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From Byronic to Gothic Blood Sucker: Subversion toward a Non-Gendered Identity

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ABSTRACT

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Analyzing Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* and linking trends of the Byronic hero that have merged into a variety of genres reveal that the hero is a mode of subversive gender expression, which has evolved within the Gothic through feminine desire. Delving into Bram Stoker's *Dracula* will provide unique insight into the audience's desires/expressions of gender. Finding the transition point from the monster vampire of *Dracula* to Stephanie Meyer's desirous, sparkling boy-next-door in *Twilight* will track the trajectory of gender and sexual norms through time. From the foundational adaptation of the Byronic hero in *Wuthering Heights* to the repressed vampiric desire of *Dracula*, to queer desire/domestication within Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*, ending with sparkling vampires of *Twilight*, we can invite the Byronic hero, which already supports rejection of societal expectations, into a genderless space, becoming a champion of desire absent from the constraints of gender and sexuality conformity.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The Byronic hero, formed and named after Lord Byron, continues to mystify literary audiences nearly two hundred years after its conception. Characterized as a masculine presence that rejects social standards, embraces his emotional depth, exudes intelligence, sexual appeal, and mystery, the Byronic hero exists as a character archetype that explores the suppressed and rejected aspects of the human psyche. As such, Byronic hero's evolution leads to becoming a vehicle for gender/sexuality expression, contradicting socially accepted heteronormativity. Identified as an ironic sexual performance that subverts the social binary of gender and sexuality, the Byronic hero thusly is observed invading the Gothic sphere. Marjorie Howes explores the complex reality of queer desire existing in a predominately heterosexual social setting, stating that "prevalent Victorian conceptions of homosexuality preserved a heterosexual model of sexual attraction by characterizing homoerotic impulses as 'misplaced' feminine desires." (105) Because of the rigid social and cultural structure of the Victorian era, fiction was one of the only ways to explore sexual desire and gender. These 'feminine desires' that are suggested to be latent in all men were considered taboo and shameful, at the very least. It is this rejection of same sex desire from societal norms that leads the Byronic hero into the arms of the Gothic, which invites the presence of monsters and darkness; a perfect place for repressed and suppressed queer desire to take root and find expression. The overall goal is to exemplify a genderfluid, bisexual identity, developed through the progression of the Byronic hero, and to have the Byronic enter modern literature as a champion for a nongendered, sexless entity.

The exploration of gender and sexuality through the gothic must begin by investigating Lord Byron, focusing on his application of and influence on the Byronic hero. Although Lord

Byron explored gender in a few of his poems, *The Corsair* demonstrates the most effective exchange of gender with Gulnare and Conrad. Through this exchange of gender, societal boundaries and conceptions of control/power are rearranged, causing a terrifying confusion that demands retreat into accepted gender roles. In Gulnare and Conrad, Lord Byron is engaging with gender in a way that encouraged others to test the boundaries of sexual/gender expression. Following Lord Byron, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* encounters the gothic sphere with the intent to blur gender roles, creating a unified identity through the Byronic hero. However, this reimagined, unified Byronic entity is ultimately destroyed by the Victorian concepts of gender and sexuality. Emily Brontë, through the gothic, is able to take the Byronic hero, as a mode for rejecting gender norms, and progress the exploration of gender that Lord Byron began. It is not until Bram Stoker's *Dracula* that the progression of the Byronic hero is moved ever closer to the genderfluid, bisexual entity.

In Count Dracula, Stoker is able to present the Byronic, unified, genderfluid/bisexual body as the destructive force that will eviscerate the Victorian body, i.e., Mina and Jonathan Harker. Similar to the fates of Catherine and Heathcliff, the Byronic body (the Count) is disrupted by the prevailing Victorian social norms. After three titles, it may appear that the unified body is unsuccessful in its quest toward genderfluidity, but, only with time, is the progression of the Byronic hero truly going to find purchase. Anne Rice enters the gothic scene with her explosive novel *Interview with the Vampire*, blowing down societal boundaries/norms/expectations with her genderfluid, openly queer vampires Louis and Lestat. Sexualizing the monster from *Dracula*, Rice invites her audience to desire the dangerous, sexy vampire rather than fear the darkness. Mirroring the Byronic course, Rice constructs Lestat and Louis in an inverse familial space with Claudia, suggesting the capability of domestic bliss for

the gothic vampire, even amidst queer expression. Completing her queer, gothic romance, Anne Rice does not concede or conform to socially accepted heteronormativity, instead leaving her legacy open to progress the Byronic even further toward genderfluidity. However, the most modern vampiric novel, *Twilight*, only serves to regress the unified, Byronic entity into a socially accepted position. Taking the sexualized version of the vampire, Stephanie Meyer complicates the discussion by settling the Byronic back into the heteronormative space in order to achieve domestic bliss. Rather than progress the Byronic further toward realizing a genderfluid, bisexual presence that concludes with domestication, Bella and Edward engage with hypersensitive versions of masculinity and femininity, which seem to contradict feminism and the queer experience. The only space available to realize the goal (a Byronic, unified body that is both genderfluid and bisexual) is modern, gothic literature that has yet to be written.

CHAPTER 2. LORD BYRON & THE BYRONIC HERO

Aristocratic, Victorian women disguised themselves in their maids' clothing to join those mourning in the streets for Lord Byron's death. They could not show their admiration, or infatuation, toward a man who rejected the very social fabric of the period. As a Romantic, Byron, like many other artists of his time, sought to live outside the developing Victorian standards. He was mysterious, sexual, outspoken, and a champion against the ruling class. His vibrancy and audacity in welcoming Romanticism into his life lead to the eventual transcendent characterization of himself—the Byronic hero. However, the artist and his hero had yet to bind into one. Aptly named, the Byronic hero finds its roots within Byron's own work, chiefly *The Pilgrimage of Childe Harold* (1812), *The Corsair* (1814), and *Don Juan* (1819-24). Byron's fixation with crafting a character that suffers through love and life, while bearing envy and revenge upon his soul is evident when analyzing the masculine presences in his poetry. In contrast to the establishing social etiquette of the Regency, the Romantic, poetic energy, overwhelmed by nature and the wonder of the sublime, sought to eradicate societal expectation and engender individual authenticity. Surviving the consolidation of middle-class values in the Victorian period, the lasting Romantic fluidity managed to persist in literature, in part, due to the Romantic memory in the Gothic novel of the Victorian period. Embracing the freedom inherent in darkness, Lord Byron's hero emerged as a literary vehicle for investigating the fragility of character which subverts gender and, ultimately, encourages a genderless, sexual energy.

To understand the hero, emphasis must lie upon the namesake, Lord Byron (1788-1824). The Romantic poet was impassioned about politics, equality, and love. However, much of his life was spent tangled in gossip and drama. Some women, most notably those compassionate toward Annabella Milbanke, Byron's only wife, regarded Lord Byron as a depraved, corrupted villain,

intent on taking advantage of the virtuous (Slagle 435). Unable, or unwilling, to separate the author from his character archetype, it is at this point that Byron begins to merge with the Byronic image. Utilizing the Byronic hero, authors, who sought to comment on the social era, seamlessly blended the character and creator. Not simply accused of being cruel, Lord Byron's fate was sealed within social infamy when rumors of an incestuous love affair with his half-sister, Augusta Leigh, began to circulate (Slagle 436). Byron's lasting "bad boy" reputation was tainted with the rumors of incest, at which was jeered in his closet drama *Manfred* (1817), with the incestuous love between Manfred and Astarte. These rumors are a large factor into the combination of the author Lord Byron's life and personality with that of his hero. Because the link between the creation of the Byronic hero and Lord Byron's life is so strong, dismissing the profound effect upon the archetype would erase the substantial complexity of identity.

Notably, the audience of the nineteenth century would have most undoubtedly recognized a character clearly derived from Lord Byron. Fashioning a thinly veiled social commentary within the popular archetype, writers participated in "an act of political discourse [which blended] the relationship between fiction and cultural opinion." (Slagle 425) The concept of blending identity is not the only consequence of this social/political discourse. Heteronormative discourse, which in its essence smothers queer identity, directs readers to examine literature in attempts to reconcile queer erasure. As such, Lord Byron's own work contains queer echoes, as many modern critics have revisited his literature. By unveiling the societally rejected parts of Lord Byron's life, to which writers blended his hero, sexual and gender performance from the Byronic hero becomes more clear. The hero, already created as an outcast and social reject, hardly maintains any desirous qualities as a partner. To further this social rejection, Byron's bisexuality was interlaid with that of his archetype. As such, the Victorian sexuality bias, which

demanded heteronormative order, directly vilifies Byron as unnatural. This Byronic discourse, then, is a linguistic structure which utilizes heteronormative signifiers to alert the audience to queer erasure.

The path to identifying the queer identity within Byronic works, however, is, like most things, a process which grows from the foundation. Investigating sexuality requires a detailed excavation and rejection of gender norms in the novel. The Byronic hero is often considered a mode for exploring gender relationships. Because the masculine presence is usually laced with strong, voiced emotional responses, the feminine presence in the novel is allowed to invade the masculine field. George Olsen mentions William Robert's commentary of *The Siege of Corinth* (1816), in which Robert argues that the

> "expiatory quality" of desperate devotion pitted the appeal of romance against the demands of propriety, and served to slip the Byronic Hero into social acceptability, whilst leaving him still evil enough to preserve the addictive frisson of danger. (464)

As Olsen observes, the Byronic during the nineteenth century was already associated with introducing socially rejected qualities into the novel, providing the "danger" that many women authors and readers found exciting. However, as Olsen indicates, the jump from masculine rebellion to feminine domination, ultimately, was aided by questioning the "exclusive masculinity" of the Byronic. Does the Byronic hero have to be he? Byron's *The Corsair* and Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847) play with the idea of the Byronic heroine.

