update: Not much new to report. I take the LSAT June 11th and am looking for work. Matthew and I are playing in a Deadlands game and a JI game, and of course I'm running the 1793 game. I've spent the past few months writing and traveling with Matthew. A few months ago, while we were in the southern part of the state, our Malinois escaped from the vet. We rushed back home and – thank God – found him very quickly, not too far from where he'd escaped. In April we spent a week in San Francisco at the Argent Hotel, where we had the good fortune to see Clint Eastwood when the hotel hosted a party for the SF Film Festival.

Regency History

It is a truth universally acknowledged that a summary of a historical period must be in want of a date.

The Regency generally refers to 1811-1820, though the country had already faced other crises during which George III was too ill to govern (*The Madness of King George*). But the last stretched on until the monarch's death in 1820, and his son, the Prince of Wales, ruled the country. The Regent was a corpulent, decadent, half-mad wastrel (he believed he was present at Waterloo and would describe it to audiences – in front of the Duke of Wellington), but somehow he (and Parliament) managed to see the country through the end of the French wars. And in any case, at least he puts Charles into perspective.

Regency England was characterized by the end of a long, bloody war, a decadent high society, the assassination of a Prime Minister, riots over the Corn Laws, riots over the political situation, the Luddite Rebellion, thousands of maimed veterans who, lacking employment, were forced to beg in the streets (or turn to crime). Fortunately for us, this decade also produced Jane Austen, Sir Walter Scott, Mary and Percy Shelley, and Lord Byron.

Timeline (Courtesy of Britannia.com)

1808-14 - Peninsular War to drive the French out of Spain

1809-10 - Commercial boom in Britain

1810 - Final illness of George III begins

1811 - Depression caused by Orders of Council. There are Luddite disturbances in Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire. The King's illness leads to his son, the Prince of Wales, becoming Regent

1812 - Prime Minister Spencer Perceval is assassinated in the House of Commons by a disgruntled bankrupt

1813 - Jane Austen's 'Pride and Prejudice' is published. The monopolies of the East India Company are abolished

1815 - The defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte at Waterloo marks the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Peace is established in Europe at the Congress of Vienna. The Corn Laws are passed by Parliament to protect British agriculture from cheap imports

1815-17 - Commercial boom in Britain

1817 - Economic slump in Britain leads to the 'Blanketeers' March' and other disturbances

1818 - Death of the King's wife, Queen Caroline. Mary Shelley publishes her 'Frankenstein'

1819 - Troops intervene at a mass political reform meeting in Manchester, killing and wounding four hundred people at the 'Peterloo Massacre'

1820 - Death of the blind and deranged King George III. He is succeeded by his son, the Prince Regent, who becomes King George IV. A radical plot to murder the Cabinet, known as the Cato Street Conspiracy, fails. Trial of Queen Caroline, in which George IV attempts to divorce her for adultery

Lifestyle

As we watch Austen adaptations, Matthew often points out how remarkable it is that no one works – and this is true for nearly everyone from the lower gentry to the nobility. Though some characters do have employment – the only honorable professions open to gentlemen who needed to earn a living were the military, the church and the law – most spent very little time working. When they do, it's often only in supervising their estates or working on their books. A man who needed to work for a living who engaged in trade was considered horribly gauche, and simply having such a person in one's family was enough to cast a pall over an entire clan's



respectability.

Most gentlewomen were taught to dance, sing, play the pianoforte, sketch and to administer a household staff. Intellectual women were dismissively deemed “Bluestockings” and were not considered gentle by most; the one exception was in writing, where there were a number of women producing everything from novels to etiquette manuals (I have one by “A Lady of Distinction”) to social treatises. Mary Shelley published *Frankenstein* in 1818; her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, published *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792.

The season determined where the fashionable lived. The Parliamentary season was spent in London, but during the hot summer months most of society would vanish to their country estates or to Brighton or Bath. Extended house and hunting parties were common, and often a way for impoverished gentry to avoid having to pay for their own upkeep for a time. But the most exciting time of the year was the spring. During “the Season,” there were plays, operas, balls, musicales, routs, balloon ascents and numerous other diversions to keep society entertained. The primary object of young women, of course, was to get married.

Character Types

Though by no means exhaustive, these are some of the most common types of characters who show up in Regencies of varying literary value.

Diamond of the First Water

This expression referred to the most beautiful of a year's debutantes in London. Young noblewomen, to come “out,” are presented at court and then allowed to attend parties and balls in society – though with strict supervision. It's important to note that most heroines are not Diamonds of the First Water; as a character type they're used mostly as villainous characters or foils for the heroine.



Recommendations: Very high COM, Member of Lower Nobility, Perfect Pitch, PS: Dancing, Singing, Pianoforte; LS: French, KS: Fashion

Heiress

Many impoverished nobles looked to heiresses as a way to improve their family fortunes – without having to dirty their own hands. Wealthy tradesmen would often give their daughters large dowries so that they could move up into the realm of landed and titled society. You can see this at work in the film *The Clandestine Marriage* and in numerous Regencies. Heiresses had much the same education as other young ladies – just not the good family name.

