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The Mundane Monster: Authoritarian Masculinity in Late-Victorian Gothic Literature

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the vicissitudes of masculinity as it presents across three late-Victorian novels in order to unpack the anxieties produced by the shift of power from aristocratic to professional communities and the tensions this shift produced between and within those communities. The various models of masculinity on display in the examined works of Gothic literature operate on ideas that came into play during the period surrounding sexuality and gender structures. Furthermore, each work takes on a particular perspective on masculinity as it works on the physical body and how that body interacts with others of its kind. The common themes of mutation, metamorphosis, and bodily decay or degeneration stand in relief to the ideal of masculinity they implicitly reference, which points toward the focal point of power relations between men and the world they inhabit as well as between each other.

Chapter One examines the world of the Victorian professional man as it exists in Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. This formulation of masculinity is modeled both on a rejection of aristocracy in favor of a professional cohort of male socialization and on an implicit moral structure which works on a continuum of degeneracy to sophistication. Chapter Two focuses on Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and its portrayal of the late-Victorian aristocratic man in the form of the dandy. This text, of the three, comes closest to incorporating an explicit homosexual valence into the interactions of the male characters, so the analysis here will adapt Eve Sedgwick's adaptation of René Girard's work on "erotic triangles." However, instead of the typical formulation (as seen in *Dracula*) of two male rivals competing for the female romantic/erotic object, *Dorian Gray*'s triangle consists of three men, blurring the lines between homosocial desire and homoerotic desire. Chapter Three traces the reification of heterosexual masculinity in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*.

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It is quite normal, I have been told, to feel that a thesis is never truly finished, only abandoned. The process that has produced this work has left me with that sense on a certain level. The countless hours that have been dedicated to this project have, I hope, been reflected in its most finished form. I know that they are not the only reason for its completion, however. So, I feel it is necessary to express my utmost gratitude to everyone who guided and supported me throughout the process.

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Also, a collective thank you to my fellow students in the HHP cohort. I have felt very lucky to take part in this program alongside you all. As a group, I think our cooperation and support of one another has been so important for this process, and I am looking forward to reading the incredible theses you have produced. Special thanks to Tim and Emily, without whom I would have had no one to complain to.

INTRODUCTION

       In Volume 1 of his *History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault reflects upon the history of the

nineteenth century up to the present, remarking that "the image of the imperial prude is

emblazoned on our restrained, mute, and hypocritical sexuality."[1] This prudishness that today

appears commonplace—one could even go as far as to say it appears natural—really solidified as

the norm during the Victorian era. In particular, the latter half of the century was host to a series

of aggressive, conservative campaigns to codify sexual desires and practices within the legal and

medical spheres, in order to construct and categorize sexual behavior within structures of

acceptability and recognizability. With this came the privatization of sexuality and its absorption

into the systems of social reproduction mediated through the nuclear family, eroding the prior,

eighteenth-century public/private division between male and female social spheres. As a result,

as many theorists have observed, there came to be an inherent conflict between genders based in

morality, which was dependent upon and influenced by the highly general language by which

gender was conceived. Essentially split into a masculine and feminine binary, the former became

associated with a certain objectivity and rationality while the latter became associated with

emotionality and subjectivity. This split subsequently privatized any discourse on difference with

relation to the sexual/gendered norms, which is to say that these discourses were silenced.

       The Victorian man (elsewhere referred to in this paper as the "ideal masculine") was born

out of the period of industrialization that characterized the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

This new set of social norms and expectations was defined by the new prioritization of economic

productivity and the fetishization of the commodity. Literary scholar Herbert Sussman writes,

"The sexuality of economic man was now governed by the sexual code of middle-class

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[1] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley, vol. 1 (New York: Vintage, 1990), 3.

morality."[2] What this meant was that masculinity depended on its own reification through the imperative of marriage. The common archetypes of the father and the professional thus came together to form the means by which men would be recognized as men. These two types informed each other, with the father being the breadwinner of the family and thus relying on the income he made as a professional in order to fulfill that expectation. This, in turn, produced the socially threatening image of the "bachelor," whose resistance to marriage not only hinted at a transgressive because not-heterosexual desire but also at a consequent unmanliness. Simply, because his masculine economic power was not redirected into the maintenance of the family, there was the potential for a decidedly forbidden pursuit of the gratification of desire. In other words, the pursuit of pleasure. Under these constraints, sexuality itself became industrialized. It was no longer acceptable as a means to achieve pleasure, rather it was expected that sex confined within the marriage would serve only one purpose: reproduction.

This demand that men split their identity between that of the husband and that of the professional businessman produced an inherent contradiction. The ideals of the two roles were diametrically opposed. The businessman was in a survivalist competition with his fellow professionals for the accumulation of wealth, and thus of masculine power, while the husband was expected to behave gently toward his wife and children, embodying a feminized caretaker role within the private sphere. This opposition led to a rift between the man and his family life. Sussman writes, "The centering of emotional life in the home generated a counterreaction that drove men to seek an affective life outside the home, not only with mistresses and prostitutes but also with other men."[3] The desire to recreate the homosocial sphere of bygone eras as a response

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[2] Herbert L. Sussman, *Masculine Identities: The History and Meanings of Manliness* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2012), 93.

[3] Sussman, 95.

to the overwhelming demands of managing two contrary identities is the predominant idea that will guide my upcoming readings of late-Victorian Gothic masculinities.

Contemporaneously with this regimented codification of terms relating to sex/gender/sexuality, the late-Victorian era saw the production of a variation on the Gothic form which had—much like the now-familiar social codes—been developing since the late-eighteenth century, with most sources agreeing on Horace Walpole's 1763 novel *The Castle of Otranto* as the first to coin the form. So, following one hundred years of development, the late-Victorian Gothic updated the genre in ways that directly reflected the newfound anxieties associated with the vague yet vital demand for social conformity—particularly for men. At its inception, and for the majority of its existence until the late-nineteenth century, the Gothic form in literature relied heavily on its recognizable structure. Typically characterized by a fantastical (here alluding to an uncanny indistinguishability between the "real" and the supernatural) world, these novels, largely produced by British authors, were spatially or chronologically dislocated from Britain itself. This meant that they were frequently set in the further reaches of continental Europe and, as an additional distance, in centuries past. Walpole's work is exemplary of this tradition, wherein the eponymous castle is located in Italy, and Walpole even attempted to pass off the work as a found manuscript from the sixteenth century. The ominous castle was also a recurring motif in these works, often shrouding some illicit secret which usually alluded to incest or intrafamilial murder. Furthermore, the prevalence of Catholic aesthetics, such as the inclusion of crypts, convents, or monasteries, reflected the British anxiety surrounding its separation from continental Europe as a result of the Reformation and the subsequent growth in popularity of Protestantism. This anxiety was further compounded by the French Revolution, which explicitly threatened England's rigid class structure with a mass-scale uprising. Meanwhile, in the late-

Victorian Gothic this anxiety returned home to England, with the literature of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, and particularly in the last fifteen years, taking place predominantly in England and, moreover, embodying recognizably contemporary social divisions and the problems that arose from them.

In addition to the structural differences in these applications of the Gothic form, there was also a marked difference in gender. Though authorship was somewhat evenly distributed, much of the popular Gothic literature of the early to mid nineteenth century could be categorized under the label "Female Gothic." At a time when the public-private divisions were still relatively correlated with the markers of gender, the Gothic provided the ideal form through which to examine women's social categorization as well as their sexuality. These novels also came to be associated with an emphasis on an elicitation of empathetic sentimentality and were marked as dangerous to the propriety of the ideal feminine as a result. So, because they were exploring in coded terms the transgressive discourses on feminine sociality and sexuality, they were categorized as dangerous for their capacity to rile the sentiments of their readers, who were unsurprisingly figured as feminine. The late-Victorian Gothic, on the other hand, became a sort of reactionary literary movement as a result, with a largely male authorship that corresponded with a newborn interest within the form in the social mandates for normative masculinity. Despite these differences, the Gothic has always maintained a dedication to one fundamental aspect. Or, perhaps more accurately, this fundamental aspect has allowed for the malleability of application demonstrated across the breadth of the form. Literary critic William Patrick Day describes this formal foundation in his 1985 work *In the Circles of Fear and Desire: A Study of Gothic Fantasy*: "[T]he Gothic world, which is in the Gothic fantasy the world beyond death, has no form or shape of its own. It is unknowable in conventional terms…that which is unnameable

and unknowable is given name and form, made knowable through the conventional language of narrative."[4] Thus, it is apparent how the Gothic form provides the perfect mechanism through which the anxiety produced by the unknowability—and more importantly the unspeakability—of these social codes could be unraveled.

In order to background the forthcoming examination of a few of these late-Victorian Gothic texts, it will be helpful to consider some contemporary psychiatric texts from the time. The Gothic, particularly in its later iterations, is familiar largely in its relation to the structuring of the mind as analogous to the iceberg, where the surface only hints at the depth it actually occupies. This manifested in a division of the self into a private and a public entity. Henry Maudsley, a British psychiatrist working during the Victorian period, published an essay on "The Double Brain," which exemplified the repressive demand for the division of public and private selves during this period, arguing for a link between degeneration, madness, and theories of evolution on a physiological basis. Essentially, the mind was physically divided into diametrically opposed halves. He writes:

> More striking still is the example of the person who is possessed by alternate voices, the one profane and blasphemous, the other reverent and devout; or, of one who is to all intents and purposes two selves at the same time, his real self having his natural feelings and seeing things in their true light, and his morbid self with unnatural feelings and perverted notions, the two engaged perpetually in an inconclusive conflict which drives him to the deepest despair and perhaps even to suicide.[5]

In this split, the function of the brain was split between the hemispheres, with the left housing the civilized and rational public self and the right the uneducated and evolutionarily backward right hemisphere. In this formulation, the former could easily be aligned with the ideal masculine and the latter with the feminine (though certainly not describing her in the ideal state). However, this

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[4] William Patrick Day, *In the Circles of Fear and Desire: A Study of Gothic Fantasy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 14.

[5] Henry Maudsley, "The Double Brain," *Mind* 14, no. 54 (1889): 184.

could also be read alongside the anxieties about evolutionary degeneration that emerged in the period as a result of Charles Darwin's theory, published in *On the Origin of Species* in 1859. Along these lines, the former self aligned with the repressed, civilized man and the latter with the atavistic, degenerated—above all uncontrolled—criminal.

Alongside Maudsley's study, German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis with Especial Reference to the Contrary Sexual Instinct: A Medico-Forensic Study* (written in 1886 and translated into English in 1892) was interested in the origins of homoerotic desire investigated through and examination of medical and legal cases. He argued that "moral degeneracy" in the form of homosexuality could be inherited, and, moreover, that "in order to maintain one's self on such a height, a constant struggle between natural impulses and morals, between sensuality and morality, is required. Only characters endowed with strong wills are able to completely emancipate themselves from sensuality and share in that pure love from which spring the noblest joys of human life."[6] These two examples of psychiatric texts from the fin de siècle spell out in rather clear terms the ways that identity formation for men during this period was hindered by these social constraints, leaving their identities inherently fragmented as a result.

