GOTHIC MONSTERS AND MASCULINITY: NEUTRALIZING THE NEW WOMAN IN VICTORIAN GOTHIC LITERATURE

Sara Schoch

Abstract:

Gothic literature of the nineteenth century was deeply concerned with threats to masculinity. Beginning with Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) and spanning the century, these novels captured an important sense of social unrest attributable to contemporary changes in intellectual and social thought which reverberated throughout the century and threatened to topple patriarchal gender norms. Two major shifts contributing to this instability were the transition from the Baconian to the Darwinian scientific model, and the threat posed by the emerging model of the New Woman to the Victorian feminine ideal embodied in the “angel in the house.” These changes threatened the foundation upon which masculinity and thus, patriarchal society, rested its dominance. This article explores textual attempts to neutralize such threats by vilifying the New Woman and glorifying the “angel in the house” in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, and concludes that such attempts ultimately reaffirm the female’s power in this male-dominated society.

GOTHIC literature of the nineteenth century was deeply concerned with threats to masculinity. Beginning with Mary Shelley’s 1818 publication of *Frankenstein* and spanning the century, these novels captured an important sense of social unrest attributable to significant contemporary changes in intellectual and social thought, which reverberated throughout the majority of the century and threatened to topple current patriarchal gender norms. Evolution in scientific and social thought over the course of the century played an integral role in destabilizing Victorian masculine gender dominance, causing anxiety in the face of dramatically changing social standards for the family. The two major shifts contributing to this instability – the transition from the


Baconian to the Darwinian paradigm of science, and the threat posed by the emerging model of the New Woman to the traditionally established and deeply celebrated “angel in the house” – worked to threaten the foundation upon which masculinity and thus, patriarchal society, rested its dominance.

Several key texts exploring such threats use monsters and depictions of their moral and sexual depravity to subvert these contemporary destabilizing influences and strengthen the power of the feminine. Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, the catalyst for such socially critical monstrous texts, Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, all explore and attempt to neutralize the social threat of the emerging dominant female figure, as well as that of the scientific revolution’s subjection of the male scientist to a feminized nature, by using the villainous monster as a representative of the autonomous and assertive New Woman figure, while celebrating textual representatives of the angel in the house as integral features of a happy and healthy society and family.

Shifting Paradigms: Baconian to Darwinian

The first major shift working to destabilize masculinity in the nineteenth century was that in scientific paradigms from Baconian to Darwinian thought. Cindy Hendershot discusses this shift in her chapter on “Darwinism and Masculinity” in The Animal Within, explaining that the Baconian paradigm asserts that the male scientist and his scientific pursuits are guided and empowered by divine inspiration from God himself. This celestial influence allows the male scientist to exercise a sense of innate power over nature, which Baconianism depicts as a feminine force. Carolyn Merchant discusses Bacon's specific feminization of nature in The Death of Nature, first citing his textual goal of “leading [the male scientist] to nature with all her children to bind her to [their] service and make her [their] slave” (Merchant 170). She goes on to retell Bacon's description of matter as a “common harlot,” and insistence that the scientist can find truth in nature and authority over nature by exploring within her “deep mines and caves” and delving into the “earth's bosom” (171). Merchant also explains Bacon's characterization of man and his relationship to nature by asserting that nature, “by art and the hand of man...can then be forced out of her natural state and squeezed and molded” into that which man can use to reconnect to God. Bacon's explicit feminization of a natural system subordinate to man, yet essential in the process of recovering the “power over nature lost,” and irrefutable connection to God, “when Adam and Eve were expelled from paradise,” demonstrates the dependence of the masculine subject on female inferiority in constituting his powerful masculine identity.

This model was upset by the emerging and eventually dominant Darwinian model, described in The Descent of Man, which takes God out of the equation and asserts that humanity itself is nothing more than a serendipitous symptom of biological change, resituting humans as inherently subject to nature and taking away the scientist's ability to seek dominion over her. This shift disempowers the male scientist, while continuing to imbue nature with feminine qualities, implicitly placing the male at the random mercy of a feminized nature, disrupting previous notions of masculine superiority over the feminine. This greatly impacted male subjects’ perceptions of themselves as masterful and flawless, subjecting them to the raw and immitigable power of a feminized system. In nineteenth century Britain’s overbearingly patriarchal society, the implications of a feminine force wielding power over the male subject were potentially devastating to masculinity as it defined itself by, and derived its power through, its domination over passive femininity.

Notions of science and its divine empowerment of the male subject found themselves in flux as early as 1814 and became a significant presence in Mary and Percy Shelley's own lives, due to the integral role of their family doctor, Sir William Lawrence, in attempting to undermine and debunk scientific arguments that electricity and the divine imbued animals with the force of life. The core point of contention in this debate was the antiquated notion that a “mysterious, 'superadded' force...was needed” to animate life. Forward-thinking materialists, such as the Shelleys' doctor were of the “professional” opinion that “life has its origin in that of [an organism's] parents, thereby seeing “no means of abstracting the animating power from the animal” (Butler 305-6). Lawrence's highly publicized debate with a colleague took place in the years immediately preceding Mary Shelley's conception of the plot of Frankenstein, and clearly manifests itself in Victor's process of creating his monster, making this particular scientific debate and shift highly pertinent to the formation of her text. This fundamental disagreement over whether man's scientific pursuits channel the divine, placing him above a generally feminized nature in the universe's hierarchy of power, is finally settled in the shift

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from Baconian to Darwinian science. This cultural shift is facilitated by the publication of Darwin's *The Descent of Man* and *The Origin of Species*, not long before the publication of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *Dracula*, situating the production of these texts in an era riddled with confusion over the implications of this drastic shift.