By feminizing the "hero" signifier, the traditional social attributes are assigned, moving the control and gender rejection into a passive state. When the Byronic is labelled "heroine",

specifically when referencing feminine domination, heteronormative discourse colors the identity and capabilities of the character. Olsen explains that "the values demanded of a heroine tend to be more passive, such as resilience and moral rectitude, and the heroine's personal journey is more likely to reinforce existing social standards." (465) Olsen then requires his audience to consider the "subject" hero/heroine and the "object" hero/heroine. While it would seem equal to have either male or female as subject or object, this dichotomy only hinders the objective of gender fluidity simply because the "object" must don what is socially considered feminine qualities. Depictions of the classic heroine are abundant within classic and modern literature, with examples of the "object" heroine including Ophelia from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1603), Elizabeth Benet from Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), Daisy Buchanan from Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925), and Primrose Everdeen from Collin's *The Hunger Games* (2008). These women, while not considered less than, are depicted in passive positions, often reliant upon the active agent to progress in the narrative. To more equally and effectually understand the gender politics that are being disregarded within the Byronic, the Byronic hero must *not* be divided into feminine and masculine identities.

Lord Byron directly participates in this political discourse with the creation of Gulnare in *The Corsair*. Olsen comments that "[Gulnare] has often been treated as a minor character, but this is beginning to change." (465) As modern critics begin to analyze and address gender and sexuality in classic literature, they find that the traditional roles in which these characters navigated are being reclassified. Gulnare begins the poem in ownership to Seyd. The harem in which she resides is attacked by Conrad, the traditional Byronic figure, and her passive nature is quickly discarded in order to gain freedom, not only for herself but for Conrad as well. Olsen regards Gulnare's strength favorably and supposes that

> accepting Conrad's plan of inaction, [Gulnare] maintains her own course, and proceeds to kill the sleeping pacha with her dagger (3.9), transgressing social boundaries and fulfilling the hero's typical role identified by Joseph Campbell, i.e., defeating a monster who maintains an oppressive status quo (337). (466)

Rather than offering two Byronic heroes, with contrasting gender, Byron appears to intentionally reflect Gulnare's steady activation with Conrad's gradual decline into passivity. Gulnare, with clear intent to only care for Conrad, not to rise above him, eventually does leave Conrad behind to become the moving force of the narrative. However, when the masculine force of the novel remains immobile, the feminine must then step in and propel the action. Shakespeare's *Macbeth* also considers this feminine domination when Macbeth stalls and frets when tasked with murder. Ultimately, it is Lady Macbeth who takes action and commits the murder. While both women, Lady Macbeth and Gulnare, are intent to care for and obey the men in their lives, the inaction of the masculine agent encourages feminine power. Contrastingly, however, Lady Macbeth takes her action and returns to passivity, while Gulnare remains an active force. In the end of his article, Olsen notes that "Gulnare is the only major woman character to survive a Byronic Hero tale." (468) Was Lord Byron suggesting an evolution of his hero through femininity when he deviated from the class suffering/death with his strongest feminine character, Gulnare?

The blending and rejection of gender roles seems to directly indicate that Lord Byron was invading gender with the intent to disrupt societal heteronormativity. D. Michael Jones explains that

> Femaleness migrates from Gulnare (the harem slave) to Conrad (the prisoner), back to Gulnare (the "spot of blood"), and back to Conrad. In their parting, they are still helplessly confused. For when Conrad goes to embrace "Gulnare, the

> homicide" (3.463) in a gesture of understanding, it is with a hand that "lost its firmness" (3.539). Because by "trying the firmness of a female hand" (3.381) in killing Seyd, Gulnare explodes the binary of male aggression and female passivity that underpins the potential for desire in a traditional romance economy. (27)

The exchange of gender completely directs the relationship between Gulnare and Conrad. This bouncing of gender allows for the overall understanding of the inherent fluidity of femininity and masculinity. The body does not exist solely in one experience. Byron's own Byronic hero and his lasting feminine entity is the foundation upon which Heathcliff and Catherine, Jonathan and Mina, and Edward and Bella all are built upon. While Conrad begins as the Byronic, Gulnare, throughout the poem, becomes Byronic. In each novel (*Wuthering Heights* [1847], *Dracula* [1897], *Twilight* [2005]), the Byronic moves past simple transfer between bodies into Byronic unification. This unification becomes the key interaction in which the Byronic can truly experience and defy gender/sexuality expectations, releasing the body into a fluidity. Most often, it is the initial encounter with femininity that leads to the overall exchange of gender, upsetting the balance and allowing for masculinity/femininity to transfer.

To determine the effective use of femininity, establishing the reigning power of gender rejection within nineteenth-century narration, it is prudent to outline the subtle changes of the Byronic hero through the novel. Traditionally, the Byronic hero is a man of dark coloring (which further connects him to darkness), with a deep capability of outward apathy. As though through his physical description, the Byronic hero's personality follows along with the melancholic darkness. Brooding, aggressive, emotionally vulnerable, and mysterious, Byron's masculine figures are often exiled, either internally or societally, and will find themselves bested by lasting suffering. Ecaterina Oana suggests that "[the hero] manifests signs of rebellion against all

fundamental values and moral codes of the society." (26) Though Byron was consulted by M. G. Lewis to leave behind his "hero-type" and move to the tragic heroes of his historical and biblical dramas, to which he conceded, it is doubtful that Byron had any inclination about how influential his character study would become to literature, especially to women authors (Olsen).

CHAPTER 3. EMILY BRONTË & *WUTHERING HEIGHTS*

One of the women authors who broke the gendered expectations of the nineteenth century was Emily Brontë. Though she wished to dismantle the patriarchal hold upon the literary field, Brontë understood that her work might be overlooked, or, at worst censored, if she were to put her feminine name on her published material. Playing the system, all of the Brontë sisters used gender neutral aliases at one point when publishing their work. However, perhaps for Brontë, her alias gave her work consideration among male readers, but it also gave her the ability to challenge societal expectations without facing backlash from her peers and critics. Even though her anonymity was, in part, a concession to the patriarchal structure of her time, the success of her novels undermined the consideration of feminine inferiority during the time.

Considered a literary influence, Brontë regarded Byron's work with interest, seeing the value of applying his themes in her own work, in order to construct a compelling literary niche. Ecaterina Oana mentions that

> the Brontë children were fascinated by Byron's outrageous life and his doomed characters. [In contrast to her sisters, Emily] understood how popular and appealing the Byronic hero had become as a literary figure, so that she tried to show in her literary creations the consequences of his egoism, self-absorption and misanthropy in very real ways. (29)

Perhaps more willing to investigate the psyche of an estranged loner, Emily Brontë differed from her sisters, who simply incorporated the hero into their works. Emily Brontë sought to develop the character into something more, something unique. Christina Ceron, regarding *Wuthering Heights*, contends that

> Emily Brontë makes use of [the] aspects of Byron's characters with the precise aim of setting the gothic element as an alternative narrative mode, as the subversive element within a realistic novel. (4)

Specifically, in reference to the Byronic hero, Brontë consumed Byron's prominent works and took note of his brooding masculine figure, finding interest in grounding this character within the growing fascination of the structured Victorian novel. And this is exactly what Emily Brontë did in *Wuthering Heights* with her masculine outcast, Heathcliff, when she settled her novel among the gothic landscape of North England, only to weave a devastating and multifaceted period drama, overflowing with sorrow and unrealized love.

Brontë implemented and evolved the Byronic hero into the character type which has remained popular for two hundred years, flowing in and out of different genres. Adhering to and, in specific ways, deferring from the classic Byronic figure set forth by Byron, Brontë manages to craft the early edition of the bad boy familiar to modern audiences. Atara Stein, in *The Byronic Hero in Film, Fiction, and Television*, contends that

> on his way to becoming reincarnated in contemporary forms, the nineteenth century hero had to make his way through the Victorian era [and] Emily Brontë was the one who fully embraced the idea of the Byronic hero and (re)portrayed him in both her poetry and novel. (Oana 29)

Oana later mentions that Brontë "juxtaposes realism and romance in a very real way" in her application of the hero. However, it is through the gothic darkness and all-encompassing mystery in *Wuthering Heights* where the beginning shifts of gender expectations are noted. Emily Brontë did not simply craft Heathcliff in the Byronic fashion, but, adding some spice for flair, she also

subverted the societal traditions and gender roles of her time. Most likely connecting to Byron's gender discourse, it is not beyond reason that Emily Brontë would want to craft her own referential Byronic hero, to release into the gothic, embracing its hidden nature. Though her novel contains what many contend is a grand love story, Brontë ultimately weaves a tale of violence, obsession, and betrayal.

Wuthering Heights is settled into the gothic as a means to disrupt the traditional narrative scene. As such, Heathcliff, the embodiment of darkness and mystery, is presented in conflict with the social expectations of the period. His desires to be freed from social restriction flow directly into his obsessive love for Catherine Earnshaw, which lead him into misery. But how does the gothic setting contribute to gender and sexuality nonconformity? N. M. Jacobs, addressing gender and layered narrative in *Wuthering Heights*, claims that the gothic is an "internal or closed world [that] approximates the hidden self within the social world, the dark side of the psyche." (206) Heathcliff, emboldened by darkness, is consistently described as wildly violent, quick to anger, stalking, growling, and ready to assault others. This violence is peculiarly overlooked throughout the novel because Mr. Lockwood, a masculine identity of propriety, is the audience's frame of reference. The patriarchy controls masculine identity through tradition and expectation, encouraging violence to maintain the social order. The conflict between the proper social man and the Byronic beast, covered in patriarchal social standards, reflects the conflict between gender identity, in that product (violence/repression) reinforces the standard (masculine control/queer intolerance).