Recommendations: Reputation: Family in Trade; PS: Dancing, Singing; High Society, LS: French.

Poor but Witty Young Lady

This is a genre staple. In all Jane Austen stories (and nearly all Regency romances) the heroine needs to get married. Sometimes it's simply because it's expected, sometimes to improve the family fortune, sometimes because she's been compromised. But the object of all Poor but Witty Young Ladies is to GET MARRIED.

Recommendations: Above average COM and INT; Conversation, High Society; PS: Dancing, Singing, Drawing; LS: French, Italian, KS: Literature

Authoress

Jane Austen led a conventional life as the spinster daughter of a clergyman, but many of her literary sisters did not. Mary Shelley and Lady Caroline Lamb exposed themselves to public ridicule on many occasion (as did Percy Shelley and Lord Byron). A growing trend in Regency novel heroines is the (anonymous, of course) authoress of social and political satires who ends up lampooning the hero or defending him.



Recommendations: High INT, Conversation, High Society; PS: Dancing, Writing; LS: Latin, French; KS: Literature, Politics; Contact: Publisher

Courtesan

In an era when being alone with a man (without anything else occurring) was enough to damage a girl's reputation and every man was expected to keep a mistress, there a lot of fallen women. The most infamous was Harriette Wilson, who held court in her opera box and entertained many, including the Duke of Wellington. Sir Walter Scott did not find her beautiful, but believed men prized her wit (!) Later in her life she published her memoirs, offering to leave out former lovers in exchange

for a stiff fee. Wellington refused, hence his "Publish and be damned!"

The life of a demi-rep could be quite lucrative, if the woman chose her protector well. An entire subset of London society centered around this world – demi-reps had their own balls, societies and gatherings which mimicked that of high society.

Generally Courtesans are not heroines in romance novels, but they do occasionally crop up in either a friendly or adversarial to the heroine.

Recommendations: High COM, Conversation, High Society, Persuasion, Seduction; PS: Courtesan, Dancing; LS: French, Italian; KS: Current Fashion

Dandy

It's telling that Beau Brummel is still a recognized name – and a copied character type, though Percy Blakeney will always be my favorite Dandy.

This is a man who recognizes a well-tied cravat when he sees one and will spend hours at his toilette to make sure that when he appears in public, he will not be in the height of fashion – he will be setting new trends.

Everything about him is outrageous. He places bets on his clubs for the most

ridiculous situations (i.e., "Lord X and the Duke of Y bet 500 guineas that Lord Z will offer for a certain young lady by Tuesday next.") His clothes always match, his horses always match, and he never dances with an unattractive woman. Unless, of course, he needs the money, or it's part of another bet....

Recommendations: High COM, Member of Lower Nobility, Gambling (not necessary well),



High Society, Riding; TF: Carriages; PS: Dancing; KS: Fashion

Rakehell

He gambles, drinks to excess, drives his equipage like a madman and consorts with opera dancers. He'll even compromise gently bred girls if given the chance. He is the rakehell (rake for short) and he is the scourge of doting Mamas everywhere. "Rake reforming" is a common plot in romance novels, since the assumption is made that these poor rakes are only acting out because they lack the love of a good woman; when they find her, they will suddenly give up their evil ways. (Personally I find it tedious and difficult to accept, but who am I to quibble with the industry?)

Recommendations: High COM, Member of Lower Nobility, Wealth; Gambling, Persuasion, Riding, Seduction; PS: Dancing; AK: London Underworld; Martial Arts: Boxing, TF: Carriages; Reputation: Rake; Psych: Compulsive Carouser/Gambler

Highwayman

Whether his motivation was to provide for himself or for the poor, the Highwayman cuts a romantic figure in the era. He could be a nobleman fallen on bad times, a soldier back from the war with only a meager pension to sustain him or someone seeking a particular revenge. Whatever his motive, the Highwayman should be handsome, follow his own code of honor and should always be gracious to the ladies.

Recommendations: High COM, High Society, Riding, Merchant, Seduction, Stealth, Streetwise; PS: Highwayman; AK: County of

operation; WF: Pistol, Knife; TF: Carriages; Martial Arts: Fencing

Naval Hero

You don't need to look to fiction to find great examples of naval characters – history is full of the larger than life captains who inspired Hornblower, Aubrey and Ramage. Admiral Lord Cochrane – a fiery haired Scotsman, heir to an earldom but penniless (his family was bankrupted by his father's scientific endeavors) – was such a one. Though so successful at capturing prizes that he never needed to impress sailors, Cochrane had a well-developed sense of justice that brought him into conflict with the Admiralty numerous times. He was convicted (some say framed) of involvement in a Stock Exchange scandal and was sentenced to the pillory. He escaped from prison and made his way to South America, where he led fleets of several rebelling colonies against Spain. He later directed the Greek navy against Turkey, and ultimately returned to England and was pardoned for his crime. When you add in his elopement with his beautiful (but poor and socially disadvantaged) wife Kitty, the novels pale!