The creation of a new "type" of man—previously unrecognized and uncategorized— allowed for the resultant construction of the homosexual as a threat to the moral fiber of a society, and indeed a nation. That the threat of homosexuality seems almost exclusively attached to the social governance of masculine behavior is significant in the context of the period's legal focus on sexual deviance. Essentially, that deviance was gendered, emphasizing the male's susceptibility to homosexuality and the female's susceptibility to prostitution. Exemplary of this

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[6] Richard Von Krafft-Ebing, *Psychopathia Sexualis: With Especial Reference to Contrary Sexual Instinct; A Medico-Forensic Study* (Forgotten Books, 2012), 5.

distinction is the Criminal Law Amendment Act, passed in 1885, which among other things criminalized "gross indecency between males" (through the Labouchere Amendment) and expanded legal protections against prostitution.[7] The linguistic ambiguity of "gross indecency" allowed legal authorities to interpret—and thereby produce—the constitutive qualities of homosexual behavior at will, and moreover reproduced the traditionally Gothic ambiguity in an official piece of legislation. This publicization of the previously private and implicit unacceptability of homosexuality allowed for the establishment of a clearly delineated and socially enforced standard of behavior in late-Victorian males.

Krafft-Ebing's radical work was one of the earliest to explicitly address homosexuality, and 20th century theorist Eve Sedgwick provides a contextualization for his work in her book *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, in which she argues that, as opposed to female social bonds, male homosociality was radically discontinuous from male homosexuality.[8] Particularly for the late-Victorian male, the ominous, silent threat of homosexuality was destabilizing for the construction of a traditional male identity, making both homophobia and homoeroticism necessary for male bonding, and through it the maintenance of patriarchal structures.. My focus in this thesis is on an analysis of the formation of the late-Victorian ideal of masculine gender identity through the mechanisms of the male homosocial community, and, moreover, how that ideal potentially hinders the formation of an integrated individual identity. Particularly, I am looking at how these ideals are perpetuated through the rhythms of homophobic terrorism, as Sedgwick terms it, within the male community, but also

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[7] Robert William Burnie, "The Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1885." (British Library, 1885), https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/the-criminal-law-amendment-act-1885, 6-7.

[8] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 2-3.

how the novel, specifically the Gothic novel, reproduced this process within the individual male—both the heterosexual and the homosexual.

In each of my chapters I address one fin-de-siècle Gothic text—*The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and *Dracula*, respectively—positioning the first two against the latter. Where *Jekyll and Hyde* and *Dorian Gray* are wrapped up in a very traditionally fin-de-siècle formulation of open secrecy and the preservation of reputation—whether gentlemanly in the case of Jekyll or aristocratic in the case of Dorian—*Dracula* is conflicted in its presentation of the stability of British, male, bourgeois subjecthood.

Of course, each of these texts comes with a hulking baggage of criticism, particularly dominated by the, by now, quite familiar queer theoretical interpretation. In the two earlier works, this takes the form of a very deliberate and literal fragmentation of the self. In the case of *Jekyll and Hyde*, Dr. Henry Jekyll develops a potion to allow his repressed self—in the form of the atavistic, criminal Mr. Edward Hyde—to emerge and act without the repressive impulses ingrained in Jekyll as a part of the professional class of Victorian gentlemen. This formulation articulates the late-Victorian anxieties about the relation between the establishment of a new professional class of men and the constructedness of criminal deviance in opposition to it. Hyde not only embodies the fear of a descent into lower-class degeneracy, but also a similar degeneracy associated with the aristocracy. As Steven D. Arata notes, "While his impulsiveness and savagery, his violent temper, and his appearance all mark Hyde as lower class and atavistic, his vices are clearly those of a monied gentleman…for Stevenson's contemporaries the conflation of upper and lower classes into a single figure of degeneracy would not have seemed unusual."[9] (235). Stevenson's novella is furthermore populated almost exclusively by these

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[9] Stephen D. Arata, "The Sedulous Ape: Atavism, Professionalism, and Stevenson's Jekyll and Hyde," *Criticism* 37, no. 2 (1995): 235.

bourgeois men, identifying a hypocrisy at the core of that perspective. Ultimately, Hyde is not a representation of a degeneration distanced from them by class, rather he embodies the Victorian gentleman in his youth, the one each of the appropriately signified gentlemen in the novel has repressed. So, we can see how the doubleness of this identity emerges both in spite of and as a result from the repressive mandate to which these men subjected themselves.

Alternately, in *Dorian Gray*, this expression of the repressed self is managed through what I identify as a "confessional form." Expanding on Judith Butler's essay "Bodily Confessions," I posit that the cycle of production and fragmentation of the self is a particularly relevant Gothic motif in this application, and, for Wilde, these sorts of confessional moments between men play a fundamental role in the construction (and destruction) of the novel's central community of men. The self is only capable of being produced through its own fragmentation, and each of these fragments maintain an oppressive wholeness in themselves making them incapable of being integrated at all. Rather than confining the fragmentation of identity to Dorian and his uncanny double in the picture, Wilde expands this fragmentary potential to each of the notable male characters in the novel. Each man is made of secrets and participates in the production of himself through the confession of these secrets to his fellows.

The dynamic between secrecy and confession does not directly correlate with the private and public spheres. In fact, it is rare that the novel depicts a moment of confession that is truly public. Rather it mutilates the form, producing the secret confession, one that takes place between men, thus allowing for the production of the self of the confessor while also creating the basis for the homosocial bond. This already precarious system becomes even more destabilized with the introduction of the character of Dorian Gray, whose perversion of masculinity through the deliberate disintegration of his own identity threatens the collapse of the carefully maintained

boundary between public-facing respectability and the hedonism it represses. The character essentially functions as a succubus, enticing his fellow men (through both homosocial and homosexual desire) to share their secrets with him. Although, under the conditions laid out prior, this confession would aid in the formation of a community of men, Dorian exists outside of the moral structures that require the carefully managed secrecy to exist in the first place as a result of the splitting of his identity between his unblemished, epicene physical body and his portrait, which sits locked away in his school room, tarnishing in relation to the sins of his liberated, mobile physical body. Thus, due to his ability to ignore the repercussions of a bad reputation, the traditional dynamics of power that govern the secret homosocial confession are upended. Dorian's mere existence violates those implicit rules, namely that the confession must remain contained within the homosocial sphere, where it functions as a commiseration between men who, by the novel's logic, demonstrate physically the effects of their sin.

In *Dracula*, we see the synthesis of this apparent split between homo- and heterosexual maleness. Homosexual desire is contained within and figured as continuous with the surface of heterosexual identity, and desire (of either inclination) is explicitly constitutive of the ideal Victorian heterosexual male. Essentially, desire becomes tantamount to identity, making the deliberate suppression of that desire tantamount to a form of spiritual death. In this way, the figure of the vampire is overwhelmingly simplistic in its self-definitional capacity. It desires blood and is defined by its lack of it, therefore affirming its predatory, sexually-charged identity whenever it fulfills that desire. The vampire, an extreme social pariah particularly under the constraints of late-Victorian codes, is ironically un-self-conscious in expressing and fulfilling its desire, juxtaposing it with the various types of Victorian man on display in the narrative. The latter group is defined by a refusal to admit desire at all, thus negating the possibility of

individuating themselves as men, especially heterosexual men. To put it in psychoanalytic terms, these men, who were subjected to maturation under the constraints and codes of Victorian England experienced unsuccessful psychosexual development which resulted in an inability to act upon sexual desire. Working within a framework established by critic Barry McCrea, in which he argues that *Dracula* envisages the world of Victorian heterosexuality from the perspective of the homosexual closet. In my assessment, this contradictory (and quintessentially Gothic) covetous and apprehensive gaze extends in both directions, out from the inside of the closet and into it from outside. The Victorian heterosexual male as he is figured in *Dracula* envies the divisive effect of the closet and desires an escape from the authoritarian control required to maintain intelligibility within a highly regulated system of gender and sexuality. The vampire is ultimately a reflection of the monstrosity produced through the repressive English ideals of masculine behavior. When Jonathan looks into the mirror expecting to see the Count behind him and sees only himself, it affects this substitution of the desiring monster for the conventional man, removing any possibility of a reification of that sought after, desire-less ideal.

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CHAPTER 1 | Masculine Substances: The Self-Making Material of *Jekyll and Hyde*

Though the title of the novel has mutated into a reductive cultural shorthand referring to

the triumph of one's private, repressed desires over one's civilized, controlled public persona,

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is as much concerned with the effect of the inverse:

the domination of the degenerative hedonist by the civilized professional gentleman that allows

for the formation of—and inherently predisposes to disintegration—the insular community of

men. Aside from M.D. (Doctor of Medicine), the professional titles of Robert Louis Stevenson's

fragmented protagonist Dr. Henry Jekyll include D.C.L. (Doctor of Civil Laws), L.L.D. (Doctor

of Laws), F.R.S. (Fellow of the Royal Society), and others unspecified[10]. Literary critic Stephen

Arata notes this multivalent effect of Jekyll-Hyde's fracturing, writing, "Indeed, what makes

Jekyll and Hyde compelling is the way it turns the class discourses of atavism and criminality

back on the bourgeoisie itself."[11] That Stevenson takes such pains to note Jekyll's socially

authenticated professional—and therefore civilized—identity not only functions to incite shock

in the reader once the doctor's final confession formally unveils the degenerated alter ego of

Hyde, but also to situate him among a class of fellow professionals, each with their own "Hyde"

threatening to crack the surface of their civility. So, when critic Jack Halberstam argues that the

novel "creates a self within a self" and thus "constructs a depth to subjectivity,"[12] this goes

against the common interpretation of the split personality as representing the conflict between

internal and external identity (self and other). The double is not merely a grotesque yet precise

split of self from other; instead there is, as Halberstam's assessment indicates, a stacking of

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[10] Robert Louis Stevenson, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, ed. Martin A. Danahay (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2015), 38-9.

[11] Stephen D. Arata, "The Sedulous Ape: Atavism, Professionalism, and Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde*," *Criticism* 37, no. 2 (1995): 236.

[12] Jack Halberstam, *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters.* (Durham; London: Duke University Press, 1995), 55.

selves within the space of the body that threatens the stability of a unitary identity. William Patrick Day explains the gothic male protagonist as, "a victim, but he is overtly the victim of his own desires and actions."[13] Each man's reputation is dependent upon self-denial and the prohibition of his own pleasure.