Heathcliff does not begin as an overly violent advocate for patriarchal dominance. He is indoctrinated into the position over time, and only completely when Catherine chooses to marry Edgar. The connection between Heathcliff and Catherine formed in the gothic landscape of an

isolated English countryside, absent the overbearing social rules that dictate propriety. The specter of wealth and Victorian values haunted the landscape by the Linton's presence and Catherine was drawn to the commonality/stability. Catherine and Heathcliff, bonded through mutual rejection of social expectation, form a delicate relationship that intertwined their identities into one body, one soul. Catherine herself recognizes the symbiosis when she confides to Nelly that "[Heathcliff's] more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same, and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire." (59) Imperatively, this fusing of identity is the greatest contribution that Brontë offers to the evolution of the Byronic hero in the gothic sphere as a means to express gender fluidity.

Heathcliff came to the Earnshaws and remained a quiet, steady influence on the moor. Compared to his later hostile temperament, Heathcliff's boyhood was described as refined and laden with abuse. However, the mischievous and joyful reputation of social traditions appears to present through Catherine's influence. Nelly recalls to Mr. Lockwood that young Catherine was

> delight[ed] to provoke [Mr. Earnshaw]; she was never so happy as when we were all scolding her at once, and she defying us with her bold, saucy look, and her ready words … [she] had more power over Heathcliff than [Mr. Earnshaw's] kindness. (30)

Once Heathcliff and Catherine merged together, with their bond solidified, as per Byronic narration progress, grief and suffering must befall them. And it does. Swayed by the wealthy, stable life that Edgar Linton can offer her, Catherine remarks to Nelly that "it would degrade me to marry Heathcliff." (59) Catherine officially breaks the union between herself and Heathcliff, severing the Byronic identity and propelling Heathcliff into the violent patriarchal tradition and herself into the passive feminine position. Later, Catherine degrades Heathcliff into the darkness

of the masculine Byronic identity when she chastises Isabel Linton for admiring Heathcliff, remarking that he "is an unreclaimed creature, without refinement, without cultivation; an arid wilderness of furze and whinstone … he's a fierce, pitiless, wolfish man." (75) However, as Catherine conceded to the patriarchal social expectation for women, this feminine domestication causes the masculine half of the Byronic to become feral, accepting the violence he had been accustomed to growing up.

The Byronic hero defies gender, becoming something deeper than masculine and feminine. Maimed by the circulation of violence that produces reinforced social standards, *Wuthering Heights* delivers a Byronic hero who becomes a channel for repressed queer identity. Nelly describes young Heathcliff as "a sullen, patient child; hardened, perhaps, to ill-treatment," adding that Catherine was "too mischievous and wayward." (27) With the mystery of Heathcliff's decent and his eventual wealth/travels, the full image of the hero is displayed when Catherine introduces emotional conflict into their relationship, often provoking Heathcliff into emotional responses. As in life, they are also in death. Brontë doesn't stray from the tragedy of the Byronic hero, giving both characters the angst of life apart. Each lay blame on the other for the pain of absence; Catherine chastises Heathcliff declaring "You have killed me – and thriven on it, I think. How strong you are! How many years do you mean to live after I am gone," while Heathcliff argues that "misery, and degradation, and death, and nothing that God or Satan could inflict would have parted us, *you*, of your own will, did it." (117, 19) Although they blame each other, both maintain that the other is her/his soul. With this merging, the Byronic hero moves solidly away from the traditional gender dichotomy, focusing instead on the essence of identity outside social convention.

CHAPTER 4. STOKER & THE BYRONIC HERO

Moving forward, the combined identity that Emily Brontë presented with Heathcliff and Catherine, as a unit, becoming the Byronic hero in *Wuthering Heights* provides a specific and delicate entrance into the gothic staple that is Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, by defining the Byronic hero and demonstrating the effective and lasting application this archetype has on gender expression and social constructions. However, Stoker more strongly embraces the gothic mode to further explore gender, but also to investigate sexuality through narration. Stoker also introduces the Byronic hero to the monster, taking the villainous persona that descended from Lord Byron to a new level. Imbedded within the vampiric, dreamlike narration is a sexual exploration of self, which ultimately leads to a detailed commentary on social expectations and suppression in the late Victorian period.

Bram Stoker, seemingly intent to overload *Dracula* with societal anxieties, takes the edgy, mysterious Byronic hero that had, at this point, become a narrative staple and reforms him to radiate seductive consumption, monstrous appeal, and to undermine traditional gender and sexual concepts. Simon Bainbridge, investigating Byronic imagination, asserts that

> The [gothic vampire] Byronic text offered women not only the fantasy of the reformation of the hero, but also that of sexual liberation and freedom from the restrictions of social convention. For a number of readers, Byron's poetry enabled them to gain access to or express feelings that they previously had not experienced. (24)

Harker, a typical Victorian man, gets a look inside Victorian repression as he confronts the villainous Byronic hero, Count Dracula. The Byronic hero, long-since merged with its creator,

Lord Byron, when released into the gothic sphere, becomes a predator of social expectations. Coming only fifty years after Brontë's challenging *Wuthering Heights*, Stoker dives more deeply within the gothic mode to expose the darkness and suppression inherent in rigid, Victorian values. Supernatural elements defy the comfortable narration typical of the period, providing *Dracula* with the unique opportunity to discretely bury gender and sexuality discomfort within the character interactions in his novel.

As Bram Stoker engages with the supernatural unknown, he is also inviting his audience into the unknown Transylvanian landscape. This gothic landscape, while perfect for exploring the repressed consciousness of Victorian England, equally serves to connect Lord Byron and his hero to the mysterious East. Just as Emily Brontë acknowledged Lord Byron by using his hero in her novel, Stoker's intent to insert the Byronic within the Eastern sphere directly references Lord Byron's connection to the "edge of the world," as it was considered during the Regency. After graduating with an M.A., Lord Byron, joined with John Cam Hobhouse, began his travels in 1809 "through Portugal and Spain to Malta, and then to little-known Albania, Greece, and Asia Minor." ("Lord Byron" 614) Finding rich and diverse cultures to explore and later integrate into his poetry, Lord Byron expressed in a letter to his mother that

> I have no desire to return to England, nor shall I unless compelled by absolute want … I have no one to be remembered to in England, and wish to hear nothing from it but that you are well. ("Letters on Albania")

Byron's excitement of and reluctance to leave is most likely due to "encounter[ing] a culture that accepted sexual relations between older aristocratic men and beautiful boys." ("Byron" 614) It is during this tour that Byron's bisexuality is revealed, which will follow him back to England, exacerbating the Victorian gender/sexuality intolerance he will face.

Just like the Byronic connection to the East, Lord Byron's association with the "undead, thanks to the success of a novella by his former friend and traveling companion John Polidori, whose [novella] mischievously made Byron its model for the title character," is another point of contact with Byronism that Bram Stoker enforces in his application of the Byronic Count Dracula ("Byron" 613). Polidori's "The Vampyre," originally titled "A Tale By Lord Byron," was an adaption of an unfinished fragment that Polidori heard at Mary Shelley's famous, late-night writing contest, at which Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley were also in attendance (Bainbridge 26). As the author that first introduced vampirism to England, Polidori is one of the first authors to capitalize on the Byronic hero as a specific rendition of Lord Byron. It is due to this layering of identity that "The Vampyre" is considered

> an examination of the power dynamics of Byronism, a combination of the rhetoric of Byronic poetics and the reader's processes of imagination, fantasy, desire, projection and identification … [which] presents the attractiveness of Byronism as a process of imagining as doubling. (Bainbridge 27)

Intent to retell the unique story that Byron created, Polidori adds his own political/social discourse in utilizing the vampire to relate Lord Byron's seductive, devouring dominion over his fanbase. "The Vampyre" is just as much a social, tongue-in-cheek commentary on Lord Byron's fame and rapture as it is a first look into the consummatory and transgressive qualities of the vampire.

In the act of creating *Dracula*, Stoker interacts with Emily Brontë's image of the Byronic hero by complicating the unified body. As rejection allowed Heathcliff and Catherine to blur into a completed, genderfluid Byronic hero, Stoker crafts Dracula as the rejected, bisexual agent who acts against Victorian values. While Heathcliff and Catherine were undone by feminine

domestication, which lead to overtly masculine violence, *Dracula* embraces domestic, feminine strength by casting Mina as the "saving grace" that protects the masculine violence of those who seek to destroy Dracula. Bram Stoker inverted the complex gender combination that Brontë created in her relationship between the Byronic hero and "heroine," ultimately, by composing one body that wreaks havoc on the gender and sexual relationships of those whom Count Dracula encounters. Moving from Brontë's unified, genderfluid Byronic hero, *Dracula* takes the next steps in developing a Byronic hero who represents the "un-gendered," sexual identity that has become prominent in modern literature.

The core of the Byronic hero is to destabilize masculinity, migrating the binary structure of gender past biological sex. The unified, Byronic body that Count Dracula encapsulates is the direct progression from the intermixed then severed identity that Heathcliff and Catherine moved through in *Wuthering Heights*. The Byronic hero in *Dracula* is already unified, functioning *within* masculinity and femininity in order to violate Victorian sensibilities. With Count Dracula, his fervent desire to penetrate Jonathan Harker exists in the space between genders; his "feminine desire" for another male and the violent urge to claim merge into one action, consumption. It seems thus that Stoker, by implementing the Byronic hero through the vampire, suggests that undead, vampiric body rests solely between genders, existing only to disrupt the gender binary. Moreover, Count Dracula, locked within the erotic and sensual gothic sphere, disorganizes heteronormativity by balancing queer desire through Mina.

However, the unified, infectious body of Count Dracula must conform to the Byronic progression, ending in tragedy. The tragedy that Stoker presents for his Byronic hero is the failure to secure a total disarticulation of gender and sexuality standards. Utilizing the Byronic for his antagonist, for Stoker, is fundamental in undoing the Victorian body through

sexual/gender exploration. Stoker, mirroring the failure of his Byronic hero, is unable to maintain the undone, unified, bisexual agent he created, either due to social pressure or inexperience with gender/sexuality exploration. Much like how Heathcliff and Catherine, once embodying the Byronic together, end their novel by conforming to gender expectations, Count Dracula, already the unified Byronic, must die, ensuring the overall succession of the gender binary and heteronormativity through remaking the Victorian body.

