

the Rake

A woman
never quite feels desired and appreciated
enough. She wants attention, but a man is too often
distracted and unresponsive. The Rake is a great female fantasy
figure—when he desires a woman, brief though that moment may be,
he will go to the ends of the earth for her. He may be disloyal, dishonest,
and amoral, but that only adds to his appeal. Unlike the normal, cautious
male, the Rake is delightfully unrestrained, a slave to his love of women.
There is the added lure of his reputation: so many women have suc-
cumbed to him, there has to be a reason. Words are a woman's weak-
ness, and the Rake is a master of seductive language. Stir a
woman's repressed longings by adapting the Rake's
mix of danger and pleasure.

The Ardent Rake

For the court of Louis XIV, the king's last years were gloomy—he was old, and had become both insufferably religious and personally unpleasant. The court was bored and desperate for novelty. So in 1710, the arrival of a fifteen-year-old lad who was both devilishly handsome and charming had a particularly strong effect on the ladies. His name was Fronsac, the future Duke de Richelieu (his granduncle being the infamous Cardinal Richelieu). He was impudent and witty. The ladies would play with him like a toy, but he would kiss them on the lips in return, his hands wandering far for an inexperienced boy. When those hands strayed up the skirts of a duchess who was not so indulgent, the king was furious, and sent the youth to the Bastille to teach him a lesson. But the ladies who had found him so amusing could not endure his absence. Compared to the stiffs in court, here was someone incredibly bold, his eyes boring into you, his hands quicker than was safe. Nothing could stop him, his novelty was irresistible. The court ladies pleaded and his stay in the Bastille was cut short.

Several years later, the young Mademoiselle de Valois was walking in a Paris park with her chaperone, an older woman who never left her side. De Valois's father, the Duke d'Orléans, was determined to protect her, his youngest daughter, from all the court seducers until she could be married off, so he had attached to her this chaperone, a woman of impeccable virtue and sourness. In the park, however, de Valois saw a young man who gave her a look that set her heart on fire. He walked on by, but the look was intense and clear. It was her chaperone who told her his name: the now infamous Duke de Richelieu, blasphemer, seducer, heartbreaker. Someone to avoid at all cost.

A few days later, the chaperone took de Valois to a different park, and lo and behold, Richelieu crossed their path again. This time he was in disguise, dressed as a beggar, but the look in his eye was unforgettable. Mademoiselle de Valois returned his gaze: at last something exciting in her drab life. Given her father's sternness, no man had dared approach her. And now this notorious courtier was pursuing her, instead of all the other ladies at court—what a thrill! Soon he was smuggling beautifully written notes to her expressing his uncontrollable desire for her. She responded timidly, but soon the notes were all she was living for. In one of them he promised to arrange everything if she would spend the night with him; imagining it was

[After an accident at sea, Don Juan finds himself washed up on a beach, where he is discovered by a young woman.] • TISBEA: Wake up, handsomest of all men, and be yourself again. • DON JUAN: If the sea gives me death, you give me life. But the sea really saved me only to be killed by you. Oh the sea tosses me from one torment to the other, for I no sooner pulled myself from the water than I met this siren—yourself. Why fill my ears with wax, since you kill me with your eyes? I was dying in the sea, but from today I shall die of love. • TISBEA: YOU have abundant breath for a man almost drowned. You suffered much, but who knows what suffering you are preparing for me? . . . I found you at my feet all water, and now you are all fire. If you burn when you are so wet, what will you do when you're dry again? You promise a scorching flame; I hope to God you're not lying. • DON JUAN: Dear girl, God should have drowned me before I could be charred by you. Perhaps love was wise

to drench me before I felt
your scalding touch. But
your fire is such that even
in water I burn. • TISBEA:
So cold and yet burning? •
DONJUAN: So much fire
is in you. • TISBEA: How
well you talk! • DON
JUAN: How well you
understand! • TISBEA: I
hope to God you're not
lying.