Though the novel's two-in-one protagonist features in the title, he does not possess his own narrative until his final written confession, which is not found until after he has committed suicide. Instead, Jekyll-Hyde haunts the narrative through the voices of his/their bourgeois comrades: the lawyer Gabriel Utterson, Dr. Hastie Lanyon, and Richard Enfield. Of the three, Utterson bears the primary responsibility of narration and of propulsive narrative action, which aligns with his reputation of being "the last reputable acquaintance and the last good influence in the lives of downgoing men."[14] The matter of homosocial influence draws out the requirement of the integrity of the individual for the integrity of the community. In other words, Utterson has a vested interest in other men remaining in line with late-Victorian male virtues. As critic Eve Sedgwick writes, "Unlike title, wealth, or land, the terms that defined the gentleman were not clearly and simply hereditary but had somehow to be earned by being a particular kind of person who spent time and money in particular ways."[15] This deliberate, meticulous process of constructing gentlemanly identity therefore produces an inherent anxiety in its subjects that results in the need to maintain the integrity of the community through the integrity of the self.

Arata makes it a point that this distinction between the civilized and the degenerated man as written in terms of one's proximity to the bourgeois middle class is something that applies in both directions. He writes, "Late-Victorian pathologists routinely argued that degeneration was

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[13] Day, 18.

[14] Stevenson, 33.

[15] Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, 177.

as endemic to a decadent aristocracy as to a troglodytic proletariat."[16] Surrounded by these anxieties about the potential permeability of class structures from both directions correlates to the anxiety that stems from the permeability of identity presented in the novel and gets at the heart of Hyde's unconventional doubleness. Arata explains further, "While his impulsiveness and savagery, his violent temper, and his appearance all mark Hyde as lower class and atavistic, his vices are clearly those of a monied gentleman."[17] However, this does not account for Hyde's viscerally off-putting and unsettling affect. While his body is physically integrated into Jekyll's, they wear different skins, and Hyde's carries an inexplicable "feeling of deformity"[18] that is immediately recognizable to gentlemen like Utterson and Enfield. His desires are also not his own, but Jekyll's and consequently reflect the repressed desires of the men in the doctor's social circle. So, not only does Hyde's emergence compel the disintegration of Jekyll's carefully constructed identity as a gentleman and consummate professional, but it threatens to do the same to the other men with whom he comes into contact.

The exemplary mechanism of this desire in the novel is the consumption of mind altering substances, such as alcohol, which is most clearly associated with indulgence in the novel. Wine, in particular, offers associations with decorum, allowing for the social unity that the professional male characters require. However, it also primes those characters for transgression of the strict virtue codes that define and unite them, therefore threatening the integrity of the morality of the community. It is the preferred lubricant for social engagements, the acceptable mode of transgression, thereby creating an implicit organization or hierarchization of substances corresponding to their purpose. It inscribes the interactions between men with the moral virtues

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[16] Arata, "The Sedulous Ape: Atavism, Professionalism, and Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde*," 235.

[17] Arata, "The Sedulous Ape: Atavism, Professionalism, and Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde*," 235.

[18] Stevenson, 37.

associated with their class and gender, while always hinting at the potential for overindulgence. The risk of addiction is particularly relevant to the construction of Victorian masculinity, which was almost entirely predicated upon the capacity for self control. The inclusion of wine in key scenes for the novel's narrative development accompanies the disintegration of Jekyll's professional identity, acting as a foil to his more reactive choice of intoxicant. Wine is a double of Jekyll's concoction, but it also maintains its own inherent contradictory characteristics, much like Hyde. Sigmund Freud's 1919 essay "The Uncanny" explains that the uncanny effect of the double stems from, "All the strivings of the ego that were frustrated by adverse circumstances, all the suppressed acts of volition that fostered the illusion of free will."[19] Wine is a guarantor of self-restraint and a social inhibitor ensuring unity under the group ethos, while simultaneously disinhibiting these men and inviting them to succumb to the compulsions that they must repress in order to maintain their gentlemanly identities. In this way, the duplicity of wine reveals the duplicity inherent to Victorian professional masculinity, while simultaneously acting as a conduit for the transgression of the stark moral boundaries set in place by these social structures.

The ascribed moral value of the range of intoxicants is organized hierarchically, with wine connoting the superior moral character of the drinker when compared to other intoxicants. It is the drink of the upper class, providing a basis for socialization within the community of their fellows, while revealing the social codes that they are actively emulating, considering they are not truly upper class themselves. Jekyll himself is famous for hosting lavish dinners which serve as sites for homosociality, and the attendants are described by Stevenson as, "All intelligent, reputable men and all judges of good wine."[20] The wine here is the punctuation on their

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[19] Sigmund Freud, "The Uncanny", in *The Uncanny*, trans. David McLintock (London: Penguin Ltd., 2003), 143.
[20] Stevenson, 45.

character. Not only do they share in the prescribed characteristics of Victorian male sociability—

intelligence, good reputation—but their ability to judge a good wine is of equally great

importance. The formal doubling of "all" reinforces wine as a provider of social cohesion that

homogenizes the group of men along recognizable lines of implied respectability. Furthermore,

judgment is a part of cognitive action, placing it high in the hierarchy of human actions and

implying a civilized sensibility. Wine, then, by working as a common touchstone and shared

intoxicant is instrumental in constructing their social personas. It acts as a reference point, as

well as an indicator of wellbeing. When Poole, Jekyll's butler, visits Utterson to express his

concern over Jekyll's state, Utterson continually notes that the wine he has offered Poole is left

undrunk. He observes that, "Even now, he sat with the glass of wine untasted on his knee, and

his eyes directed to a corner of the floor."[21] For Utterson, Poole's sincerity of feeling regarding

Jekyll's potential endangerment is confirmed by the fact that he never touches his wine. The

drink therefore becomes a barometer for social harmony, and Jekyll's disintegration—and the

accompanying disintegration of his social circle—is signified by the context in which wine is

consumed or not consumed.

Jekyll's drug functions as the inverted mirror image of wine because it removes the

veneer of respectability that is constitutive of Victorian masculine identity. Even its physical

description by Dr. Lanyon indicates its contrary effect. In his journal, he writes, "The mixture,

which was at first of a reddish hue, began, in proportion as the crystals melted, to brighten in

color, to effervesce audibly, and to throw off small fumes of vapour."[22] The potion's original

state could be considered identical to wine, given its "reddish hue," but the transformation of the

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[21] Stevenson, 59.
[22] Stevenson, 74.

liquid—a precursor to Jekyll's own transformation—is the sign of the moral decline it threatens to, if not enact, expose. It no longer bears resemblance to that familiar intoxicant, taking on a volatile and uncertain power through its transformation. It also assumes its own power, "throwing off vapors" breaking free of that control to which wine is subject. Wine, of course, offers a similar effect as the potion. That is, it alters the mental state of these men, lowering inhibition and allowing them to succumb to the gaiety that they deny themselves in other parts of their lives.

However, implicit to wine is the assumption that this transformed state is highly controlled, and the social foundation of the drinking of wine ensures that the effects will be felt not only by one, but all. Jekyll, himself, upon first experiencing the transformative effects of his potion writes, "I knew myself, at the first breath of this new life, to be more wicked, tenfold more wicked, sold a slave to my original evil; and the thought, in that moment, braced and delighted me like wine."[23] The potion awakens the dormant misanthropy of Jekyll's character. Or, perhaps instead of awakening it (which implies it is attached to his unconscious mind), it breaks down those aspects of his conscious mind which demand that it remain secret. He removes himself from polite society, choosing to isolate himself in his "closet," a space that carries its own association with sexual transgression in the form of homosexuality. The comparison of his newly unbridled, physically monstrous self to the intoxication that wine effects exemplifies the mischaracterization of wine in the eyes of polite Victorian society. Rather than existing as opposing forces, wine and the potion exist on a continuum, with wine simply embodying a watered down version of Jekyll's concoction. Much in the same way, the identities of Jekyll and Hyde are "selves within selves" as Halberstam remarks, and, indeed, the name

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[23] Stevenson, 78.

"Hyde" suggests this outright. When Utterson goes to visit Lanyon, Stevenson writes, "Dr. Lanyon sat alone over his wine."[24] Though Stevenson reserves most of the appearances of wine for social functions, the rare occurrence of someone drinking wine alone raises the idea of overindulgence. Overindulgence becomes a form of misanthropy itself, mirroring the way in which Jekyll drinking the potion precedes his excision from polite society and subsequent overindulgence in socially unacceptable behavior. Suddenly, the context in which wine is consumed becomes the determining factor of its effect on the morality of the drinker, and drinking alone becomes a warning sign for a possible further transgression of the social boundaries by which consumption of wine is governed and which wine, in turn, governs. Wine as a motif thus undermines the purported morality of these men, demonstrating the performativity of their social behaviors by aligning the effects of the potion with the similar, but lesser, effects of wine.

Utterson is the character who is perhaps most keenly aware of the balancing act that is required for the performance of masculinity. He is the epitome of the Victorian stoic, described as being, "austere with himself; [drinking] gin when he was alone, to mortify a taste for vintages."[25] Once again, Stevenson splits alcohol into categories, clearly identifying wine as an indulgence designated for social gatherings, whereas liquors like gin are coded as less indulgent, even going so far as to elicit a somewhat anti-social sentiment. This is particularly apparent in Utterson being "austere with himself" by only drinking gin when he is alone, saving wine for when he is socially engaged. Furthermore, Utterson explicitly denying himself the indulgence of drinking wine alone demonstrates a strict adherence to these Stoic ideals in his self-imposed

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[24] Stevenson, 39.
[25] Stevenson 33.

austerity. He is not utterly removed from the occasional indulgence, however, frequently joining Jekyll's dinner parties as a welcome presence as Stevenson writes, "At friendly meetings, and when the wine was to his taste, something eminently human beaconed from his eyes; something indeed which never found its way into his talk, but which spoke not only in these silent symbols of the after-dinner face, but more often and loudly in the acts of his life."[26] Here, wine undoes the austere Utterson, transforming his typically well-regulated professional persona into one that is much warmer and emotionally connected to those around him. This deliberate and carefully managed distance from his fellow men demonstrates the way that homosociality and homosexuality could easily become conflated with one another. Notably, wine, which is intended to produce a sense of community among the gentlemen in the novel, is the drink that Utterson explicitly avoids. Moreover, it is the key in dismantling his carefully crafted and strictly imposed attitude toward solitude and the moral fortitude that accompanies it. It is only at these dinner parties where he allows himself to slip into a more comfortable skin and only doing so among others who are taking part in the same ritual. Wine is the key that unlocks these tightly woven Stoic ideals that govern Victorian masculinity, showcasing the constructed nature of the personas that each of these men adopt. Jekyll is Utterson's foil, then. Each is defined by their drink of choice; for Utterson, it is the gin that he drinks when he is alone, and for Jekyll, it is the potion that physically transforms him into the repulsive Hyde. If these drinks of choice exist on a continuum of morality as mentioned previously, gin and Jekyll's potion would fall at either extreme with wine somewhere in the middle. The complete Victorian stoic, exemplified in Utterson, pushes away his humanity and the desires that are inherent to it. Something "eminently human beacon[s] from [Utterson's] eyes" when he drinks wine at these dinner parties,

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[26] Stevenson, 33.

reinforcing wine as the thing that allows these men to connect with the feelings and desires—the humanity—that they must forcibly suppress in order to contort their public personas to align with the societal expectations of respectability.