It is through the gothic structure in which *Dracula* is best able to defy Victorian values. Even though the novel ends by returning to the Victorian landscape, Bram Stoker's *Dracula* exists within the Victorian era, both conforming to and defying social regulations of the period. Embracing that dichotomy and winding his characters through complex, doubled identities truly allows Stoker to represent the troubling, ethereal quality of the gothic. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick perhaps most effectively details the modern conception of the gothic in "The Character in the Veil: Imagery of the Surface in the Gothic Novel." Referencing the Freudian element that influences a more psychoanalytical approach, Sedgwick summarizes that

> The Gothic [is valued] most readily when [critics] have been able to perceive and describe it as exploring our "sharply personal sense of the war *within*," as "acknowledg[ing] the non-rational … ultimately and most persistently in the *depths* of the human being," as "*plunging into* feeling" to find "a new *dimension*." (255)

As such, the gothic mode becomes a very personal and introspective lens in which to place conflict. The question of humanity and morality come into light amidst the enveloping supernatural darkness, hiding the most primal fears and shame that plague society. For *Dracula* specifically, how does the gothic significantly inform upon humanity and the Victorian era?

Immorality, consumption, violence, sexuality, and the battle between good/evil agents color the novel, while Victorian concepts of propriety, heterosexuality, commonness, and introversion clash furiously against the gothic setting. However unique *Dracula* stands among gothic novels of the time, there are still commonalities to which Bram Stoker adhered to. Christopher Craft identifies the "triple rhythm" that, applied by Stoker, seems inherent to the gothic narrative structure, explaining that

> Each of these texts (*Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*) first invites or admits a monster, then entertains and is entertained by monstrosity for some extended duration, until in its closing pages it expels or repudiates the monster and all the disruption that he/she/it brings. (107)

It is the challenging content that flows beneath the surface that moves *Dracula* from the typical, gothic monster tale. More than a descriptive narrative, the gothic darkness provides not only a sense of danger, but also a certain freedom within the unknown. Stoker and his audience are able to read between the lines and imagine what could be possible within a setting that embraces the fantastical. It is in this in-between that the exploration of gender, sexuality, and social constructions of femininity and masculinity are truly seen.

Embracing the dichotomy between the gothic and Victorian values, Sedgwick, considering common groupings from Gothic critics, suggests that reason and repression lie opposite of depth, irrationality, and sexuality (255). Just as Heathcliff and Catherine repress their desires by embracing social expectations, *Dracula* uses external forces to challenge the repression caused by societal pressures. Mina Harker, née Murray, and Lucy Westenra attempt to follow traditional feminine roles, Jonathan Harker tries to remain the heterosexual Victorian ideal, Van Helsing represents the traditional values of the Victorian era that should fight to

withstand the darkness of the gothic, and Count Dracula embodies self-realization and open sexuality that challenges his European counterparts. Marjorie Howes suggests that

> because of the emphasis in the novel on heterosexuality and the crucial roles of the female characters, the fears and [sexual fantasies] in which *Dracula* invites the reader to participate are exclusively male. Because the fundamental ambivalences motivating the novel revolve around [male homosexuality], *Dracula* uses the feminine to displace and mediate the anxiety-causing elements of masculine character, representing the forbidden desires the men fear in themselves as monstrous femininity. (104)

Dracula, through his supernatural identity, embodies the monstrous femininity that terrifies Jonathan Harker and challenges Lucy and Mina in how feminine strength is perceived. Most importantly, it is this monstrous femininity, in contrast with Victorian masculinity, *in one body*, that steadily moves into realizing a bisexual Byronic hero, with which the audience can overlay sexual desires of their own.

Ultimately, *Dracula* echoes Sedgwick's concept of homosocial desire that she outlines in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. Put simply, the connection between men must be transferred or mediated through a woman due to intense societal homophobia. Stoker utilizes this transferal interaction to express the complexity of repressed queer gender and sexuality expressions. Explaining the delicate relationship between descriptive gender expressions and the lasting rejection and suppression of queer gender and sexuality, Sedgwick explains that

> Once the secularization of [the term] "the homosexual" [was made] available as a descriptive category of lived experience, what had happened was … that a new and immensely potent tool—the ability to set proscriptive and descriptive limits to the forms of male homosocial desire—had become available for the manipulation of every form of power that was refracted through the gender system …What modern European-style homophobia delineates is thus a space, and perhaps a mechanism, of domination, rather than the agency or motivation or political thrust of the domination … it is analytically important to remember that the domination offered by this strategy is not only over a minority population, but over the bonds that structure all social form. (87)

The Victorian era demanded that traces of queerness be hidden *within* heterosexual desire/expectations because of the intense homophobia and social rejection that became aligned with bisexual or gay relationships. Since there is no way to completely smother or reject queer identity, the literature that prevails from stricter moments in time must be carefully reassessed to reclaim the moments of suppression. By setting these "proscriptive and descriptive limits" on queer identity, problematic gender and sexuality issues have burrowed deeply into a repressed sphere in order to survive a heteronormative social scene. As *Dracula* becomes a staple for gender and sexuality nonconformity, the work continually readdresses the difficult tension that exists between social norms and gender/sexuality fluidity.

CHAPTER 5. *DRACULA*

At the core of *Dracula* exists a masculine fear of feminization. The novel acts as a vehicle to express gender anxiety, where the punishment for exploring sexuality and gender is eternal "madness" (i.e., vampiric desire). Marjorie Howes explains that

> The text displaces the feared self onto the monster and mediates between conflicting desires to accept and reject the monstrous through its pattern of admission, entertainment, and expulsion. (117)

Jonathan Harker unconsciously separates himself from his feminine counterpart, Mina, from the very beginning. Harker escapes the socially strict Victorian London for the unknown East, abandoning the domestic sphere, only to fall prey to dangerous, homosocial anxiety. Leaving Mina in London, who is both the feminine influence that balances Harker's Victorian masculinity *and* his moral protector, was perhaps the first act toward exploring queer identity through the supernatural. As Harker travels closer to Count Dracula's castle, he is persuaded to return to the social sphere he understands by a "hysterical" and "excited" older woman, who adorns Harker with a cross for protection in his insistence to conclude business. This old woman, with her concern and frantic feminine energy, sparks unease in Harker to the point of considering death, as he remarks

> Whether it is the old lady's fear, or the many ghostly traditions of this place, or the crucifix itself, I do not know, but I am not feeling nearly as easy in my mind as usual. If this book should ever reach Mina before I do, let it bring my good-bye. (Stoker 3)

Harker does not fret in his journey, even though he is going into "the Carpathian mountains; one of the wildest and least known portions of Europe … [where] there are no maps," a Byronic landscape marred by erotic mystery (1). Harker only expresses concern for his safety when confronted with feminine fear.

Harker's vague uneasiness and masculine fear of feminization quickly find purchase as Count Dracula is introduced. After strange and stranger events follow Harker to Dracula's castle, he finds his discomfort unrelieved upon meeting his client. Completely engulfed by a strange land outside of Harker's Victorian comfort, Dracula appears to Jonathan with "a very marked physiognomy," taking great care to describe the Count in detail. Most catching, is Harker's focus on Dracula's mouth, recounting that

> The mouth, so far as I could see if under the heavy moustache, as fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp white teeth; these protruded over the lips, whose remarkable ruddiness showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years. (Stoker 11)

Transfixed by terror and interest, Harker concludes this diary entry by admitting his fear and taking note of the peculiar, gender landscape that he had fallen into, stating that "I am all in a sea of wonders. I doubt; I fear; I think strange things, which I dare not confess to my own soul. God keep me, if only for the sake of those dear to me." (11) It is simply looking upon the sexualized vampire that drives Harker into distress. Howe, referring to the "strange things, which [Harker] dare not confess," concludes that "fear of utterance emphasizes the oral, locating the source of anxiety in the mouth." (110) Not only does Harker's Victorian masculinity prevent him from knowing/explaining/understanding desire for another man, but also finds the mouth of Dracula

central to his anxiety, inhibiting his own voice. Craft explains the gender/sexuality confusion apparent in the "Vampire Mouth" as

> the primary site of erotic experience … with its soft flesh barred by hard bone, its red crossed by white, this mouth compels opposites and contrasts into a frightening unity … bespeaking the subversion of the stable and lucid distinctions of gender. (109)

The act of devouring, undoing, masculinity remains the constant fear for the masculine identities of the novel, only slightly abating when a feminine entity is present to protect against the queer, consumptive interaction. Harker, unable to conceptualize queer desire, only passively recognizes the erotic quality of the "vampire mouth" that he noted of Dracula's appearance. Although Jonathan escapes Dracula's sensual mouth, his fear of penetration does not alleviate, as he soon becomes aware that Dracula is not his only advisory.

In order to deescalate the uncomfortable gender tension between the Count and Jonathan, Stoker victimizes Harker through the three vampire women, delving into sexual fantasy that appears socially acceptable (i.e., heterosexual). As Dracula is the bisexual agent who influences all those he consumes, the violent, domineering masculinity of the three vampire women only reiterate the strength of the Count's ability to disrupt gender and sexuality through vampirism. The bisexually masculine vampire women are unable to contain their excitement at the prospect of devouring a male, furthering the transfer of gender and providing Dracula with a socially safe way to interact with Jonathan. Christopher Craft reminds us to

> remember that the vampire mouth is first of all Dracula's mouth, and that all subsequent versions of it (in Dracula all vampires other than the Count are

> female)8 merely repeat as diminished simulacra the desire of the Great Original, that "father or furtherer of a new order of beings." (360) Dracula himself, calling his children "my jackals to do my bidding when I want to feed," identifies the systematic creation of female surrogates who enact his will and desire (365). (109)

This moment of sleepy sexual desire directly contrasts with the Victorian masculinity that Jonathan wishes to embody. Not only is he promised to Mina, but Harker, for the first time since arriving at Dracula's castle, *engages* (passively) with the differences to his social standard. Moreover, Jonathan denotes himself to the feminine role in a sexual encounter, waiting passively to be penetrated by Dracula's feminine agent. Fearing the sensuality of femininity, even in women, suggests that Dracula, through the act of masculine, vampiric penetration, can inflict "feminine desire" in men. Marjorie Howe explains that

> *Dracula* feminizes desire and obsessively fears the woman in man, which is undeniably and naturally present and always threatening to overwhelm the masculine … the novel's most acute anxiety stems from the knowledge that male bisexuality is natural and unavoidable and that the feminine may be irrepressible, demanding release in sublimated or symbolic form. (105, 6)

However passively Harker desires the vampire women, his desire also extends to the vampire master himself, Dracula. Using red and white imagery, Stoker appears to call for his audience to be as sexual or technical as they wish.