—TIRSO DE MOLINA, THE
PLAYBOY OF SEVILLE,
TRANSLATED BY ADRIENNE M.
SCHIZZANO AND OSCAR
MANDEL

*Pleased with my first
success, I determined to
profit by this happy
reconciliation. I called them
my dear wives, my faithful
companions, the two beings
chosen to make me happy.*

*I sought to turn their
heads, and to rouse in
them desires the strength of
which I knew and which
would drive away any
reflections contrary to my
plans. The skillful man
who knows how to
communicate gradually the
heat of love to the senses of
the most virtuous woman
is quite certain of soon
being absolute master of
her mind and her person;
you cannot reflect when
you have lost your head;
and, moreover, principles of
wisdom, however deeply
engraved they may be on
the mind, are effaced in
that moment when the
heart yearns only for
pleasure: pleasure alone
then commands and is
obeyed. The man who has
had experience of conquests
nearly always succeeds
where he who is only timid
and in love fails. . . .
When I had brought my
two belles to the state of
abandonment in which I*

impossible to bring such a thing to pass, she did not mind playing along and agreeing to his bold proposal.

Mademoiselle de Valois had a chambermaid named Angelique, who dressed her for bed and slept in an adjoining room. One night as the chaperone was knitting, de Valois looked up from the book she was reading to see Angelique carrying her mistress's nightclothes to her room, but for some strange reason Angelique looked back at her and smiled—it was Richelieu, expertly dressed as the maid! De Valois nearly gasped from fright, but caught herself, realizing the danger she was in: if she said anything her family would find out about the notes, and about her part in the whole affair. What could she do? She decided to go to her room and talk the young duke out of his ridiculously dangerous maneuver. She said good night to her chaperone, but once she was in her bedroom, the words she had planned were useless. When she tried to reason with Richelieu, he responded with that look in his eye, and then with his arms around her. She could not yell, but now she was unsure what to do. His impetuous words, his caresses, the danger of it all—her head was whirling, she was lost. What was virtue and her prior boredom compared to an evening with the court's most notorious rake? So while the chaperone knitted away, the duke initiated her into the rituals of libertinage.

Months later, de Valois's father had reason to suspect that Richelieu had broken through his lines of defense. The chaperone was fired, the precautions were doubled. D'Orléans did not realize that to Richelieu such measures were a challenge, and he lived for challenges. He bought the house next door under an assumed name and secretly tunneled a trapdoor through the wall adjoining the duke's kitchen cupboard. In this cupboard, over the next few months—until the novelty wore off—de Valois and Richelieu enjoyed endless trysts.

Everyone in Paris knew of Richelieu's exploits, for he made it a point to publicize them as loudly as possible. Every week a new story would circulate through the court. A husband had locked his wife in an upstairs room at night, worried the duke was after her; to reach her the duke had crawled in darkness along a thin wooden plank suspended between two upper-floor windows. Two women who lived in the same house, one a widow, the other married and quite religious, had discovered to their mutual horror that the duke was having an affair with both of them at the same time, leaving one in the middle of the night to be with the other. When they confronted him, the duke, always on the prowl for something novel, and a devilish talker, had neither apologized nor backed down, but proceeded to talk them into a ménage à trois, playing on the wounded vanity of each woman, who could not stand the thought of him preferring the other. Year after year, the stories of his remarkable seductions spread. One woman admired his audacity and bravery, another his gallantry in thwarting a husband. Women competed for his attention: if he did not want to seduce you, there had to be something wrong with you. To be the target of his attentions became a great fantasy. At one point two ladies

fought a pistol duel over the duke, and one of them was seriously wounded. The Duchess d'Orléans, Richelieu's most bitter enemy, once wrote, "If I believed in sorcery I should think that the Duke possessed some supernatural secret, for I have never known a woman to oppose the very least resistance to him."

In seduction there is often a dilemma: to seduce you need planning and calculation, but if your victim suspects that you have ulterior motives, she will grow defensive. Furthermore, if you seem to be in control, you will inspire fear instead of desire. The Ardent Rake solves this dilemma in the most artful manner. Of course he must calculate and plan—he has to find a way around the jealous husband, or whatever the obstacle is. It is exhausting work. But by nature, the Ardent Rake also has the advantage of an uncontrollable libido. When he pursues a woman, he really is aglow with desire; the victim senses this and is inflamed, even despite herself. How can she imagine that he is a heartless seducer who will abandon her when he so ardently braves all dangers and obstacles to get to her? And even if she is aware of his rakish past, of his incorrigible amorality, it doesn't matter, because she also sees his weakness. He cannot control himself; he actually is a slave to all women. As such he inspires no fear.