This suppression of human desire—or humanity altogether—is what pushes Jekyll to transform himself. Rather than being content with the controlled form of indulgence that wine offers, he takes it to an extreme, which positions him as an exemplar of debauchery. Jekyll describes the potion as having "no discriminating action; it was neither diabolical nor divine; it but shook the doors of the prisonhouse of my disposition."[27] Like Utterson, Jekyll is acutely aware that he is deliberately locking away parts of himself in shaping his public persona, and he resents that suppression. However, unlike Utterson, Jekyll is unable to manage the demand of austerity in the face of his own desire for debauchery. The division of the psyche into morally good and morally corrupt halves is a direct result of externally imposed social ideals, then, and not something that is natural to the human psyche. In contrast with the two extremes, wine serves the purpose of uniting those halves, allowing the male characters in the novel to navigate between the rigid dichotomies of fin-de-siècle social norms. It provides a thin line of separation between complete stoicism and complete debauchery, a line that provides both a divider and an invitation to step across. However, by virtue of its noncommittal identity, it is only able to offer a watered down version of either extreme, potentially becoming the "gateway drug" that leads those who are most susceptible (like Jekyll) to fully transgress those social boundaries.

Wine's eminence in religious tradition, particularly relating to the Catholic rite of communion, reveals a further duplicity in its moral function in the novel. Congregation in religious contexts is centered around communal socialization, and communion entails that every

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[27] Stevenson, 79.

member of the congregation drinks of the same cup. The social contexts in which Stevenson's professional men drink wine together replicates this congregation in a secular setting. Though not coded as religious, the consumption of wine in these contexts is imbued with the positive moral associations that are attached to religious practices, further elevating the reputable nature of the activity and well as the character of its participants. After the murder of Carew and Hyde's ensuant disappearance, Jekyll begins reintegrating himself socially. Stevenson writes, "He came out of his seclusion, renewed relations with his friends, became once more their familiar guest and entertainer; and while he had always been known for charities, he was now no less distinguished for religion."[28] Because he relinquished absolute control to his transformative potion, Jekyll had compromised that public persona. However, when Hyde murders Carew and Jekyll decides that he must cease the transformations, the sign that his former social persona has been revived is his reintegration into the social scene through the resumption of his dinner parties. In addition, he distinguishes himself as a religious man and thus a moral one, demonstrating the purely symbolic value of religiosity in ameliorating social perception during the period. Each of these separate reintegrations is characterized by ritual, either social or religious, of which wine is the organizing principle.

Not only is wine a substitute for harder drugs used to vicariously experience debauchery in the safety of upper-middle-class homosocial settings, but it is also a substitute for the literal blood of Christ when one receives the Eucharist. It substitutes a socially acceptable act for a savage one—cannibalism. The consumption of wine in this context safely simulates the bloodlust by which Hyde is driven, uncovering the potential for savagery inherent to humanity. The part of humanity which is driven by the urge to spill blood and kill is replaced with the

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[28] Stevenson, 55.

simulation of those acts. The consumption of the Eucharist sublimates those savage intentions which come to represent the opposite sentiment, namely, ensuring the eternal continuation of the human soul. Jekyll's potion, rather than opaquely simulating this bloodlust, fully invites its realization. As Jekyll writes, "This familiar that I called out of my own soul, and sent forth alone to do his good pleasure, was a being inherently malign and villainous; his every act and thought centered on the self; drinking pleasure with bestial avidity from any degree of torture to another; relentless like a man of stone."[29] That Hyde is described to be "drinking pleasure" reinforces the connection between the effects of the potion and the effect that wine is simulating to a lesser degree. Furthermore, Hyde springs from Jekyll's own soul situating the desires Hyde expresses within the being he shares with Jekyll, not other to it. The presumption that follows this confession of depraved desire is that it exists within each man who shares in that social position and responsibility.

The doubleness of wine as a social proponent and intoxicant, preservative of morality and gateway to a greater evil, allegorizes the stringent social rules that governed Victorian masculinity. Though Jekyll's drug takes the effects that wine simulates to their extreme, realized conclusion, the prevalence of wine throughout the novel indicates a morbid curiosity and desire to be free from the social binds that force each of these men into a state of compressed selfhood. The homosociality that accompanies the dinner parties where wine is drunk serves as both a source of mutual understanding as well as a reinforcement of the expectations that Victorian masculinity places upon them. Jekyll's descent from an upstanding male professional to a monstrous embodiment of debauchery as a result of the potion with which wine is inextricably linked demonstrates the slippery slope of the intense suppression of desires required to formulate

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[29] Stevenson, 80-1.

the ideal masculine persona in the Victorian era. The benign view of wine, when contrasted with

the utter devastation caused by Jekyll's drug, becomes increasingly disconcerting as Jekyll

spirals downward. However, as Jekyll himself says, "the drug...is neither diabolical nor

divine."[30] Its function is merely to uncover and unleash what was already there.

Taking into consideration the doubling of *Jekyll and Hyde*, it is their physical unity, their

sharing of the same physical body, juxtaposed with their disassociated physiognomy that makes

it so unconventional. Halberstam describes their dynamic saying, "Hyde is the base costume, the

foundation, for Jekyll."[31] The inverse, however, is also true as the two are unable to exist

coherently without the other. Jekyll himself avows that, "man is not truly one, but truly two…I

hazard the guess that man will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious,

incongruous and independent denizens."[32] The destabilizing potential of the social laws which

demand that the self *must* be divided are here embodied by Jekyll (and Hyde), and, furthermore,

he diagnoses this problem of the fragmentary self, its "incongruity," externally, in the bodies of

his fellow men. The creation of the distinct physical persona of Hyde through the formulation of

the drug is thus required by the demand for social respectability. It is necessary by these

demands that any base impulse remain secret, hidden—hence "Hyde." The sins that Hyde

represents existed in Jekyll prior to his deliberate self-fragmentation, clearly making them

symptomatic of the greater problem this demand for secrecy presents, namely, the unsavory

emergence of unacceptable behaviors outside of the control of the society that suppresses them.

Essentially, the diagnosis that Jekyll poses is not an effort to disparage his fellow men but to

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[30] Stevenson, 79.
[31] Halberstam, 64.
[32] Stevenson, 76.

explicitly identify the failure of efforts to silence and suppress the "degenerate" in producing a morally healthy society.

Eve Sedgwick encapsulates the bind in which the gentleman (the upper-middle-class man) found himself as she writes, "Unlike title, wealth, or land, the terms that defined the gentleman were not clearly and simply hereditary but had somehow to be earned by being a particular kind of person who spent time and money in particular ways."[33] Inherent in the position of the gentleman is an insecurity that redoubles the need for deliberate suppression of any threatening characteristics. Moreover, Sedgwick elaborates:

> In order to maintain the illusion of equality, or at any rate of meritocratic pseudoequality, within the class of gentlemen, and at the same time justify the magnification of distinctions within the class, it clearly made sense to envision a long, complicated period of individual psychic testing and preparation, full of fallings-away, redefinitions, and crossings and recrossings of lines of identification.[34]

This materializes in Stevenson's text in the always-vague references to the debauchery that is expected of young men. Aligning with Sedgwick's description of a "long, complicated period of individual psychic testing and preparation" is the function of the acceptable debauchery in youth, a period during which men are expected to get the natural inclination toward sin out of their systems, so to speak. Not only does Jekyll reference this "coming-of-age" period in his confession, but Utterson, too, reflects on this period thinking, "His past was fairly blameless; few men could read the rolls of their life with less apprehension; yet he was humbled to the dust by the many ill things he had done, and raised up again into a sober and fearful gratitude by the many he had come so near to doing yet avoided" (Stevenson 45). Utterson is in many ways the moral center of the novel, living a life devoid of excess in any category. However, even he

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[33] Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, 177.
[34] Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, 178.

identifies the "humbling" potential of his past deeds alongside the remnant of that desire for unrestricted pleasure in his soul. Additionally, the tension emerges as a result of society's need for this youthful eruption of socially unacceptable behavior that is predicated upon an immediate, public rejection of those behaviors as soon as they enter their adult years.

The gravitation toward substances, then, demonstrates the failure of this repression. The self is fragmented as soon as the Victorian boy becomes a man and must obey the rigid rules laid out for him. With the loss of that freedom comes the access to the substituting substance, whether it be wine, gin, or something different altogether. Each indulgence marks an acknowledgement of the fragmentation of the self, that the self can never be whole under these conditions. For Jekyll, whose suicide ends the novel, this fragmentation is literalized through his physical transformation, but it is the other men in the novel—Utterson, Lanyon, and even Enflied—who are most endangered by it precisely because of their resistance to acknowledging it.

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CHAPTER 2 | Secret Confessions: The Precarious Integrity of Masculine Identity in
Dorian Gray

The Picture of Dorian Gray is a novel obsessed with the methodology of secrets and the terror produced by the constant threat of their exposure. Indeed, it begins with the formulation of a secret as a material object—the eponymous picture—and the subsequent confession of that secret. Its entrenchment within the social, political, and legal mores of *fin-de-siecle* Britain constitutes a mirror of Wilde's own morality—and thus his identity—reflecting the tensions between morality, art, community, and secrecy that this examination of the work will attempt to lay bare by focusing primarily on the behavioral conventions that govern the community of men among whom these tensions unfold. The inextricability of Wilde's own identity from the precarious identities of his trifecta of leading men is even acknowledged by the author in an 1894 letter in which he writes to an admirer of the novel: "I am so glad you like that strange coloured book of mine: it contains much of me in it. Basil Hallward is what I think I am: Lord Henry what the world thinks me: Dorian what I would like to be—in other ages, perhaps"[35]. So, he conceptualized himself as both the active (Henry) and passive (Basil) desiring subject as well as the object of that desire (Dorian). Moreover, it is this apparent fracturing of the self into distinct surfaces along the lines of desire that elucidates the novel's primary engagement with masculine identity as necessarily, inherently fragmented and ultimately always unfulfilled under the circumstances of Victorian social codes.