> All three [vampire women] had brilliant white teeth that sone like pearls against the ruby of their voluptuous lips. There was … some longing and at the same time

> some deadly fear. I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire that they would kiss me with those red lips. (23)

The marked similarity to Dracula's own mouth suggests, as Craft mentions, "the transgression which would unsex Harker and toward which [*Dracula*] constantly aspires and then retreats: the actual penetration of the male." (110) Though Harker is not penetrated during this scene, his "wicked, burning desire" is sustained "in an agony of delightful anticipation" that he contrastingly finds "thrilling and repulsive," waiting "in a languorous ecstasy" to be taken by the vampire woman, depicting a true inversion of the Victorian masculine sexual tradition (Stoker 23).

Intending to push the gender/sexuality boundary into further disarray, Stoker writes Dracula's presence as the disrupting force to Harker's penetration. The emergence of the masculine penetrator strikes Harker's awareness, like lightning, into pure horror at his passivity. Though the vampire women act as agents for Dracula, his fury forces the Count to claim that "[Jonathan Harker] belongs to me!" Perhaps intent to claim Jonathan with his masculine presence, Dracula prohibits his women from "kissing" Harker. This intent is demonstrated when "the Count turned, after look at [Harker's] face attentively, and said in a soft whisper:-- 'Yes, I too can love'." (Stoker 24) Possibly it is this declaration of love between men, his passivity sexually, or the horror of the supernatural invasion that causes Harker to faint, claiming that the sexually driven, gender-typical divergent event "[gives] new lights on certain things which have puzzled [him]." (Stoker 22)

It is after this encounter that Dracula can be truly realized as the bisexual agent who infects the masculine and feminine entities of the novel. After the sexually charged encounter with the four vampires living in the castle, Harker understands that his safety, his will to remain

strong in his heterosexuality, is in danger; and he must escape back to London to save himself, from death and from experiencing queer sexuality. Jonathan makes clear that "it has always been at night-time that I have been molested or threatened, or in some way in danger or in fear." (Stoker 29) Equating darkness and the night with the danger of expressed, penetrative sexuality only strengthens Dracula's very real threat to Victorian masculinity. The Count seeks to not only penetrate Harker, but also to demonstrate his ownership of Jonathan by interfering with the relationships between Jonathan and women. In regard to the encrypted letter Jonathan attempts to send to Mina, Dracula's rage could be at Harker's attempt to signal for help, but his use of language suggests that the slight lands solidly upon their budding relationship. With "eyes blazed wickedly," Dracula exclaims that "[the letter] is a vile thing, an outrage upon friendship and hospitality! It is not signed. Well! So it cannot matter to us." (Stoker 26) This blatant betrayal and rejection of the imposed gender and sexuality expression that Dracula has offered to Harker stings the vampire; yet by not signing the letter, refusing to align his entire identity to the plea for help, Jonathan, Dracula believes, could be open to exploring his sexuality, which is evident through his use of "us" to align the men against outside, heterosexual, intervention.

However, as much as Dracula infers Harker's subconscious interest in sexual exploration, relinquishing an identity forged from rigid and punishing gender and sexual expectations proves to be the crucial hardship that the English characters struggle with, running into what they know rather than the unknown. Jonathan Harker continues to resist Dracula's attention/advances. Culminating the disastrous first section of the novel, Harker chooses his masculine identity over the genderfluid, bisexual identity that Dracula offers and shows to him during his stay in Transylvania. Only able to understand his tumultuous relationship with Dracula through the vampire women, Harker laments that "[he is] alone in the castle with those awful women. Faugh!

Mina is a woman, and there is nought in common. They are devils of the Pit." (Stoker 33) Knowing that Dracula is not there to continue his claim of ownership, Harker fears the women will descend on him and "unsex" him. Recalling his heterosexual connection and sexual attraction to Mina strengthens Harker to deny his penetration and gives him the will to escape. Atop the perilous precipice, "steep and high," Harker believes that "at its foot a man may sleep—as a man." (Stoker 33) In his final act of rebellion against Dracula, Jonathan Harker climbs down the castle wall, only to reappear in Budapest, amnesic, having fallen victim to the great tragedy of bisexuality.

The vampire, like Simon Bainbridge notes, "can be seen as potentially liberating as well as corrupting." (24) This contradiction fits perfectly with the notion of genderfluidity and bisexuality that Dracula embodies, which moves toward the doubling of identity that those who interact with the Count encounter. Mina and Jonathan Harker, both struggling with Victorian and Gothic forms of themselves, run from and are victim to Dracula in uniquely different ways, often conforming to typical gender roles. Count Dracula himself is also subject to the doubling of identity, although his halves are complex and many. The Count is represented both as old and young, monstrous and alluring, Eastern mystery and Western civility, and bisexually dangerous. Bainbridge explains that

> This [doubling] is structured through discourses of race (West vs. East), gender (masculine vs. feminine) and class (bourgeois vs. aristocracy), and embodied in the genre of the text itself, which oscillates between the realism of the novel and the supernaturalism of romance. (30)

The Byronic discourse, thus, begins with identifying the corrupting force that fractures binary boundaries. To explain this progression, Bainbridge, regarding the vampire, remarks that "the

attraction of the Byronic hero-villain figure stem from the way it enables a projection of the self and provides a release for repressed tendencies." (31) Both Mina and Jonathan are offered a view of their repressed desires and find themselves frightened of the possibilities, of the freedoms. The allure of Count Dracula's vampirism is not enough to bind the couple to a nonbinary immortality.

Having witnessed Count Dracula's predatory hospitality and reemerging in a Budapestian hospital, Jonathan Harker, unfortunately, has not ended his supernatural encounter with Dracula. The previously noted gender/sexual interactions that transpired within Dracula's castle haunt Jonathan and lead him into a fragile position, being cared for by Mina. It is not clear, however, if Harker is in the beginning stages of vampirism in his stay at the hospital or if he is simply disturbed. Harker is either experiencing the lasting effects of a violent, bisexual encounter between himself and the vampire women, effectively unsexing his masculine identity by agency to Dracula, or is truly consumed by madness at the darkness and "uncivilized" conduct that he was subjected to in Transylvania. Jonathan writes in his journal that "[he] felt impotent, and in the dark, and distrustful." (Stoker 118) Mina even remarks on the ambiguity of Jonathan's madness, writing "how [Jonathan] must have suffered, whether it be true or only imagination." (Stoker 113) Jonathan is only relieved from his submissive state when Van Helsing, the paragon of Victorian, masculine heterosexuality, validates his dangerous, supernatural encounter.

After Jonathan returns, bodily and mentally, to his Victorian safe zone, he struggles to maintain the masculine identity he once had. Tainted by his supernatural experience and descent into/ascension from his Gothic persona, Harker must renavigate his relationship with Mina. Much like Van Helsing, Jonathan, after coming back to his Victorian self, is now able to see the bisexual and genderfluid tendencies that Mina embodies, before her corruption by the Count.

Jonathan intended his journal to be a connecting force between himself and Mina, rather than the account of his victimization. However, Jonathan releases his identity and self-confidence as a mentally stable Victorian man when he gives Mina the diary, saying "I do not want to know it. I want to take up my life here, with our marriage … Take [the diary] and keep it, read it if you will, but never let me know." (Stoker 67) Jonathan is placing his identity (either mad or unsexed), his control (over the supernatural danger or their marriage), and his life (before and after Dracula) into Mina's hands, proving his total devotion and trust in her latent masculinity, knowing that her femininity wouldn't hinder her from being able to handle his instability. Mina admits to Lucy in a letter that "the strain of keeping up a brave and cheerful appearance to Jonathan tries [her]," but that she, intent "to save him from it," will be the strength (morally and intellectually) so that "poor Jonathan may not be upset, for I can speak for him and never let him be troubled or worried with it at all." (Stoker 99, 103-4) It is only after his "awakening" that Jonathan is able to recognize Mina and become unified in their relationship, trespassing gender roles.

Alice Case, in "Tasting the Original Apple: Gender and the Struggle for Narrative Authority in 'Dracula,'" she considers Mina and Jonathan to be the ideal of "domestic marital happiness", but that

> the dynamic of both Mina's and Jonathan's shifting status and activities as characters and narrators indicates that this merging and crossing of gender categories is more unstable than the final endorsement of the couple suggests. While the Harker marriage is the only model of gender relations still standing at the end of the novel, it has been reaffirmed by a rather strange route, which restates traditional gender positions in the most lurid terms. (225)

Although Mina and Jonathan become a team, the gender pressures that permeate the novel, ultimately, lead the couple into accepting the traditional gender stations of the Regency. Similar to Heathcliff and Catherine, the Harkers can only experience genderfluidity through their connection to each other, but will be torn apart into commonality, mirroring the Byronic situation of destruction. It can then be argued that, during their moments of togetherness and by fusing gender, as demonstrated in *Wuthering Heights*, Mina and Jonathan could also become a Byronic entity, unified in one body. The difference, however, is that the stronger Byronic presence, Count Dracula, is actively and violently encouraging nonbinary, bisexual existence, effectively demanding that Mina and Jonathan abandon their Victorian values. In the end, when locked into the constraining social structure that was the Regency, the momentarily Byronic couples, Mina and Jonathan along with Heathcliff and Catherine, are unable to submit to the chaos that is a lasting Byronic identity.