The Ardent Rake teaches us a simple lesson: intense desire has a distracting power on a woman, just as the Siren's physical presence does on a man. A woman is often defensive and can sense insincerity or calculation. But if she feels consumed by your attentions, and is confident you will do anything for her, she will notice nothing else about you, or will find a way to forgive your indiscretions. This is the perfect cover for a seducer. The key is to show no hesitation, to abandon all restraint, to let yourself go, to show that you cannot control yourself and are fundamentally weak. Do not worry about inspiring mistrust; as long as you are the slave to her charms, she will not think of the aftermath.

The Demonic Rake

In the early 1880s, members of Roman high society began to talk of a young journalist who had arrived on the scene, a certain Gabriele D'Annunzio. This was strange in itself, for Italian royalty had only the deepest contempt for anyone outside their circle, and a newspaper society reporter was almost as low as you could go. Indeed well-born men paid D'Annunzio little attention. He had no money and few connections, coming from a strictly middle-class background. Besides, to them he was downright ugly—short and stocky, with a dark, splotchy complexion and bulging eyes. The men thought him so unappealing they gladly let him mingle with their wives and daughters, certain that their women would be safe with this garboyle and happy to get this gossip hunter off their hands. No, it was not the men who talked of D'Annunzio; it was their wives.

wanted them, I expressed a more eager desire; their eyes lit up; my caresses were returned; and it was plain that their resistance would not delay for more than a few moments the next scene I desired them to play. I proposed that each should accompany me in turn into a charming closet, next to the room in which we were, which I wanted them to admire. They both remained silent. • "You hesitate?" I said to them. "I will see which of you is the more attached to me. The one who loves me the more will be the first to follow the lover she wishes to convince of her affection. . . ." • I knew my puritan, and I was well aware that, after a few struggles, she gave herself up completely to the present moment. This one appeared to be as agreeable to her as the others we had previously spent together; she forgot that she was sharing me [with Madame Renaud]. . . . [When her turn came] Madame Renaud responded with a transport that proved her contentment, and she left the sitting only after having repeated continually: "What a man! What a man! He is astonishing! How often you could be happy with him if he were only faithful!"

—THE PRIVATE LIFE OF THE
MARSHAL DUKE OF RICHELIEU,
TRANSLATED BY F. S. FLINT

*His very successes in love,
even more than the
marvellous voice of this
little, bald seducer with a
nose like Punch, swept
along in his train a whole
procession of enamoured
women, both opulent and
tormented. D'Annunzio
had successfully revived the
Byronic legend: as he
passed by full-breasted
women, standing in his
way as Boldoni would
paint them, strings of
pearls anchoring them to
life—princesses and
actresses, great Russian
ladies and even middle-
class Bordeaux
housewives—they would
offer themselves up to him.*

—PHILIPPE JULLIAN, *PRINCE OF
AESTHETES: COUNT ROBERT
DE MONTESQUIEU*, TRANSLATED
BY JOHN HAYLOCK AND FRANCIS
KING

*In short, nothing is so
sweet as to triumph over
the Resistance of a
beautiful Person; and in
that I have the Ambition
of Conquerors, who fly
perpetually from Victory to
Victory and can never
prevail with themselves to
put a bound to their
Wishes. Nothing can
restrain the Impetuosity of
my Desires; I have an
Heart for the whole Earth;
and like Alexander, I could
wish for New Worlds
wherein to extend my
Amorous Conquests.*