Wilde's explicit identification with each of these "selves" requires any attempt at interpreting the novel to remain intimately connected to the very real circumstances that precipitated its production in the first place. When Wilde says, "Dorian [is] what I would like to

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[35] Oscar Wilde, *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, ed. Merlin Holland and Rupert Hart-Davis (London: Fourth Estate, 2000), 585.

be," it can be argued that he is alluding to the persistent ambiguity surrounding Dorian's sins, to which the novel alludes but never makes explicit. This luxury of secret sin is one Wilde himself was not afforded, considering the contemporary publicity and historical renown surrounding the scandal of his homosexual affair with fellow aesthete Lord Alfred Douglas and his subsequent trial on charges of sodomy and gross indecency, imprisonment for two years between 1895 and 1897 across four prisons culminating in Reading Gaol, and his exile in France, where he eventually died of meningitis[36]. It is in one of Douglas's poems that the phrase "the love that dare not speak its name" originates, but its significance ironically stems from its use as evidence in Wilde's conviction[37]. For all of the public attention and opinion his scandal garnered, Wilde never did confess publicly to any of the crimes of which he was convicted, and, as biographer Richard Ellman points out, "More than half of *De Profundis* [the letter Wilde wrote to Douglas while imprisoned in Reading Gaol] is taken up by his confession, not of his own sins, but of Bosie's [Douglas]."[38] So, considering its author's constant negotiation between his own secret desire—which was made public and therefore confessed on his behalf—and the diametrically opposed prescriptions for masculine behavior under the terms of Victorian society, it follows naturally that *Dorian Gray* takes up what I will term a homosocial discourse of confession.

When eminent queer theorist and critic of Gothic literature Eve Sedgwick refers to the social bonds between men as predicated on "homosocial desire," she identifies it as existing on a continuum alongside homosexuality: "To draw the 'homosocial' back into the orbit of 'desire,' of the potentially erotic, then, is to hypothesize the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual—a continuum whose visibility, for men, in our society, is

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[36] Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988), 495-496, 516-517, 527-529.
[37] Ellman, 386, 463.
[38] Ellman, 513.

radically disrupted."[39] The disruption of visibility, or rather the obstruction of this continuum, embeds it within the Gothic structure of *Dorian Gray*, which is preoccupied with the spatial mediation between surface and sub-surface, public and private, or, more to the point, secret. In this way, the discourse of confession is not only responding to the draconian stipulations of Victorian social codes, but also emulating their structure. In *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1*, Michel Foucault elaborates on the ubiquity of the confessional in every manner of social interaction during the nineteenth-century:

> [The confession] plays a part…in the most ordinary affairs of everyday life, and in the most solemn rites; one confesses one's crimes, one's sins, one's thoughts and desires, one's illnesses and troubles; one goes about telling, with the greatest precision, whatever is most difficult to tell. One confesses in public and in private…One admits oneself, in pleasure and in pain, things it would be impossible to tell anyone else, the things people write books about. One confesses—or is forced to confess…The most defenseless tenderness and the bloodiest of powers have a similar need of confession. Western man has become a confessing animal.[40]

This encroachment of the discourse of confession into every aspect of life begets the Victorian subject's innate reliance upon it as a means of producing a tangible concept of the self in language. Furthermore, demand for confession inherently demands a public self-definition that would allow for categorization along the lines of power. In his enumeration of the various new— and secularized—methods and contexts for confession, the nuances between public and private confession solidify and point to a hierarchy of confessional outcomes which are ever present in Wilde's novel. It is important to note the inclusion of desire among the objects of the confession and its resultant sublimation into discourse, which Foucault argues is responsible for the shift in focus from the evil of acts to the evil of desires. As Sedgwick identifies desire as the hinge of

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[39] Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, 1-2.
[40] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, Vol. 1 (New York: Vintage, 1990), 59.

homosociality, so too does Foucault identify the discovery and exposition of desire as, "the specific pleasure of the true discourse on pleasure."[41]

Expanding upon Foucault's formulation of the confession, theorist Judith Bulter's essay "Bodily Confessions" engages with his concept of "pastoral power," or the implicit power possessed by the Christian pastor in receiving confession, in an effort to identify the "self-making" potential of the confession. Butler, explaining Foucault, describes pastoral power as, "that form of power by which the administration of the soul takes place."[42] In this account, power—wielded by the Christian pastor hearing the confession—implies access to a "discourse of truth about who they [the confessor] are" and allows the confessor to "speak about themselves through the same discourse of truth."[43] Though Butler and Foucault both utilize a psychoanalytic framework in order to update this dynamic—instead of pastor and congregant, analyser and analysand—the cycle of production and fragmentation of the self is a particularly relevant Gothic motif, and, for Wilde, these sorts of discourses play a fundamental role in the construction (and destruction) of the novel's central community of men. Critic of Gothic literature William Patrick Day notes, "Once the protagonist enters [the Gothic world], the identity begins to break up. The line between the self and the Other begins to waver, and the wholeness and integrity of the self begins to collapse."[44] *Dorian Gray* exemplifies this element of the Gothic, but advances it beyond the typical convention of doubling to which Day is referring in the previous excerpt. Rather than confining the fragmentation of identity to Dorian and his uncanny double in the picture, Wilde expands this fragmentary potential to each of the notable male characters in the

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[41] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, 71.
[42] Judith Butler, "Bodily Confessions," in *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 161.
[43] Butler, "Bodily Confessions," 162.
[44]Day, 21-22.

novel. Each man is made of secrets and participates in the production of himself through the confession of these secrets to his fellows.

This dynamic between secrecy and confession does not directly correlate with the private and public spheres. In fact, it is rare that the novel depicts a moment of confession that is truly public. Rather it mutilates the form, producing the secret confession, one that takes place between men, thus allowing for the production of the self of the confessor while also creating the basis for the homosocial bond. This already precarious system becomes even more destabilized with the introduction of Dorian Gray, whose perversion of masculinity through the deliberate disintegration of his own identity threatens the collapse of the carefully maintained boundary between privacy and publicity. The character essentially functions as a succubus, enticing his fellow men (through both homosocial and homosexual desire) to share their desires with him. Although, under the conditions laid out prior, this confession would aid in the formation of a community of men, Dorian exists outside of the moral structures that require the discourse of secrecy to exist in the first place as a result of the splitting of his identity between his unblemished, epicene physical body and his portrait, which sits locked away in his school room, tarnishing in relation to the sins of the former. As a result, his ability to ignore the repercussions of a bad reputation, the traditional dynamics of power that govern the secret homosocial confession are upended. So, Dorian's mere existence violates those implicit rules, namely that the confession remain contained within the homosocial sphere, where it functions as a commiseration between men who, by the novel's logic, demonstrate physically the effects of their sin.

It is Basil Hallward, friend, admirer, and, most importantly, painter of Dorian Gray, who initiates this complexly formulated discourse in the novel, and Basil's engagement with it is the

most earnest in relation to his fellows. His inaugural confession complicates the form from the outset as he diverges from Foucault's and Butler's conception of the confession as primarily a function of verbal speech—what Butler refers to as "the performative force of spoken utterance"[45]—fusing a verbal confession with the visual confession that is the picture. Basil's confession is prompted by Lord Henry Wotton's inquiry into why he will not exhibit Dorian Gray's picture. It is in the verbal discourse between the two young men that Basil elaborates upon his hesitancy saying, "'I know you will laugh at me…but I really can't exhibit it. I have put too much of myself into it.'"[46] Though Basil does seem to confess to Henry here, his purpose is to clarify his broader need for secrecy achieved by hiding the painting from public view. Implied in his assessment that he depicted "too much" of himself is the assumption that the self is something that must necessarily remain secret, hidden from view. This stipulation explains the reticence of this particular moment of confession. Basil cannot solidify in language the secret of his desire and must maintain a degree of ambiguity even with his close friend. Despite his vagueness, this act of confession is one of self-production that is corroborated by Henry's attention and absorption. The anticipation of laughter with which Basil prefaces his still-reticent explanation emphasizes the motivational force of shame in the production of the self in the context of fin-de-siècle social norms. In this case, Basil's shame stems both from the prospect of exhibiting the picture, a synecdoche for his secret desire, and from the prospect of Henry's rejection in the face of his vulnerability, which would constitute a violation of the homosocial bond they share.

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[45] Butler, "Bodily Confessions," 163.

[46] Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, ed. Norman Page (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2005), 44.

Moreover, the intermingling of confession in speech and confession in art problematizes the previously established dynamic of a confession spoken out loud to a deliberately selected counterpart. The visual confession, here the picture, betrays itself according to Basil: "[E]very portrait that is painted with feeling is a portrait of the artist, not of the sitter. The sitter is merely the accident, the occasion. It is not he who is revealed by the painter; it is rather the painter who, on the coloured canvas, reveals himself. The reason I will not exhibit this picture is that I am afraid that I have shown in it the secret of my own soul."[47] The final sentence emphatically realizes that aforementioned demand for secrecy in an effort to maintain the structural integrity of the soul (or self). In accordance with Day's identification of the Gothic's tendency to dissolve the border between "self" and "other," Basil's refusal to display the portrait publicly juxtaposed with his ultimately candid confession to Henry demonstrates the fine line between self-making and self-breaking. A confession of the secret that constitutes the self is required in each instance; however, the confession within the context of a community of men (the homosocial sphere) results in the former, while the confession on display for the general public, in the form of displaying the painting, results in the latter. In this way, Basil demonstrates the careful mediation required to construct masculine identity as well as the fragmentation between the social and private "self" that is always already part and parcel of any identity. Furthermore, this effect of the revelatory potential of visual art is only amplified by the transfer of power over the canvas from Basil to Dorian, for whom the "secret of [his] own soul" is exceedingly perverse (and ambiguous) compared to Basil's barely subtextual references to his homosexual desire for Dorian.

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[47] Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 47.

In the Gothic world, mitigation of that always-present fragmentation is of the utmost importance, and Basil succeeds because he possesses a unique awareness of his own desires and confines those potentially self-annihilating characteristics within the picture. As he explains his first encounter with Dorian Gray—his impetus for creating the picture—to Lord Henry Wotton he says, "'A curious sensation of terror came over me. I knew that I had come face to face with some one whose mere personality was so fascinating that, if I allowed it to do so, it would absorb my whole nature, my whole soul, my very art itself.'"[48] Within this culmination of the confession, Basil acknowledges his homoerotic desire for Dorian Gray as overtly as he can, making real and deliberately identifying with that part of his identity which must be kept secret. Literary critic Jack Halberstam's assertion in his book *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* that "by the end of the century, secret and unlawful desires are euphemisms for homosexuality"[49] encompasses this portion of Basil's identity that threatens to destabilize his reputation and therefore the coherence of his private and public selves. As a result of the strict Victorian codes of ideal masculine conduct, the self must be socially constructed in accordance with those ideals in order to attach it to some externally validating principle. The "terror" Basil describes elucidates the threat of this separation of public and private selves. It would deny him integrity. Integrity here carries two meanings: honesty in relating the self to expressions of the self, on the one hand, and the unification of public and private self, on the other.