Despite how Mina and Jonathan may briefly embody Byronic unification, their separation is final and swift when Jonathan insists that Mina acquiesce to abandoning the "party of men". Howes clarifies that, due to Jonathan's experiences with Dracula, "ambivalent flirtation with a feminine (homoerotic) desire, to play the passive woman's part and be penetrated, leads to a defensive reaction against the feminine." (108) Jonathan, who relied on Mina to care for him, to contact Van Helsing, to record and combine relevant information to the investigation, and to be his moral/sexual/gendered angel, remarks that

> Somehow, it was a dread to me that [Mina] was in this fearful business at all; but now that her work is done, [hopefully] she may well feel her part is finished, and that she can henceforth leave the rest to us [men]. (Stoker 157)

Even though Jonathan relied on Mina to take up the mantel of masculinity when he was unable, regardless of their successful blending, he is, now in the company of similar-minded Victorian men, willing to move Mina into the feminine sphere she is hardly contained within. However, it is not only through Jonathan that Mina demonstrates her genderfluid tendencies. Van Helsing consistently remarks on the extraordinary genderfluid mixture that Mina manifests, commenting that

> She has man's brain- a brain that a man should have were he much gifted- and a woman's heart. The good God fashioned her for a purpose, believe me, when He made that so good combination. (Stoker 149)

This purpose, as Alice Case mentions, is to demonstrate "a struggle that turns out to be largely about the 'proper' distribution of masculine and feminine qualities among characters [in *Dracula*]." (224) Before vampiric corruption, Mina's Victorian identity is already intermingled with the "New Woman" that she looks down on. Her conflicting statements about the "New Woman," dismayed rejection toward feminine independence yet quietly pleased at the freedom, becomes a reflection of her own identity as a proto- "New Woman" and Victorian idol. Mina finds pleasure and purpose in her work against Dracula, employing her masculine control and intellect against those around her. As the constant Victorian presence throughout the novel, Van Helsing declares that the men, in their fight against Dracula, would "act all the more free [when Mina is] not in the danger, such as [they would be]." (Stoker 153) Mina, believing they would be "lessen[ing] their safety" without her presence, admits that "it was a bitter pill for [her] to swallow, [she] could say nothing, save to accept their chivalrous care." (153) As much as Mina has exercised her genderfluid abilities until this moment, Victorian values are relegating her to the sidelines, where she would ultimately become victimized. In stripping Mina of her masculine

agency, the men effectively leave Mina, like Lucy, to be devoured by the bisexual Dracula, "lead[ing] to her near defection to vampirism's liberated expression." (Howes 115)

Mina's nonbinary gender engagement, in such clear contrast to her Victorian persona, can be understood as a product of the gothic space she inhabits. The supernatural elements that surround her are the catalyzing agents to propelling Mina into masculine position, in which she is responsible for directing the investigation of Dracula, the narration of the novel, and the moral/sexual integrity of the men. In contrast to her Victorian femininity, Mina's Gothic identity is revealed once Dracula has consumed her blood, connecting them. Similar to the rest of the novel, Mina is defined by her relationships with the other characters and her interaction with Count Dracula is no different. Although the lasting fear in the novel is queer desire and penetration, the demonically possessed, violent feminine entity is the outcome that Jonathan and the men are trying to avoid. When Dracula arrives to England, he follows the socially acceptable gender interaction of only "vamping" women. This act of "vamping," of exploring the genderfluid continuum of masculinity and femininity, exposes the women to a power that they have been restricted from. As Dracula preys upon Mina, mostly in efforts to homosocially connect to Jonathan, Dracula is also restoring the masculinity that has been stripped from her. Dracula doesn't "vamp" Mina like the other women either, in another act of recognizing her already genderfluid state.

Dracula first drinks from Mina, who admits, "I did not want to hinder him," and then the Count directly acknowledges Mina's intellect when he mocks that "[Mina], like the others, would play [her] brains against [his]." (Stoker 181) The Count's very presence in Mina's room is an admittance of Mina's masculine strength and feminine connection with Jonathan, with whom Dracula wants a feminine connection. Rather than utilizing his masculine ability of penetration to

make Mina drink his blood, making Mina "flesh of [his] flesh … [his] companion and helper," Dracula adopts a very feminine imitation of breastfeeding. Mina, in desire, recalls that

> he pulled open his shirt, and with his long sharp nail opened a vein in his breast. When the blood began to spurt out, he took my hands in one of his, holding them tight, and with the other seized my neck and pressed my mouth to the wound, so that I must either suffocate or swallow. (Stoker 182)

This strange, sexual bloodletting connects Mina (and, through association, Jonathan) to the Count, in an act meant to restore her masculine identity. However, either due to Dracula's deviation or Mina's already bisexual, nonbinary identity, Mina is not a slave to Dracula, like the women "vamped" before her. Dracula is able to evade one of their traps by utilizing his link with Mina, but, exactly like the men's error before, Dracula faces his demise due to his rejection and detached regard of Mina, ignoring the feminine within himself and Mina.

In the end, Mina's gothic and Victorian personas, while similar to Jonathan's, blend and blur into an amalgamation of gender and sexuality stereotypes that are simultaneously conformed to and rejected. Unfortunately for Dracula, the genderfluid connection he so desperately sought with the couple becomes his ultimate downfall. In the end, though, Mina and Jonathan's gothic desires and repressed identities are crafted into the existence of their son, Quincy, proving only that the transgressive, Byronic qualities have a lasting presence within the "safe" social sphere of Victorian England. Just as Dracula's death is uncertain, the calm-after-the-storm, disillusioned reality that Mina and Jonathan escape to is still corrupted by the living memory of their gender/sexuality exploration nightmare. Marjorie Howes suggests that, concerning the end of the novel, that "Mina has been rescued from the threat of vampiric gender indefinition, but her enduring bisexuality reminds us that the feminine has been suppressed but not eliminated." (117)

In contrast, however, Mina and Jonathan's rejection and destruction of the nonbinary, genderfluid, bisexual entity and the acceptance of Victorian values (*while still interacting within genderfluidity*) reminds us that queer experiences are suppressed but *not* eliminated. This distinction leads directly into the modern sphere of vampire novels that embrace gender/sexual exploration while simultaneously grafting and evolving the Byronic hero into a domesticated sexual entity that finds peace rather than suffering.

CHAPTER 6. ANNE RICE & *INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE*

As the Byronic moves through the gothic mode, the unified, nonbinary, bisexual presence of vampiric identity, which functions as the destruction and reformation of the Victorian body, embodies the social anxieties surrounding gender and sexuality, demanding repressed queer desire to be reevaluated and recognized. The progression of identity from *Wuthering Heights* to *Dracula* to *Twilight*, demonstrates the transfusion of the Byronic hero, focusing entirely on the applied exploration of self. From the desolate, gothic English landscape to the unknown wilderness and supernatural of the East, the Byronic hero, moving about eighty years forward within gothic literature, becomes a different creature than what Bram Stoker displayed. Before arriving in *Twilight*'s Forks, Washington, the vampiric Byronic hero is due a facelift. This drastic and powerful makeover comes with the debut novel *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) by Anne Rice. Until this point, the vampire was still the creature/monster of the night, dwelling within the repressed and feared social anxieties that were beneath the narrative surface. Anne Rice, however, introduces the terror-inducing monster to the power of sexual appeal. Meenakshi Gigi Durham argues that "only since the mid-1980s has the vampire been understood in terms of its relevance to adolescence, especially in relation to identity formation, emergent sexualities and gender roles." (282) Existing as the most influential, modern, vampire novel, *Interview with the Vampire* irrevocably changed the direction of contemporary gothic fiction.

Before the Rice's gothic overhaul, *Dracula* experienced the first, sexually charged reimaging of the novel through the casting of Bela Lugosi in the 1931 film. Similar to the strangely appealing Monster of *Frankenstein*, portrayed by Boris Karloff, early nineteenth-century audiences were not quite ready to experience attractive monsters. Concerning the

evolution of vampire men, Kristina Durocher eloquently states that, “contemporary vampire men combine Count Dracula’s violent nature and masculine power with the conventional attractiveness of Rice’s vampires.” (50) The raw sexual appeal of the vampire is not a concept that Anne Rice introduces into the vampire gothic; Stoker makes it explicitly clear that Count Dracula has an overpowering, bisexual energy that captures his victims, male and female. Rice just moves the vampire into the modern landscape, presenting the façade of humanity. Her vampires, Louis and Lestat, hunt throughout the ages in metaphoric, human drag, intending to blend into society. The predatory threat, therefore, has moved from the invasive foreigner to the “attractive white urban vampires who threaten society from within its social structure” (Durocher 48). Unlike the violent destruction of Dracula, who embodied genderfluidity/bisexuality, Anne Rice’s vampires, according to her social standards, do not require a feminine presence to express desire and sexual attraction for men. In fact, *Interview with the Vampire* is most often considered as one of the first, openly homoerotic examples in the gothic. However, just because the danger and fear of repressed queer desire is absent in Rice’s vampires, Durocher believes that “despite their sexual fluidity, these vampire men are physically dominant … [able to use] the ultimate power of unchallenged patriarchy … to exploit those beneath them in the social hierarchy.” (49) Unlike the bourgeois victims of Dracula, Louis and Lestat introduce predatory consumption to the lower class, bringing the vampire into the modern economy.