—MOLIÈRE, *DON JOHN OR
THE LIBERTINE*, TRANSLATED BY
JOHN OZELL

Introduced to D'Annunzio by their husbands, these duchesses and marchionesses would find themselves entertaining this strange-looking man, and when he was alone with them, his manner would suddenly change. Within minutes these ladies would be spellbound. First, he had the most magnificent voice they had ever heard—soft and low, each syllable articulated, with a flowing rhythm and inflection that was almost musical. One woman compared it to the ringing of church bells in the distance. Others said his voice had a "hypnotic" effect. The words that voice spoke were interesting as well—alliterative phrases, charming locutions, poetic images, and a way of offering praise that could melt a woman's heart. D'Annunzio had mastered the art of flattery. He seemed to know each woman's weakness: one he would call a goddess of nature, another an incomparable artist in the making, another a romantic figure out of a novel. A woman's heart would flutter as he described the effect she had on him. Everything was suggestive, hinting at sex or romance. That night she would ponder his words, recalling little in particular that he had said, because he never said anything concrete, but rather the feeling it had given her. The next day she would receive from him a poem that seemed to have been written specifically for her. (In fact he wrote dozens of very similar poems, slightly tailoring each one for its intended victim.)

A few years after D'Annunzio began work as a society reporter, he married the daughter of the Duke and Duchess of Gallese. Shortly thereafter, with the unshakeable support of society ladies, he began publishing novels and books of poetry. The number of his conquests was remarkable, and also the quality—not only marchionesses would fall at his feet, but great artists, such as the actress Eleanor Duse, who helped him become a respected dramatist and literary celebrity. The dancer Isadora Duncan, another who eventually fell under his spell, explained his magic: "Perhaps the most remarkable lover of our time is Gabriele D'Annunzio. And this notwithstanding that he is small, bald, and, except when his face lights up with enthusiasm, ugly. But when he speaks to a woman he likes, his face is transfigured, so that he suddenly becomes Apollo. . . . His effect on women is remarkable. The lady he is talking to suddenly feels that her very soul and being are lifted."

At the outbreak of World War I, the fifty-two-year-old D'Annunzio joined the army. Although he had no military experience, he had a flair for the dramatic and a burning desire to prove his bravery. He learned to fly and led dangerous but highly effective missions. By the end of the war, he was Italy's most decorated hero. His exploits made him a beloved national figure, and after the war, crowds would gather outside his hotel wherever in Italy he went. He would address them from a balcony, discussing politics, railing against the current Italian government. A witness of one of these speeches, the American writer Walter Starkie, was initially disappointed at the appearance of the famous D'Annunzio on a balcony in Venice; he was short, and looked grotesque. "Little by little, however, I began to sink under the fascination of the voice, which penetrated into my consciousness. . . .

Never a hurried, jerky gesture. . . . He played upon the emotions of the crowd as a supreme violinist does upon a Stradivarius. The eyes of the thousands were fixed upon him as though hypnotized by his power." Once again, it was the sound of the voice and the poetic connotations of the words that seduced the masses. Arguing that modern Italy should reclaim the greatness of the Roman Empire, D'Annunzio would craft slogans for the audience to repeat, or would ask emotionally loaded questions for them to answer. He flattered the crowd, made them feel they were part of some drama. Everything was vague and suggestive.

The issue of the day was the ownership of the city of Fiume, just across the border in neighboring Yugoslavia. Many Italians believed that Italy's reward for siding with the Allies in the recent war should be the annexation of Fiume. D'Annunzio championed this cause, and because of his status as a war hero the army was ready to side with him, although the government opposed any action. In September of 1919, with soldiers rallying around him, D'Annunzio led his infamous march on Fiume. When an Italian general stopped him along the way, and threatened to shoot him, D'Annunzio opened his coat to show his medals, and said in his magnetic voice, "If you must kill me, fire first on this!" The general stood there stunned, then broke into tears. He joined up with D'Annunzio.