Recommendations: Bureaucratics, Navigation, Oratory, Tactics; PS: Naval Officer,



Seamanship, KS: Fighting Vessels; TF: Water Vessels; WF: Early Firearms, Cannons; LS: French, Spanish, Signal Code; AK: English Channel, Mediterranean, Indian Ocean, North Atlantic, Caribbean; Martial Arts:

Fencing; Psych: Keeps his word

More on Jane Austen

You can find the novels of Jane Austen at the Project Gutenberg website or Austen.com.

The 1990s adaptations are all fairly good. *Pride and Prejudice* (BBC, 1995) is the one I watch the most. *Persuasion* gets off to a slow start, but the ending is magnificent, and it's worth watching if only for the naval costuming. *Mansfield Park* is not a faithful adaptation, but it is entertaining and the heroine is transformed (through her writing – Austen's own juvenilia) into Austen herself at times.

I would avoid the Gwyneth Paltrow *Emma* – it's horribly overacted. The Kate Beckinsale/BBC *Emma*, which came out very shortly after, is much better and is truer to the novel. *Sense and Sensibility* is also fun, though not without problems. As for modern retellings, I prefer *Clueless* (an updated *Emma*) to *Bridget Jones's Diary* (borrowed liberally from *P&P* and *Persuasion*). [I am quite likely the

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only person on the planet who did NOT like BJD, but there it is. I appreciated the in-jokes, I liked Renee Zellweger (though for all the hype about the weight she gained, she was NOT fat), Colin Firth and other Austen-adaptation alums who appeared, but I found the film painful. Perhaps one has to be a thirty-something singleton to get it; I've been married since 19.] A good book for analyzing the films is *Jane Austen in Hollywood*.

References: Books

Blanch, Lesley: *The Game of Hearts: Harriette Wilson's Memoirs*.
Burnett, T.A.J.: *The Rise and Fall of a Regency Dandy: The Life and Times of Scrope Berdmore Davies*.
Cochrane, Admiral Lord: *The Autobiography of a Seaman*.
Dallas, Gregor: *The Final Act: the Roads to Waterloo*.
Erickson, Carolly: *Our Tempestuous Day*.
Foreman, Amanda: *Georgiana: Duchess of Devonshire*.
Harvey, Robert: *Cochrane: The Life and Exploits of a Fighting Captain*.
Hoffman, Captain Frederick: *A Sailor of King George*.
Johnson, Paul: *The Birth of the Modern: World Society 1815-1830*.
King, Hattendorf and Estes: *A Sea of Words: A Lexicon and Companion for Patrick O'Brian's Seafaring Tales*.
King and Hattendorf: *Every Man Will Do His Duty: An Anthology of Firsthand Accounts from the Age of Nelson, 1793-1815*.
Lady of Distinction, A: *The Mirror of Graces*.
Low, Donald A: *The Regency Underworld*.
Melville, Lewis: *Regency Ladies*.
Miller, Nathan: *Broadsides: The Age of Fighting Sail*.
Murray, Venetia: *An Elegant Madness: High Society in Regency England*.
Pope, Dudley: *Life in Nelson's Navy*.
Priestly, J.B.: *The Prince of Pleasure and his Regency*.
Roosevelt, Theodore: *The War of 1812*.
Tillyard, Stella: *Aristocrats: Caroline, Emily, Louisa, and Sarah Lennox 1740-1832*.
Tillyard, Stella: *Citizen Lord: The Life of Edward Fitzgerald, Irish Revolutionary*.
Vickery, Amanda: *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England*.

I would not recommend *What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew* for the Regency; it's a better resource for Victorian England. Additionally, while I enjoy the Horatio Hornblower books, I never warmed to the character of Jack Aubrey from Patrick O'Brian's novels. And if you're brave enough to try the romances – well. Georgette Heyer is the standard, but I like Elizabeth Mansfield and Barbara Metzger. If you feel more literary, there's not only Austen but Scott, Thackeray, Trollope, and Eliot. Who knows, since I've been on a George Eliot kick of late, maybe next it'll be "Middlemarch Hero."

References: websites

Jane Austen Online: Austen.com
Correct Forms of Address in Regency England: <http://laura.chinet.com/html/titles12.html>
English Peerage (1790): <http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/eng/History/Barons/>
Regency Timeline: http://members.theglobe.com/algis/1811_1820.html
Republic of Pemberley: Pemberley.com
Sailing Ships of the Royal Navy: <http://www.cronab.demon.co.uk/INTRO.HTM>

This is a very small sample of the sites out there. I list more at my game site for my 1793 game: mactyre.net/shelley/1793/ or <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/1793>.

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