However, rather than "allow[ing] it to" facilitate the disintegration of his identity, he uses the creation of the picture as a means of diverting his erotic obsession with his young subject,

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[48] Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 48.
[49] Halberstam, 65.

subduing the damning potential secret by immobilizing it in art. Thus art, as briefly mentioned previously, carries an inherently confessional quality which becomes threatening as soon as it is made visible to the public. Here, however, the only one seeing it is Henry, positioning him as the audience/public who hears and sees Basil's confessions and, rather than rejecting the explicit admission to a socially unacceptable desire, accepts these desires as the crystallization of his friend's identity. The friendship these two men share, one figured here as a community despite its narrow scope, demonstrates the necessity of constant mediation between secretive and confessional behavior in order to produce the masculine self as well as the community of men.

Although Basil in his earnest secrecy and sheepish, impassioned confession conducts a relatively straightforward demonstration of the confessional discourse, Henry is equally engaged in it, albeit exhibiting his own inversion of the form. Where Basil's formative secrecy is transcribed into art, Henry's is externalized through his influence over other people, an influence to which Basil seems quite immune. Early on, Basil identifies Henry's unconventional secrecy, responding to the lord's claim of acting unscrupulously in his marriage saying, "'I believe that you are really a very good husband, but that you are thoroughly ashamed of your own virtues. You are an extraordinary fellow. You never say a moral thing, and you never do a wrong thing. Your cynicism is simply a pose.'"[50] Rather than adhering to the conventional structure of secrecy in the novel—and, indeed, in late-Victorian society in general—Henry inverts the identity-forming relationships among truth, shame, and social acceptability. Of the three men central to the novel—himself, Basil, and Dorian—he is the most conventional type of man, identified by Basil as living virtuously but vehemently claiming the opposite about himself. In the same way that Basil was motivated to keep his identity secret, out of public view, by the shame that would

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[50] Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 46.

accompany his exposure, Henry is motivated by the shame with which he views his own material scrupulousness. So, ironically, Henry's desire to be seen as constantly rebuking Victorian behavioral edicts lead to the fragmentation of his identity in the same way that Basil's desire to be seen as conventional does.

For Henry, the philosophy of "New Hedonism" that he espouses captures and immobilizes in language the debauchery that is the object of his desire and keeps it tangled there. He desires transgression but can only realize it in language, which is his art as much as painting is Basil's. When describing New Hedonism, Henry implores Dorian, his pupil in that moment, "'Live! Live the wonderful life that is in you! Let nothing be lost upon you. Be always searching for new sensations. Be afraid of nothing…'"[51] In this instance of the exertion of influence over his younger companion, that Henry is able to relieve himself of the threat of disintegration. Like Basil, Dorian Gray is his chosen vessel for this transference of desire. Dorian, in the nascent state of his character—the state in which both Basil and Henry as well as the reader are introduced to him—acts as a passive accelerant for the self-making of his older, more experienced counterparts, and they, in turn, exert their own influences upon him, accelerating his transition from youthful innocent to narcissistic cynic.

Together, the three men share a triangular relationship which is negotiated through the keeping of secrets, the sharing of confessions, and the influence they exert over one another. The influential potential of these relationships does not exist in the first chapter but for Dorian's implied influence over Basil and his art. However, as soon as Dorian enters the fray in the second chapter, the triangle falls into place. Basil remains captivated with the young man, and Dorian finds himself similarly captivated by Henry, who takes the opportunity to put his "New

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[51] Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 63.

Hedonism" into practice. Following Henry's ironic pontification on the immorality of influence, Dorian is immobilized, "dimly conscious that entirely fresh influences were at work within him" as Henry's words "had touched some secret chord that had never been touched before, but that he felt was now vibrating and throbbing to curious pulses."[52] The shock at being exposed to an entirely new ideology, especially one that upends every normative worldview he has been exposed to thus far in his life, reveals the secrets of his own soul to himself. This is only compounded by the erotic language of "touching" and "vibrating" and "throbbing," which anticipate the awakening of his desire. He is, however, only "dimly conscious" of the effect, which only becomes concrete with the completion of the picture. Upon seeing it, "A look of joy came into his eyes, as if he had recognized himself for the first time…The sense of his own beauty came on him like a revelation. He had never felt it before."[53] In spite of Basil's adoration of and resultant doting upon the young man, it is only Lord Henry's eloquent, ominous insistence on the brevity of youth coupled with the perfect physical realization of the beauty that youth entails that are able to awaken his (self-)consciousness.

Thus, it is only through influence facilitated by the community of these three men that Dorian Gray finally uncovers the "secret of [his] own soul." This is a third variant on the function of secrecy in forming an intelligible identity that appears in the novel, and perhaps the most complex. Rather than being aware of his covert nature and deliberately suppressing it like his fellows, Dorian has been a secret to himself. He nevertheless experiences similar emotional associations with that secrecy following the dawn of his self-consciousness. Speaking about Henry's relentlessly revealing language he asks, "But he felt afraid of him, and ashamed of being

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[52] Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 59.
[53] Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 65.

afraid. Why had it been left for a stranger to reveal him to himself?"[54] His shame mirrors that of both Basil and Henry, and solidifies the relationship between secrecy and fear that produces shame. Essentially, the threat of shame is what requires secrecy for the formation and maintenance of a sound identity. The sudden revelation of this secret that constitutes his "self" and the shame that follows threatens the fragmentation of identity that Basil and Henry managed thus far to avoid. Furthermore, the newly-formed object of the picture impedes his ability to successfully homogenize his self image. Instead, the picture embodies the "other" corresponding to Dorian's "self," exemplifying the dissolution of the self/other border that Day identifies as crucial to Gothic thematics.

This collapse of the symbolic order, precipitated by the meeting of subject and portrait (object), is responsible for the monstrosity into which Dorian falls and is only further compounded by the "poisonous book," which embodies Henry's influential, hedonistic philosophy. For Dorian, "It was the strangest book that he had ever read. It seemed to him that in exquisite raiment, and to the delicate sound of flutes, the sins of the world were passing in dumb show before him. Things that he had dimly dreamed of were suddenly made real to him. Things of which he had never dreamed were gradually revealed."[55] So, Dorian's process of self-making is carried out twofold, first in the confrontation with the picture and second with the assimilation of the text of the book. The book also functions as an art object itself, described in terms of fashion, music, and theater, further breaking down the boundaries between the real and the fantastical. This conflation of art and reality requires the real to be understood and processed only through its resemblance to or realization in art, rather than the other way around. As a

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[54] Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 61.

[55] Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 158-159.

result, Dorian's behavior is influenced entirely by the book, and the consequences of that

behavior are immortalized in the picture. The relationship between influence, identity, and

secrecy are represented clearly in the trifecta of the book, Dorian himself, and the picture

respectively. The secret is essentially other from the self, but through its embodiment in the

picture it becomes more substantive than the flesh and blood version of Dorian who commits the

sins that appear inscribed upon its surface.

Vitally, this inverts the relationship between self and secret, in which the picture assumes

the role of self and the actual self becomes other. As Dorian's sinful behavior gains him

notoriety among the London elite, his fellow men find it difficult to consolidate the rumors with

the man they see:

> Even those who had heard the most evil things against him—and from time to time
> strange rumours about his mode of life crept through London and became the chatter of
> the clubs—could not believe anything to his dishonour when they saw him. He had
> always the look of one who had kept himself unspotted from the world. Men who talked
> grossly became silent when Dorian Gray entered the room. There was something in the
> purity of his face that rebuked them. His mere presence seemed to recall to them the
> memory of the innocence that they had tarnished. They wondered how one so charming
> and graceful as he was could have escaped the stain of an age that was at once sordid and
> sensual.[56]

The confounding nature of Dorian's persisting youth and beauty in the face of the "strange

rumours" which follow him around further solidifies the surface as the governing space of the

social-self. The physical body is expected to give up the secrets of men eventually, something

that Dorian's eternal youth denies them. It makes him illegible in the context of a community of

men who share their definition within the symbolic order that Dorian has escaped. Furthermore,

his state of physical (and thus implied moral) perfection is viewed in contrast to their own

"tarnished innocence," much in the same way that Dorian enjoys admiring his physically

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[56] Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 161-162.

unchanged appearance in contrast to the decay of the body in the picture. He habitually

compared the two:

> Often, on returning home from one of those mysterious and prolonged absences that gave rise to such strange conjecture among those who were his friends, or thought that they were so, he himself would creep upstairs to the locked room, open the door with the key that never left him now, and stand, with a mirror, in front of the portrait that Basil Hallward had painted of him, looking now at the evil and aging face on the canvas, and now at the fair young face that laughed back at him from the polished glass. The very sharpness of the contrast used to quicken his sense of pleasure. He grew more and more enamored of his own beauty, more and more interested in the corruption of his own soul.[57]

In the same way that his fellow men expect his body to confess his secret sins and desires as their

own do, the portrait enacts this confession. Rather than the traditional verbal confession seen

with Basil, this is a physicalized confession borne from the logistical relationship between reality

and surface, one to which all men in the novel are subject but for one. The irreconcilable split

between Dorian Gray's body and his soul precludes him from this conventional designation of

manhood as is produced through the discourse of confession. Moreover he is denied true

participation within the community because of this failed inscription of the self on the surface of

the body. By upending the typical relationship between confession and secrecy that would result

in the production of the self, Dorian is sentenced to a restricted and necessarily partial identity.

He must hide the portrait from view in the "locked room," because it is the embodiment of a

confession that, if realized through the process of public exposure, would completely disintegrate

the fabric of his being upon being revealed to be purely fabricated.

The confession is denied to Dorian Gray because it is realized and inscribed on a

completely different physical surface to that of his own body. Nevertheless, he desires a path

toward confession—here, the process of inscribing on the surface what lies below. The only

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[57] Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 162

recourse he has of accomplishing this and thus of participating in the community of men of which he can definitionally only experience from the periphery is to exert his own influence in the same way that Henry influenced him. Basil recognizes this behavior in him:

> England is bad enough I know, and English society is all wrong. That is the reason why I want you to be fine. You have not been fine. One has a right to judge of a man by the effect he has over his friends. Yours seem to lose all sense of honour, of goodness, of purity. You have filled them with a madness for pleasure. They have gone down into the depths. You led them there.[58]

Although this influence is the result of his hedonistic philosophy, it is also the only way in which Dorian can safely externalize the secret of his soul. Other men (and women) become his instrument of self-expression, inscribing the truth of his soul's depravity on their tarnished reputations. Basil speaks the logic of this relationship into reality, asserting the way in which the community is representative of the individual, thus simultaneously revealing the community's investment in the moral quality of the individuals it welcomes. Furthermore, Dorian's reputation reflects Basil (and Henry) insofar as they are publicly associated with him. In this way, the community reveals its power ("pastoral power"), and that power "reduces one to silence."[59]

Henry has power over the painting too by proxy. He influences Dorian and that influence appears on the canvas.