When D'Annunzio entered Fiume, he was greeted as a liberator. The next day he was declared leader of the Free State of Fiume. Soon he was giving daily speeches from a balcony overlooking the town's main square, holding tens of thousands of people spellbound without benefit of loudspeakers. He initiated all kinds of celebrations and rituals harking back to the Roman Empire. The citizens of Fiume began to imitate him, particularly his sexual exploits; the city became like a giant bordello. His popularity was so high that the Italian government feared a march on Rome, which at that point, had D'Annunzio decided to do it—and he had the support of a large part of the military—might actually have succeeded; D'Annunzio could have beaten Mussolini to the punch and changed the course of history. (He was not a Fascist, but a kind of aesthetic socialist.) He decided to stay in Fiume, however, and ruled there for sixteen months before the Italian government finally bombed him out of the city.

Seduction is a psychological process that transcends gender, except in a few key areas where each gender has its own weakness. The male is traditionally vulnerable to the visual. The Siren who can concoct the right physical appearance will seduce in large numbers. For women the weakness is language and words: as was written by one of D'Annunzio's victims, the French actress Simone, "How can one explain his conquests except by his extraordinary verbal power, and the musical timbre of his voice, put to the service of exceptional eloquence? For my sex is susceptible to words, bewitched by them, longing to be dominated by them."

The Rake is as promiscuous with words as he is with women. He chooses words for their ability to suggest, insinuate, hypnotize, elevate, in-

Among the many modes of handling Don Juan's effect on women, the motif of the irresistible hero is worth singling out, for it illustrates a curious change in our sensibility. Don Juan did not become irresistible to women until the Romantic age, and I am disposed to think that it is a trait of the female imagination to make him so. When the female voice began to assert itself and even, perhaps, to dominate in literature, Don Juan evolved to become the women's rather than the man's ideal. . . . Don Juan is now the woman's dream of the perfect lover, fugitive, passionate, daring. He gives her the one unforgettable moment, the magnificent exaltation of the flesh which is too often denied her by the real husband, who thinks that men are gross and women spiritual. To be the fatal Don Juan may be the dream of a few men; but to meet him is the dream of many women.

—OSCAR MANDEL, "THE
LEGEND OF DON JUAN," *THE
THEATRE OF DON JUAN*

feet. The words of the Rake are the equivalent of the bodily adornment of the Siren: a powerful sensual distraction, a narcotic. The Rake's use of language is demonic because it is designed not to communicate or convey information but to persuade, flatter, stir emotional turmoil, much as the serpent in the Garden of Eden used words to lead Eve into temptation.

The example of D'Annunzio reveals the link between the erotic Rake, who seduces women, and the political Rake, who seduces the masses. Both depend on words. Adapt the character of the Rake and you will find that the use of words as a subtle poison has infinite applications. Remember: it is the form that matters, not the content. The less your targets focus on what you say, and the more on how it makes them feel, the more seductive your effect. Give your words a lofty, spiritual, literary flavor the better to insinuate desire in your unwitting victims.

But what is this force, then, by which Don Juan seduces? It is desire, the energy of sensuous desire. He desires in every woman the whole of womanhood. The reaction to this gigantic passion beautifies and develops the one desired, who flushes in enhanced beauty by his reflection. As the enthusiast's fire with seductive splendor illumines even those who stand in a casual relation to him, so Don Juan transfigures in a far deeper sense every girl.

—SØREN KIERKEGAARD, *EITHER/OR*

Keys to the Character

At first it may seem strange that a man who is clearly dishonest, disloyal, and has no interest in marriage would have any appeal to a woman. But throughout all of history, and in all cultures, this type has had a fatal effect. What the Rake offers is what society normally does not allow women: an affair of pure pleasure, an exciting brush with danger. A woman is often deeply oppressed by the role she is expected to play. She is supposed to be the tender, civilizing force in society, and to want commitment and lifelong loyalty. But often her marriages and relationships give her not romance and devotion but routine and an endlessly distracted mate. It remains an abiding female fantasy to meet a man who gives totally of himself, who lives for her, even if only for a while.

This dark, repressed side of female desire found expression in the legend of Don Juan. At first the legend was a male fantasy: the adventurous knight who could have any woman he wanted. But in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Don Juan slowly evolved from the masculine adventurer to a more feminized version: a man who lived only for women. This evolution came from women's interest in the story, and was a result of their frustrated desires. Marriage for them was a form of indentured servitude; but Don Juan offered pleasure for its own sake, desire with no strings at-

tached. For the time he crossed your path, you were all he thought about. His desire for you was so powerful that he gave you no time to think or to worry about the consequences. He would come in the night, give you an unforgettable moment, and then vanish. He might have conquered a thousand women before you, but that only made him more interesting; better to be abandoned than undesired by such a man.