Interview with the Vampire was a major turning point for the sexual attraction of vampires, which directly transformed the gothic, vampiric genre, but it also made it possible to openly engage with queer desire. Anne Rice does not hide queer desire within her novel, like the other novels being discussed. Instead, she pushes into the queer space and revels in the danger and eroticism of participating in the queer discourse that was in stark contrast to traditional

heteronormativity. Rice's main character, Louis de Pointe du Lac, begins the novel as a depressed, mortal man, who just happens to bewitch the only vampire in the area, Lestat de Lioncourt. From the moment of turning, the sexual tension and arousal between Louis and Lestat is clearly declared by Rice, with Lestat often referring to Louis as his lover. Their consumption of humans mirrors the homosocial exchange by using the human, regardless of gender, as the barrier between them, teasing mutual, sexual desire. Calling to the 'Vampire Mouth' discussed with Dracula, Louis describes Lestat during his turning, emphasizing that "the movement of his lips raised the hair all over my body, sent a shock of sensation through my body that was not unlike the pleasure of passion … the sucking mesmerized me." (Rice 94-148) The bisexual, vampiric mouth that Stoker used to invoke queer desire is blatantly on display with Rice's vampires. As a mortal man, Louis would have been complacent to the heteronormative social expectation, but, when he is turned, his vampiric freedom enabled his exploration of queer desire. He feeds from mortal men in sexually charged situations and even demonstrates desire (and eventual love) for Armand, a European vampire. Anne Rice very clearly demonstrates and engages in queer desire, challenging the repression and suppression inherent in queer relationships depicted in literature. Rice not only moves the vampire *solidly* into queer discourse, but she also rearranges traditional boundaries, disrupting sexuality, sexual attraction, community, and the family structure.

As Lestat and Louis consume the vulnerable people around them, the narrative directly turns from their predatory status in their community to question how they can be *a part* of their community through the ages. Louis, who was once a rich, plantation owner, in similar fashion to the traditional vampiric plot, is horrified by his new-found immortality, begrudging Lestat for turning him and guiltily drinking blood from humans. To continue with their charade of

humanity, Rice's vampires must have the wealth to secure their lifestyle, and, throughout the ages, Louis and Lestat continually occupy the upper-class. Their long reach of predation extended through minority groups, the lower-class, and the young. Louis explains to a victim that "a young man around your age would have appealed to [Lestat]." (Rice 175) Not only does Lestat desire men but he preys, sexually and literally, upon the young to cause destruction, of heteronormative boundaries and life. In the end, it becomes imperative for Louis and Lestat to maintain a social status to give them free reign over hunting and expressing queer desire. Although, their total connection to their community is stifled due to their near constant predation, demonstrating the failure to fully assimilate to the human condition/community. Just as vampires want and fail to join human society, Louis fails to find pleasure in killing human beings. The breaking point ignites when Louis' mental torment/incapability to cope with being a vampire leads him leave Lestat and try to become a 'vegetarian' vampire, drinking the blood of animals and leaving society.

In rejecting his aristocratic, vampiric lifestyle, Louis is rejecting the unnatural, which includes his sexually charged relationship with Lestat. Because of this rejection, Lestat coerces Louis to return to him by reconstructing the family structure in the queer space, offering him Claudia as a daughter to parent with him. Conceding to Lestat's ploy, Louis fills the maternal role in raising Claudia, acting as the emotional/moral support of the family, while Lestat remains the patriarchal influence of their familial dynamic, encouraging violence. Both Lestat and Louis coddle Claudia as a child, even long after she has mentally matured into womanhood, causing a deep-seeded resentment and anger in Claudia. This anger is mostly focused at Lestat, as Claudia is able to see the moral differences between the two men and recognizes that Louis was manipulated into their family, much like herself. In the body of a child, Claudia is 'unable' to

express sexuality, yet Rice still plays with boundaries as she mentions the love between Claudia and Louis, sometimes parental and other times sexual. This destruction of agency is the ultimate catalyst toward Lestat's murder. Removing their controlling and violent 'father', Claudia ensures that Louis and herself are able to live as equals, separated not by age, sexuality, or Lestat. Because of their inability to integrate into society, Louis (not wanting to consume humans) and Claudia (wanting to be recognized as the aged vampire she really is) are constantly on the search for more vampires, believing at times that they are the last alive. This quest ultimately leads to the destruction of their found-family dynamic, proving once more that the vampiric condition cannot yet mirror the human traditional social structures.

Durocher concludes the overall influential, transgressive quality that Anne Rice introduces with her vampires, claiming that

> these attractive vampire protagonists do not enjoy torturing and killing humans, and instead seek to live peacefully within society, denying their desire for human blood. This shift away from the male vampire lead as danger to society is necessary in order for them to be a suitable love interests for human women. (Durocher 51)

It is through feminine desire that the vampire moves from predator to possible lover, and, while Rice was able to present queer desire and inversion of traditional social boundaries, the goal of domestic bliss is not completed realized at the end of *Interview with the Vampire*. *Twilight*, about thirty years after Rice, takes the gothic romance to an entirely new level fame, yet still doesn't manage to comprehensibly meld the genderfluid, queer experience into the domestic sphere. While Meyer does get closer to integrating the vampire into human society, ultimately, she fails

to uplift and progress the queer-coded Byronic hero, regressing from the constant build up from *Dracula* and *Interview with the Vampire*.

CHAPTER 7. *TWILIGHT*

Young Adult fiction (YA) truly found its "boom" when Stephanie Meyer published her love story between teenaged Isabel "Bella" Swan and vampire, Byronic hero Edward Cullen. The cultural phenomenon that was *Twilight* was equally as confusing for older audiences as it was enticing for young readers. Although many people would not consider the literary classics like *Wuthering Heights* and *Dracula* to be of the same caliber as a YA series, the implementation and execution of the modern Byronic vampire connects these novels through their transgressive manipulation of the archetype. Stoker ends his novel with the destruction of the progressive, unified Byronic vampire, instead regulating Jonathan and Mina, who were connected with the Count, to the Victorian gender roles that they felt comfortable within. However, Stoker does leave a slight ambiguity with the birth of Quincy Harker, suggesting that the repressed queer desire, as memory and socially suppressed gender/sexuality, will continue to exist, despite social norms. Meyer, in some ways imitating *Dracula*, readdresses the vampire through Rice's seductive lens, dragging the Byronic hero, who encourages the melding and transference of gender and sexuality, into a regressive state, instead ending her novel within the heteronormative space that, until this point, the gothic had sought to dismantle.

As the gothic tends to do, *Twilight* caused contention within the literary genre. Published in 2005, Meyer's novel conflicted strongly with feminist values, which claimed that Bella's submissive personality and damsel-like characteristics were only retreating into the hard-fought social expectations of femininity. The Byronic hero is introduced to younger audiences as the brooding, obsessive, controlling, and emotionally deranged bad-boy that is Edward Cullen. Many believed that Bella was too weak-willed, and that Edward was overflowing with toxic

masculinity, representing a power imbalance in their relationship, which would negatively impact the young audience obsessed with the material. Even though there was considerable concern for the material, Meyer's vampire romance continued to explode, defining the YA genre even today. Instead of continuing the queer discourse that flowed from her vampire contemporaries, Meyer managed to successfully infiltrate her vampires into the human community, going as far as to make them desirable to their human counterparts. Through this feminine desire, *Twilight* is able to engage with the supernatural in ways that the gothic hadn't been able to do yet. Interspecies romance and love, removed from queer desire, effectively reenacts the domestic bliss that Catherine and Heathcliff edged toward. The ultimate key to the successful, Byronic vampire is to form and maintain a genderfluid, bisexual entity through a unified identity (which is most often displayed through a male and female couple) that also removes the Byronic tragedy, ending with domestic bliss. Anna Silver very cleverly contends that "Bella and Edward are tamed, domesticated versions of Heathcliff and Cathy," (135) and they very much are. The ruin of Heathcliff and Catherine is their inability to end their novel as a unified, Byronic body, instead falling prey to societally acceptable conventions, violent masculinity, and the classic Byronic suffering. However, through their failure, Stoker was able to craft a Byronic hero *already* unified within one body that sought to spread the nonbinary, bisexual exploration into the Victorian social structure, seeking to tear apart the Victorian body. Dracula's failure was ignoring the femininity within himself and Mina, the pressures of Victorian values, and the reformation of the Victorian body. Most importantly, Stoker imbedded his genderfluid, bisexual entity in Quincy, the product of sexual/gender exploration, and implied the lasting existence of queer desire. Meyer, on the other hand, allows the Byronic to regress through

a heteronormative, reproductive, sexually charged relationship in which the Byronic curse is lifted, allowing the Byronic hero to end amidst domestic bliss.

Specifically, as Pramod Nayar mentions, "when masculinity is being constantly redefined," tracing and expanding upon lingering queer representations becomes more important as time progresses (73). As Edward and Bella navigate their own static gender performances during their relationship, it is the Byronic vampirism that *should have* led them to a unified, genderfluid, bisexual identity that can defy the Byronic curse of suffering through the domestication of the vampire. Instead of following along the trajectory mapped through *Dracula* and *Interview with the Vampire*, Meyer conceded to societal gender roles, moving *Twilight* away from the Byronic entity, which fuses gender roles and attempts to exist, immortally, in the domestic sphere.

In Bella Swan, Meyer has crafted the ideal blank slate onto which her white readers could superimpose their own identities onto. Described as "ivory-skinned" with a "sallow, unhealthy" tone, Bella admits that she "[doesn't] relate well to people [her] age," "never in harmony" with those in her life, and notoriously clumsy, explaining that she probably had a "glitch in the brain." (*Twilight* 10-1) This bleached, uncertain palate is the essential component to Bella's overall personality, which leads her through her awkward teenaged years into the sexually evocative, uniquely strong vampire that she desires to become. This weakened state of humanity is a shell in which Bella believes to be trapped in, never belonging or comfortable in her own identity/skin. In this way, with the discomfort, Bella's desire to be something outside of human mimics the transgender dysphoria that many young, queer adolescents experience while merging into adulthood. However, instead of engaging more comprehensibly with the gender/identity confusion, Bella's demure personality emphasizes her self-harming dependence to Edward,

believing herself to be so far below his station (in wealth, appearance, intelligence, etc.) that she is lucky to have garnered any of his attention at all. Most specifically, Bella is, at the very beginning of the series, literally embodying a strangely out of place (due to the modern setting) femininity that requires her to be subservient to her vampire. If Bella's extremely passive femininity corrupts the Swan/Cullen relationship, Edward's violent, overcompensated, hyper-realized masculinity is also at fault.