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[58] Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 183.

[59] Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1*, 60.

CHAPTER 3 | Definitional Desire: The Heterosexual Man and *Dracula*'s Eternal Thirst

But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.

—1 Timothy 5:6 (KJV)

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* has long confounded attempts to strictly categorize the novel within a single generic form. It has alternatingly been classified as Gothic fantasy, travel narrative, marriage story (or marriage plot), reverse colonial narrative, and even domestic comedy of manners. Of course, among these multitudes, the Gothic is the singular constant thus presenting the most accurate amalgamation of the lot. Nevertheless, alongside representing the pervasiveness of the novel as an object of literary criticism, this wide array of genres— seemingly opposed in terms of the topics under consideration—signifies the ambiguity Stoker is dedicated to preserving.

Indeed, this should not come as a surprise considering Stoker's own admission, not unimportantly in letters exchanged with Walt Whitman, to being "naturally secretive to the world."[60] Critic Talia Schaffer takes this and other excerpts from Stoker's correspondence with Whitman as well as evidence of his close friendship with Oscar Wilde (at least until his extremely public fall from grace) in order to contextualize her reading of *Dracula* as a novel produced out of its author's anxious involvement in homoerotic cultural spheres. Her argument hinges on the assertion that, "Stoker manages to speak both from the closet and from the open," arguing that, "he writes as a man victimized by Wilde's trial, and yet as a man who sympathizes with Wilde's victimization."[61] Figuring Stoker as a closeted gay man, for Schaffer, unlocks the latent homoeroticism present in the text—one that primarily emerges through the subtextual

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[60] Horace Traubel, *With Walt Whitman in Camden*, vol. 4, 9 vols. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1953), 183.

[61] Talia Schaffer, "'A Wilde Desire Took Me': The Homoerotic History of *Dracula*," *ELH* 61, no. 2 (1994), 398.

identification of Dracula himself with a "monstrously magnified and demonized version of Wilde"[62] —in order to establish a motive for the author's seemingly deliberate deconstruction of heterosexual conventions.

In a similar vein, Christopher Craft's 1984 article "'Kiss Me with Those Red Lips': Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*" takes a psychoanalytic approach to the interpretation of vampirism in the novel and its connection to specifically late-Victorian anxieties about gender and sexuality. For Craft, the "interfusion of sexual desire and fear that the moment of erotic fulfillment may occasion the erasure of the conventional and integral self informs both the central action in *Dracula* and the surcharged emotion of the characters about to be kissed by 'those red lips.'"[63] Essentially, he figures the image of the vampiric mouth as the locus of threatening eroticism, simultaneously and contradictorily evoking the consumptive orifice and the penetrative instrument—in other words, the female and male genitalia, respectively. In this way, Craft argues that what threatens the "erasure of the conventional and integral self" is the implication of homoeroticism, or "inversion," that is attached to any and all contact with the vampire's illegible (according to strictly codified Victorian gender constructs) physical body. "Desire," he concludes, "despite its propensity to wander, stays home and retains an essentially heterosexual and familial definition."[64]

Synthesizing these two seminal readings of the vicissitudes of gender and sexuality in *Dracula*, both narratively and with regard to the production of the text, and their intrinsic linkage with the figure of the vampire, critic Barry McCrea formulates a niche genre in which to classify the novel in his 2010 article "Heterosexual Horror: *Dracula*, the Closet, and the Marriage-Plot."

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[62] Schaffer, "'A Wilde Desire Took Me': The Homoerotic History of *Dracula*," 416.

[63] Christopher Craft, "'Kiss Me with Those Red Lips': Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," *Representations*, no. 8 (1984), 107.

[64] Craft, "'Kiss Me with Those Red Lips': Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," 129.

The idea of *Dracula* as "heterosexual horror" stems from McCrea's reading of the text as examining "heterosexuality as it is viewed from inside the gay closet—as an exotic foreign world, at once alluring and frightening."[65] Using Schaffer and Craft to establish Stoker's secret homosexuality, McCrea extends their critical readings of the text in order to locate a specifically closeted homosexual anxiety surrounding conventional (i.e., heterosexual) relationships, positing that "the nightmare of heterosexuality, from which one is protected by the closet, is the alienation from one's own private desires, through the discovery that one's innermost longings are not, in fact, one's own; not only in the sense that they come to be conscripted by social forms, but also because they turn out to have been socially constituted to begin with."[66] However, he is largely concerned with the ways Stoker conceives the horror of heterosexuality from the perspective of the married, bourgeois English woman. His reading of the text centers on the twinned narratives of domestic horror in Transylvania and England, engaging particularly with Jonathan's initial incarceration at Castle Dracula as emulating all of the recognizable rhythms of romantic courtship and "domesticated sexuality."[67] Simply put, he reads Jonathan as a bride of Dracula.

Operating under the acceptance of McCrea's perspective that *Dracula* embodies the anxious perspective of the closeted man—importantly *not* the closeted woman—and that the closet thus becomes protective against the publicization of that individual's private desires, I want to suggest a reading that contends with the conversely unambiguous and thus incriminating conception of heterosexual male desire within the novel. Within the conventions of heterosexual courtship or marriage, *Dracula* maintains a deliberate ambiguity surrounding what should be the

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[65] Barry McCrea, "Heterosexual Horror: *Dracula*, the Closet, and the Marriage-Plot," *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 43, no. 2 (2010), 253.

[66] McCrea, "Heterosexual Horror: *Dracula*, the Closet, and the Marriage-Plot," 268.

[67] McCrea, "Heterosexual Horror: *Dracula*, the Closet, and the Marriage-Plot," 259.

straightforward, recognizable, "normal" patterns of institutionally and socially authorized desire,

the negative image of the homosexual's secret desire. So, examining how these ambiguities

manifest in the novel and what they betray about the structures of heterosexual male desire and

therefore about the "social constitution," to use McCrea's term, of ideal masculine gender will be

the project of this chapter.

In order to embark on a close examination of instances in the text that exemplify this

embattled formulation of normative desire, it is first necessary to establish the dynamic between

different aspects of identity formation, namely sex, sexuality, and gender. Eve Sedgwick

distinguishes between sex and gender in *Epistemology of the Closet*:

> Compared to chromosomal sex, which is seen…to be immutable, immanent in the
> individual, and biologically based, the meaning of gender is seen as culturally mutable
> and variable, highly relational (in the sense that each of the binarized genders is defined
> primarily by its relation to the other), and inextricable from a history of power
> differentials between genders.[68]

It is, however, much more complicated to come to a similarly lucid meaning for sexuality, for as

Sedgwick herself argues it is "virtually impossible to situate on a map delimited by the feminist-

defined sex/gender distinction."[69] So, what we can take onboard from Sedgwick's

deconstructivist approach is a demonstration of the elusive nature of a concrete definition of

sexuality in general. No doubt this contributes to the gravitation of Gothic criticism toward an

examination of the mechanisms of sexuality, particularly "deviant" sexuality, but simultaneously

hinders that criticism from coming to any kind of conclusion. However, despite this frustration, it

is possible to continue with this model by understanding sexuality in the highly subjective terms

under which it was produced in late-nineteenth century British society—essentially, the binary of

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[68] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley; Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 28.

[69] Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 29.

heterosexual/homosexual. Sedgwick is careful to point this out as one of many binaries concerning the social identity of the British citizen, as well as specifying it as a new categorization of identity in the late-nineteenth century:

> What *was* new from the turn of the [twentieth] century was the world-mapping by which every given person, just as he or she was necessarily assignable to a male or a female gender, was now considered necessarily assignable as well to a homo- or a hetero-sexuality, a binarized identity that was full of implications, however confusing, for even the ostensibly least sexual aspects of personal existence. It was this new development that left no space in the culture exempt from the potent incoherences of homo/heterosexual definition.[70]

It is important, too, to note the asymmetrical relationship that Sedgwick formulates within these binaries:

> [F]irst, term B [homosexuality] is not symmetrical with but subordinated to term A [heterosexuality]; second, the ontologically valorized term A actually depends for its meaning on the simultaneous subsumption and exclusion of term B; hence, third, the question of priority between the supposed central and the supposed marginal category of each dyad is irresolvably unstable, an instability caused by the fact that term B is constituted as at once internal and external to term A.[71]

This asymmetry that produces instability in the structure of identity formation is the basis upon which *Dracula*'s horror operates. Whether Stoker identified as homosexual or heterosexual (Schaffer's convincing article concludes the former), and therefore whether or not the anxieties of the homosexual closet (as McCrea argues) motivated and informed his authorship, the novel itself remains an artifact which articulates both sides (in this binary formulation) of the contemporary discourses of sex/gender/sexuality. In this way, *Dracula* functions as a culmination of the *fin-de-siècle* flood of Gothic literature, simultaneously solidifying and dissolving the established rhythms of these aforementioned discourses.

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[70] Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 2.
[71] Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*, 9-10.

Although queer readings of *Dracula* abound (the three referenced in the introduction to this chapter only scratch the surface), the examinations of heterosexual masculinity in the novel, particularly that of the ostensibly traditional, stable male characters is comparatively sparse and superficial. Where it does exist, it is commonly and understandably employed as contextualization for inquiries into the female characters in the novel, since, as is apparent following the examinations of *Jekyll and Hyde* and *Dorian Gray* in the last two chapters, the inclusion and centrality of women in *Dracula* was highly atypical for novels in this category. For the purposes of this chapter, however, the primary focus will be on what Craft termed the "Crew of Light,"[72] or the community of men mobilized by Abraham Van Helsing in order to combat Dracula and all of the threats implicit in his invasion of England.

Alongside Van Helsing, a multi hyphenate professor from Amsterdam[73], the crew consists of five other men. Jonathan Harker is a young British solicitor and, in the continuity of the novel, Dracula's first victim. The first section of the text consists of his journal entries in which he records traveling east to Transylvania in order to visit with the strange Count Dracula, whom he is tasked with acclimating to British culture and customs for the Count's impending relocation to London. The visit quickly becomes imprisonment in the stereotypically Gothic Castle Dracula, as Jonathan is subjected to sexually threatening encounters with Dracula's harem of vampire women as well as with the Count himself. His narration is chronologically simultaneous with the narrative conveyed through the epistolary correspondence between his fiancée, Mina Murray, and her best friend Lucy Westenra, much of which is preoccupied with the latter's courtship of three different suitors—all three of whom also tout membership of Van

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[72] Craft, "'Kiss Me with Those Red Lips': Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," 109.