The great seducers do not offer the mild pleasures that society condones. They touch a person's unconscious, those repressed desires that cry out for liberation. Do not imagine that women are the tender creatures that some people would like them to be. Like men, they are deeply attracted to the forbidden, the dangerous, even the slightly evil. (Don Juan ends by going to hell, and the word "rake" comes from "rakehell," a man who rakes the coals of hell; the devilish component, clearly, is an important part of the fantasy.) Always remember: if you are to play the Rake, you must convey a sense of risk and darkness, suggesting to your victim that she is participating in something rare and thrilling—a chance to play out her own rakish desires.

To play the Rake, the most obvious requirement is the ability to let yourself go, to draw a woman into the kind of purely sensual moment in which past and future lose meaning. You must be able to abandon yourself to the moment. (When the Rake Valmont—a character modeled after the Duke de Richelieu—in Laclos' eighteenth-century novel *Dangerous Liaisons* writes letters that are obviously calculated to have a certain effect on his chosen victim, Madame de Tourvel, she sees right through them; but when his letters really do burn with passion, she begins to relent.) An added benefit of this quality is that it makes you seem unable to control yourself, a display of weakness that a woman enjoys. By abandoning yourself to the seduced, you make them feel that you exist for them alone—a feeling reflecting a truth, though a temporary one. Of the hundreds of women that Pablo Picasso, consummate rake, seduced over the years, most of them had the feeling that they were the only one he truly loved.

The Rake never worries about a woman's resistance to him, or for that matter about any other obstacle in his path—a husband, a physical barrier. Resistance is only the spur to his desire, enflaming him all the more. When Picasso was seducing Françoise Gilot, in fact, he begged her to resist; he needed resistance to add to the thrill. In any case, an obstacle in your way gives you the opportunity to prove yourself, and the creativity you bring to matters of love. In the eleventh-century Japanese novel *The Tale of Genji*, by the court lady Murasaki Shikibu, the Rake Prince Niou is not disturbed by the sudden disappearance of Ukifune, the woman he loves. She has fled because although she is interested in the prince, she is in love with another man; but her absence allows the prince to go to extreme lengths to track her down. His sudden appearance to whisk her away to a house deep in the woods, and the gallantry he displays in doing so, overwhelm her. Remember: if no resistances or obstacles face you, you must create them. No seduction can proceed without them.

The Rake is an extreme personality. Impudent, sarcastic, and bitingly witty, he cares nothing for what anyone thinks. Paradoxically, this only makes him more seductive. In the courtlike atmosphere of studio-era Hollywood, when most of the actors behaved like dutiful sheep, the great Rake Errol Flynn stood out in his insolence. He defied the studio chiefs, engaged in the most extreme pranks, reveled in his reputation as Hollywood's supreme seducer—all of which enhanced his popularity. The Rake needs a backdrop of convention—a stultified court, a humdrum marriage, a conservative culture—to shine, to be appreciated for the breath of fresh air he provides. Never worry about going too far: the Rake's essence is that he goes further than anyone else.

When the Earl of Rochester, seventeenth-century England's most notorious Rake and poet, abducted Elizabeth Malet, one of the most sought-after young ladies of the court, he was duly punished. But lo and behold, a few years later young Elizabeth, though wooed by the most eligible bachelors in the country, chose Rochester to be her husband. In demonstrating his audacious desire, he made himself stand out from the crowd.

Related to the Rake's extremism is the sense of danger, taboo, perhaps even the hint of cruelty about him. This was the appeal of another poet Rake, one of the greatest in history: Lord Byron. Byron disliked any kind of convention, and happily played this up. When he had an affair with his half sister, who bore a child by him, he made sure that all of England knew about it. He could be uncommonly cruel, as he was to his wife. But all of this only made him that much more desirable. Danger and taboo appeal to a repressed side in women, who are supposed to represent a civilizing, moralizing force in culture. Just as a man may fall victim to the Siren through his desire to be free of his sense of masculine responsibility, a woman may succumb to the Rake through her yearning to be free of the constraints of virtue and decency. Indeed it is often the most virtuous woman who falls most deeply in love with the Rake.