As the literal, exact opposite of Bella, Edward's characterization is firmly placed in his appeal to women. Meyer deploys her "sympathetic vampire," who "strives to vanquish his craving for human blood, works to help humans and preserve the social order, and not only falls in love with a human girl but constantly puts her well-being before his own." (Durham 284) Edward is introduced, not as an individual, but as a part of the "Cullen clan." The entirety of Forks, Washington, recognizes the unbelievable, bisexual beauty that the "family" portrays. Bella, gawking from across the cafeteria, comments that she couldn't look away

> because their faces, so different, so similar, were all devastatingly, inhumanly beautiful. They were faces you never expected to see except perhaps on the airbrushed pages of a fashion magazine. Or painted by an old master as the face of an angel. It was hard to decide who was the most beautiful — maybe the perfect blond girl, or the bronze-haired boy. (*Twilight* 19)

Showing no interest in her human peers, Bella is informed, by "the girl from [her] Spanish class, whose name [she] had forgotten," that the Cullens "all live together with Dr. Cullen and his wife," thus creating the family unit through play-acting as humans with convoluted connections/relationships to each other (*Twilight* 19-20). Meyer uses the genderfluid, bisexual energy of the vampire to emphasize the drastic contrast between the humans and the Cullens.

Everyone, male and female, accepts the unnatural beauty and sexual appeal of the Cullens, regardless of their presenting gender, which seems to make room for the expected, gothic exploration of sexuality. Although the vampire is recognized through bisexual attraction, Meyer firmly roots all expressed sexual attraction in heterosexuality. Edward, the only Cullen not seemingly, incestuously involved with a 'brother' or 'sister', cheekily foreshadows his and Bella's later relationship when he smirks, as if knowing, when Jessica (the forgotten 'friend') warns Bella to not "waste [her] time. He doesn't date. Apparently none of the girls here are good-looking enough for him." (*Twilight* 22) The shared amusement at Jessica's information indicates that both Edward *and* Bella know that Bella is *just* the correct amount of strange-outsider and vague appearance to interest the vampire.

Edward's domineering masculinity that is opposed by Bella's submissive femininity leads to an imbalanced and manipulative relationship dynamic between the couple, causing the ultimate demise of their connection. To move toward a more harmonized relationship, both must be willing to exchange gender identities, which happens through the predatory nature of vampirism. However, Edward refuses this melding of identities. Once aware of Edward's supernatural status, Bella expresses her extreme and obsessive desire to become immortal, wishing to never grow old and lose her youthful appeal. Edward, however, very strictly following the "good" vampire routine that is expected from the contemporary, loveable vampire, doesn't want to "damn Bella." (*New Moon* 37) Not only does Edward not want to harm Bella's physical body but he is also concerned for her soul. As Edward and Bella spend the first book learning each other and falling into the strict masculine/feminine imbalanced relationship, it is within *New Moon*, the second book of the series, where the codependency and manipulation come to a violent climax. Edward makes the executive decision to end their relationship, leaving

Bella in a yearlong catatonic state of grief and depression, proving the volatile state of their connection. In true gothic fashion though, both Edward and Bella decide they cannot live without each other and must traverse this mixed-species relationship with more care to reach a conclusion that best compliments their desires, immortality and domestication.

Bella explains later in *New Moon* that "[she] wanted to be fierce and deadly, someone no one would dare mess with … [she] wanted to be a vampire." (263) This desire, similar to Mina Harker's desire to be included with the men, in full control of her masculine identity, is the motivating cause of Bella's progression as a character. Meyer, the readers, Edward, and Bella herself all recognize that Bella is missing something in her exaggerated, overly feminine state. What she is missing is what Edward can only provide her; the vampiric, masculine strength that only the Byronic hero, within the gothic, can exchange. To become a strong, lasting couple that will find peace for eternity, Edward and Bella must exchange gender roles, encouraging a genderfluid transformation that will harmonize their souls. The feminist condemnation of Bella's fragile identity is not the only cause for change. Edward, too, must reevaluate his connection to the toxic masculinity he projects, stemming from his very Victorian, previously human life (as he was born in 1901). Edward's offensive masculinity must conform to the societal/cultural redefinition of gender just as much as Bella's submissive femininity must. From the Victorian era to modernity, gender roles and sexuality have seen an extremely drastic shift into a nonbinary state, engaging with the inherent sexlessness of the human identity. For many reasons, religion probably being the most prominent, the progression of gender/sexuality relations is constantly in an ebb and flow of acceptance. Although Meyer's *Twilight* series should (by reason of progression) allow for gender/sexuality exploration and redefinition, it presents out-of-century

gender roles for her characters, not immediately assigning a more modern conception of gender to her story.

In what is perhaps one of the most interesting character interactions throughout the series, Meyer, with a common romance story trend, invites further complication into Bella and Edward's relationship through Jacob Black, a Native American werewolf. Thinly tied to Bella through childhood, Jacob makes his contempt for the Cullen family public knowledge. The Quileute tribe of werewolves, unknown to Bella until *New Moon*, is the natural enemy to the Cullen family of vampires. As such, the love triangle between Jacob, Edward, and Bella becomes quite contentious. However, Bella and Edward, functioning within the Byronic identity, are in no way threatened by Jacob's interest, which eventually becomes problematic when Renesmee is born. Jacob Black's desire and attraction for Bella, once again referencing Eve Sedgwick's concept of homosocial desire, through a complete understanding of imprinting and biology, indicates a lingering, passive, and underlying attraction for Edward. Meyer's werewolves are subject to a mysterious force of attraction and undying love known as imprinting. Jacob, like most all other werewolves of his tribe, longs to imprint on someone and become a unified soul between two bodies. As such, at the end of the series, in *Breaking Dawn*, Jacob is finally able to understand his obsessive desire for Bella when he imprints on her daughter, suggesting that Bella was a substitute for Jacob's interest until his life-partner could be born. Since Bella is not able to produce through cellular fission, half of Renesmee's identity descends from Edward, thus indicating that the strained, disagreeable relationship between Jacob and Edward can express sexual desire. It is doubtful that Stephanie Meyer intended for this biological loophole to exist within her series, but it does allow further connection to the complex, homosocial/queer relationship between Count Dracula and Jonathan Harker. Through this biological transference

of sexual desire (which moved through Bella and Edward), the argument can be made that in the end, Jacob Black is the only character in *Twilight* that can conceivably occupy a unified, genderfluid entity.

In the end, Meyer does, somewhat, amend her rigid, often religious, gender expectations through "vamping" Bella. As the series moves toward her death and immortality, Bella becomes more confident and comfortable in her found family. Edward, on the other hand, manages to let go of his controlling, domineering tendencies toward their relationship, trusting in Bella's abilities, strength, and honesty. Bella and Edward, through understanding and connecting together, are able to represent the iconic, heterosexual relationship, which solidifies with reproduction. As Renesmee, their half-human half-vampire child, is born, she becomes the heterosexual mirror of Mina and Jonathan's baby Quincy, but she also signifies Bella's complete transition into the Byronic vampirism (that Edward occupies) and adulthood/motherhood. The last book of the series, *Breaking Dawn*, moves completely away from the demure, self-conscious, clumsy girl that Edward knew. After "vampification," Bella becomes the bisexual icon, like the other Cullens, and embraces the masculinity that comes with her undead status. Edward, taking a back seat to Bella's new identity, assumes the soft, caring, and passionate persona of a love-struck father basking in his wife's power and appeal. Their family unit, complete with an almost immortal child, introduces the gothic mode into the domestic bliss that allows for the complimentary blend of fierce, supernatural violence (key to the gothic space) and warm, homebound domesticity (key to the romantic genre). Through the *Twilight* series, the modern conceptions of identity, either sexually or with gender, are reproduced, limiting the Byronic presence from continuing farther into modern literature, intending to deconstruct social constraints and promote self-realization.

CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSION

It is clear, overall, that the Byronic hero, which inherently embodies rejection, exists as a mode of gender/sexuality expression. Immersing the Byronic in the gothic space only strengthens the progression of gender/sexual relations, by exploring repression and vampiric desire. By mapping the Byronic hero from Lord Byron to Stephanie Meyer, engaging with gothic game-changers along the way, not only is queer desire explored and demonstrated but heteronormativity is thwarted. Just as the Byronic hero seeks to defy society in all ways, the unified body is destroyed over and over again by the rigid Victorian institution, yet the unified entity always finds a way back into the gothic. Lord Byron constructed the Byronic, Emily Brontë reimaged the Byronic as a unified presence, Bram Stoker presented the Byronic as destructive, unified body, Anne Rice propelled the Byronic into the queer experience, successfully uniting the genderfluid/bisexual body and inviting sexual appeal to the monster, and, most modernly, Stephanie Meyer regressed the unified, openly genderfluid/bisexual Byronic presence into heteronormative domestication.

As modern, gothic vampire novels continue to develop, the push from Rice's genderfluid, bisexual vampires would lead the Byronic hero, which already supports rejection of societal expectations, into a genderless space, becoming a champion of desire absent from the constraints of gender and sexuality conformity. As the gothic continues to evolve, the repressed desires, such as queer desire, gender exchange, etc., will change, morphing to fit the anxieties and fears of modernity. The strains of rejected sexualities are already being expressed as transgender and asexual erasure continues to blight the LGBTQ+ community, stunting growth and self-expression. The goal of this paper is to map the Byronic hero as a vehicle for gender/sexuality

expression through its conception to modern novels, hoping to end with the expression that the Byronic is a perfect archetype in which genderfluidity and bisexuality can flourish, removing boundaries and promoting acceptance.

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