[73] Bram Stoker, *Dracula*, ed. David J. Skal and John Edgar Browning, 2nd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2022), 114. Van Helsing's official title is listed as "Abraham Van Helsing, Md, DPh, D. Lit, etc., etc.," echoing Jekyll's various titles.

Helsing's exclusive crew and participate in the crusade against the vampire threat. The three

men—Hon. Arthur Holmwood ("Art), Dr. John Seward ("Jack"), and Mr. Quincey Morris—are

old friends. Arthur, Mina's journal reveals, is "the only son of Lord Godalming"[74] making him

the only aristocrat with a prominent role in the novel apart from Count Dracula himself. He is

also Lucy's eventual fiancé, further juxtaposing his character with Dracula's, who, upon his

arrival in England, begins feeding on Lucy at night leading to her poor health. Dr. Seward, Lucy

explains, is "a doctor…and has an immense lunatic asylum all under his own care," and what

attracts her to him is the "wonderful power he must have over his patients."[75] While Seward is

heartbroken by Lucy's refusal of his proposal, which came on the same day as Arthur's and

Quincey's, Quincey is much less dejected by comparison, insisting that he will remain "'a very

faithful friend'"[76] to her. His place in the crew is distinct as the only non-British man other than

Van Helsing, coming from Texas. He is nevertheless "well educated and has exquisite manners,"

according to Lucy, and his final sacrifice allows the crew to kill Dracula.

This expository first third of *Dracula* functions within the narrative system that Craft

dubs the "triple rhythm" of the literature of Gothic monstrosity:

> [Each text] 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…Interposed between these
> antithetical gestures of admission and expulsion is the gothic novel's prolonged middle,
> during which the text affords its ambivalence a degree of play intended to produce a
> pleasurable, indeed a thrilling anxiety.[77]

This "prolonged middle" of the narrative is bookended by Dracula's entrance into and exit from

England and contains the method by which the vampire as literary tool upsets the highly

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[74] Stoker, 78.
[75] Stoker, 62.
[76] Stoker, 63.
[77] Craft, "'Kiss Me with Those Red Lips': Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," 107.

regulated sphere of late-Victorian male heterosexual identity. This chapter will unveil the methodical linking of the anxieties of gender, desire, and death within the narratives of Arthur, Seward, and Quincey as they operate within the masculine community of Van Helsing's crew—defined by its fundamental opposition to Dracula—and that of Lucy's suitors—in which Dracula participates alongside them.

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Although the courtship of Lucy only really lasts for the duration of a few letters exchanged between her and Mina, the dynamic it establishes between herself and the three men, as well as the way it transforms the preexisting relationship among the three of them is felt throughout the rest of the narrative, up to and surpassing her death—or rather, her murder. Craft describes the conflict at the heart of the novel as "an extended battle between two evidently masculine forces, one identifiably good and the other identifiably evil, for the allegiance of a woman" and asserts that Van Helsing, opposing Dracula's ostensibly isolated modus operandi, "works through surrogates to cement communal bonds."[78] However, I would argue that Van Helsing simply benefits from the existing communal bonds that predate his return to England, including his own former student-teacher relationship with Seward.[79] It is important to establish the longstanding nature of these bonds before attempting to deconstruct them, as they are the object upon which Van Helsing's transformative influence acts. In a letter to Holmwood discussing Lucy's poor state of health, Seward writes of Van Helsing: "When I told him of our friendship and how you trust to me in the matter, he said: 'You must tell him all you think. Tell him what I think, if you can guess it, if you will. Nay, I am not jesting. This is no jest, but life

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[78] Craft, "'Kiss Me with Those Red Lips': Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," 116.
[79] Stoker, 114.

and death, perhaps more.'"[80] This urgent need to erase the boundary between the privacy of

thought through public speech (whether verbal or written), or, in other words, to banish secrecy

is fundamental to the formation of these bonds. Indeed the narrative is a patchwork of these

purportedly candid effusions of speech, once private in the form of a letter or a diary, and now

public in the form of the volume Mina creates. Not only is Lucy's health a matter of "life and

death," but so too is the very mechanism of masculine communication. It is a radical declaration

of truth—insofar as "truth" represents a consistency between thought and speech—predicated

upon the preceding century of codification of inappropriate and unacceptable embodiments of

desire. Sedgwick writes, "[E]ven prior to a reification of 'the homosexual' there goes a necessary

reification of 'society' as against it/him."[81] The heterosexual Victorian male could thus always

rely upon his desire's corroboration through the exclusion of perversity.

However, this precarious construction of an identity by distancing itself from the

"abnormal" becomes problematic when one needs to positively define the "normal," or in this

case the heterosexual. Judith Butler's adoption of Lacanian psychoanalytic modes elucidates this

contradiction in attempting to give heterosexuality a substance:

> The masculine subject only *appears* to originate meanings and thereby to signify. His
> seemingly self-grounded autonomy attempts to conceal the repression which is both its
> ground and the perpetual possibility of its own ungrounding. But that process of
> meaning-constitution requires that women reflect that masculine power and everywhere
> reassure that power of the reality of its illusory autonomy…The conflict of masculinity
> appears, then, to be precisely the demand for a full recognition of autonomy that will also
> and nevertheless promise a return to those full pleasures prior to repression and
> individuation.[82]

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[80] Stoker, 115.

[81] Sedgwick, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, 86.

[82] Judith Butler,. *Gender Trouble*. New York; London: Routledge, 1990, 57-8.

For our purposes, we can say that not only does the man rely on the woman as a "reassuring sign" of his individuality, so too does the homosexual reassure and reaffirm the heterosexual. Both the figure of the woman, in the form of Lucy and Mina, and that of the homosexual, in the form of Dracula (and to a certain extent Jonathan), serve to destabilize the identities of *Dracula*'s male heroes. In this way, Van Helsing's strict governance over the men in his crew, afforded him through the authority of his professional status, has the opposite of its intended effect, driving them away from clear self-definitions and easily utterable and therefore achievable desires.

Other critical readings of *Dracula* have located the distortion of the familiar, recognizable strains of sexuality in the figure of the vampire and, in Craft's case, the vampiric kiss.[83] However, in the same way that the vampiric kiss avoids a more traditional penetration and exchange of fluids, Van Helsing's militant administration of transfusions evoke the same avoidance and point to a broader avoidance of fulfilling desire on the part of the heterosexual men in the novel. When he is finally called upon to donate his own blood to the cause—following, of course, the exchange of blood between husband and wife—Seward writes in his diary, "It was with a feeling of personal pride that I could see a faint tinge of colour steal back into the pallid cheeks and lips. No man knows, till he experiences it, what it is to feel his own life-blood drawn away into the veins of the woman he loves."[84] Clearly the sequence of transfusions—Holmwood, followed by Seward, followed by Van Helsing, followed by Quincey—demonstrates a sort of hierarchy within the crew as well as a hierarchy in their relationship with Lucy as well. And, moreover, the transfusions invert the effects of the vampiric kiss. That is not to say that they successfully reverse its detrimental effects upon Lucy's health,

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[83] Craft, "'Kiss Me with Those Red Lips': Gender and Inversion in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," 117.
[84] Stoker, 128.

although they provide momentary relief. Rather, they invert the rejuvenating effect that the kiss

has for the vampire himself, instead weakening the men responsible for donating their blood to

the cause. Quincey remarks that Arthur "looked queer"[85] following his transfusion, and Seward,

after surviving an attack from his zoophagous patient Renfield at the asylum, notes, "I cannot

afford to lose blood just at present: I have lost too much of late for my physical good, and then

the prolonged state of Lucy's illness and its horrible phases is telling on me."[86] So, the act of

voluntarily withdrawing blood in order to reinvigorate the object of desire implicitly replaces a

direct fulfillment of that desire while simultaneously sapping the desiring subject of his strength.

The depletion of the collective strength of the band of men stands in opposition to

Dracula's own invigorated state when Jonathan happens upon him in his coffin. Disgusted,

Jonathan recounts, "He was either dead or asleep, I could not say which—for the eyes were open

and stony, but without the glassiness of death—and the cheeks had the warmth of life through all

their pallor; the lips were as red as ever."[87] Similarly to Lucy, signs of Dracula's health manifests

in a reddening of his cheeks and lips, which can be easily confused as signals of sexual arousal.

It is not unsurprising, then, that Lucy's eventual transformation into a vampire is accompanied

by the emergence of an aggressive sexual appetite. Stephen D. Arata puts this simply as,

"Dracula propagates his race solely through the bodies of women suggest[ing] an affinity, or

even an identity, between vampiric sexuality and female sexuality. Both are represented as

primitive and voracious, and both threaten patriarchal hegemony."[88] Of course, the correction of

this "voracious" desire is her murder through the same methods of corrective penetration used to

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[85] Stoker, 148.
[86] Stoker, 139.
[87] Stoker, 55.
[88] Stephen D. Arata, "The Occidental Tourist: 'Dracula' and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization," *Victorian Studies* 33, no. 4 (1990), 632.

administer the transfusions. However, what her death at the hands of the traditional, heterosexual male characters reveals is the affinity between death and desire, or, more accurately, between death and stifled desire.

When desire, as established previously in the excerpt from *Gender Trouble*, is tantamount to identity, the deliberate suppression of that desire is tantamount to a form of spiritual death. In this way, the figure of the vampire is overwhelmingly simplistic in its self-definitional capacity. It desires blood and is defined by its lack of it, therefore affirming its predatory, sexually-charged identity whenever it fulfills that desire. The vampire, an extreme social pariah particularly under the constraints of late-Victorian codes, is ironically un-self-conscious in expressing and fulfilling its desire, juxtaposing it with the various types of Victorian man on display in the narrative. The latter group is defined by a refusal to admit desire at all, thus negating the possibility of individuating themselves as men, especially heterosexual men. To put it in psychoanalytic terms, these men, who were subjected to maturation under the constraints and codes of Victorian England experienced unsuccessful psychosexual development which resulted in an inability to act upon sexual desire. As Foucault argues in "Friendship as a Way of Life," "The problem is not to discover in oneself the truth of one's sex, but, rather, to use one's sexuality henceforth to arrive at a multiplicity of relationships. And, no doubt, that's the real reason why homosexuality is not a form of desire but something desirable."[89] This brings us back to McCrea, who argues that *Dracula* envisages the world of Victorian heterosexuality from the perspective of the homosexual closet. In my assessment, this contradictory (and quintessentially Gothic) covetous and apprehensive gaze extends in both directions, out from the inside of the closet and into it from outside. The Victorian heterosexual male as he is figured in *Dracula*

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[89] Michel Foucault, "Friendship as a Way of Life," in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rainbow, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), 135-6.

envies the divisive effect of the closet and desires an escape from the authoritarian control

required to maintain intelligibility within a highly regulated system of gender and sexuality.

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