Among the Rake's most seductive qualities is his ability to make women want to reform him. How many thought they would be the one to tame Lord Byron; how many of Picasso's women thought they would finally be the one with whom he would spend the rest of his life. You must exploit this tendency to the fullest. When caught red-handed in rakishness, fall back on your weakness—your desire to change, and your inability to do so. With so many women at your feet, what can you do? You are the one who is the victim. You need help. Women will jump at this opportunity; they are uncommonly indulgent of the Rake, for he is such a pleasant, dashing figure. The desire to reform him disguises the true nature of their desire, the secret thrill they get from him. When President Bill Clinton was clearly caught out as a Rake, it was women who rushed to his defense, finding every possible excuse for him. The fact that the Rake is so devoted to women, in his own strange way, makes him lovable and seductive to them.

Finally, a Rake's greatest asset is his reputation. Never downplay your bad name, or seem to apologize for it. Instead, embrace it, enhance it. It is

what draws women to you. There are several things you must be known for: your irresistible attractiveness to women; your uncontrollable devotion to pleasure (this will make you seem weak, but also exciting to be around); your disdain for convention; a rebellious streak that makes you seem dangerous. This last element can be slightly hidden; on the surface, be polite and civil, while letting it be known that behind the scenes you are incorrigible. Duke de Richelieu made his conquests as public as possible, exciting other women's competitive desire to join the club of the seduced. It was by reputation that Lord Byron attracted his willing victims. A woman may feel ambivalent about President Clinton's reputation, but beneath that ambivalence is an underlying interest. Do not leave your reputation to chance or gossip; it is your life's artwork, and you must craft it, hone it, and display it with the care of an artist.

***Symbol:* Fire.**

*The Rake burns with a desire that
enflames the woman he is seducing. It is
extreme, uncontrollable, and dangerous. The Rake may
end in hell, but the flames surrounding him often make
him seem that much more desirable to women.*

Dangers

Like the Siren, the Rake faces the most danger from members of his own sex, who are far less indulgent than women are of his constant skirt chasing. In the old days, a Rake was often an aristocrat, and no matter how many people he offended or even killed, in the end he would go unpunished. Today, only stars and the very wealthy can play the Rake with impunity; the rest of us need to be careful.

Elvis Presley had been a shy young man. Attaining early stardom, and seeing the power it gave him over women, he went berserk, becoming a Rake almost overnight. Like many Rakes, Elvis had a predilection for women who were already taken. He found himself cornered by an angry husband or boyfriend on numerous occasions, and came away with a few cuts and bruises. This might seem to suggest that you should step lightly around husbands and boyfriends, especially early on in your career. But the charm of the Rake is that such dangers don't matter to them. You cannot be a Rake by being fearful and prudent; the occasional pummeling is part of the game. Later on, in any case, at the height of Elvis's fame, no husband would dare touch him.

The greater danger for the Rake comes not from the violently offended husband but from those insecure men who feel threatened by the Don Juan figure. Although they will not admit it, they envy the Rake's life of pleasure, and like everyone envious, they will attack in hidden ways, often masking their persecutions as morality. The Rake may find his career endangered by such men (or by the occasional woman who is equally insecure, and who feels hurt because the Rake does not want her). There is little the Rake can do to avoid envy; if everyone was as successful in seduction, society would not function.

So accept envy as a badge of honor. Don't be naive, be aware. When attacked by a moralist persecutor, do not be taken in by their crusade; it is motivated by envy, pure and simple. You can blunt it by being less of a Rake, asking forgiveness, claiming to have reformed, but this will damage your reputation, making you seem less lovably rakish. In the end, it is better to suffer attacks with dignity and keep on seducing. Seduction is the source of your power; and you can always count on the infinite indulgence of women.