**The New Woman**

Simultaneous to the destabilization of masculinity rooted in the loss of masculine scientific control over nature, the model of the New Woman begins to develop, threatening that of the celebrated angel in the house, also working to weaken contemporary notions of masculinity. Coventry Patmore coined the term with his poem, “Angel in the House,” published in 1854. The poem idealizes this passive, purely domestic female figure, providing a definition for the perfect woman in contemporary British society. Patmore's poetic exploration of the angel in the house both describes the private and maternal qualities that each woman should display, and ranks her as inferior to her male spouse by using the love between man and wife as a metaphor for that between man and God. Patmore's poem depicts the ideal relationship between man and woman as one of a “superior” who “delights” in the “smallness and weakness of his beloved” (Dunn 210). In his analysis of “Angel in the House,” John Dunn demonstrates how the poem's depiction of “the great” male with his “small” wife provides an analogy for its depiction of “God's relationship to the [man's] soul” (212). Patmore's assertion, however, that an experience of divine love can only be achieved through loving an angel in the house places the male loses his ability to connect to God and thus, the innate sense of superiority and dominance upon which his masculine identity constitutes itself.

Thus, it becomes clear that this male-defined model of femininity aligns itself perfectly with the Baconian paradigm of science. These systems, through both science and social convention, attempt to ensure masculine superiority by defining masculinity through its ability to dominate female forces, embodied by nature and the ideal wife. Once upset however, by Darwinism and by developing notions of the intellectually curious and socially autonomous figure who will develop into the New Woman, the entire concept of masculinity and thus, culturally prescribed male identity, was called into question. Just as the shift to Darwinism uprooted scientific anchors for masculinity, the emergence of the New Woman destabilized masculinity as it was secured in relation to the angel in the house. While Patmore provided a clear definition of who the angel in the house was and how she would behave, no such clarity existed for the confusing and fractured notions of the New Woman taking shape in the nineteenth century. A significant element of her power and fright located itself in the fact that women were defining her for themselves. Rather than allowing men to appoint them a role in society, as was the case for the angel in the house, women themselves were taking responsibility for defining the New Woman (Ledger 10). This sense of initiative and female power, combined with the fact that there was no clear definition of who the New Woman was, made this model “elusive,” and a particular “challenge to the...homogeneous culture of Victorianism which could not find a consistent language by which she could be categorized” (11). This confusing new model of an increasingly autonomous, sexually empowered, and assertive female figure also posed a threat to contemporary conceptions of masculinity.

The textual response to such dramatic social and scientific shifts manifests itself similarly throughout *Frankenstein*, *The Strange Case of Dr.
Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, and Dracula. All three of the novels self-consciously suggest the existence of such a masculine crisis by dramatizing this loss in masculine scientific power through the male scientist's ultimate subjection to a feminized nature. In each text, male scientific endeavors either backfire and leave men at the mercy of nature and their creations, or become subordinate to more subjective practices of superstition and mythic authority. All such subversions in the male scientists' expectations work to convey the contemporary vulnerability of masculinity at this time, which so founded itself upon scientific principles and their proposed logic of male superiority to feminized forces.

The Failure of the Male Scientist

Mary Shelley's Frankenstein contains multiple scenes in which the failure of the male scientist becomes apparent, reflecting contemporary male insecurities over the shift that has transformed scientific pursuits, once empowering and demonstrative of man's innate superiority over processes governed by a feminized system. The novel first demonstrates its consciousness of this shift and the notion of scientific forms and ideas becoming obsolete when a young Victor Frankenstein asks his father about the philosophy of Cornelius Agrippa. Frankenstein Sr. responds to his young son's interest in this outdated scientist by flippantly telling him not to "waste [his] time" on such "sad trash" (Shelley 21). This moment ultimately catalyzes Victor's obsessive pursuit of the type of science against which the Shelleys' doctor was contemporaneously debating, one centered on the notion that electricity and its ability to channel the divine carried the power to animate life.

Later, when describing the moment at which he begins to research this animating power, Victor at more than one point characterizes this search as one in which he “pursued nature to her hiding places,” the latter of which also describes the “moon” as it “gazed upon [his] midnight labor” (32). This brief gesture to female nature as the means by which Victor will make his discovery represents a clear nod to the Baconian system, however Victor's eventual placement in a position of reduced agency and apparent misery as a result of this scientific endeavor evidences a clear failure on behalf of this scientific paradigm. The secrets Bacon so encourages scientists to extract from nature in order to assert man's power over her only make Frankenstein a slave to the knowledge he gains and the destructive monster that it causes him to create. Victor's attention to the moon's gaze furthers this notion of nature's ultimate power over the male scientist as she casually supervises such endeavors through the eyes of a classic symbol of femininity. Thus, from the outset of his scientific pursuit, it becomes apparent that science can be easily overridden, particularly the vein of science through which the male derived a significant sense of his masculine superiority.

Frankenstein's most notable textual depiction of the failure of the male scientist appears in Victor's realization of his life's work, usurping the biological role of the female and creating monstrous life. As Victor ardently awaits the animation of his creature, the moment to which his entire life has lead him, he describes the disgusting “dull yellow eye of the creature” as it opens, its first movement as “convulsive motion agitated its limbs,” and the way in which the “beautiful” features he chose for the creature "only formed a more horrid contrast" with the repellent and unnatural features of this being whom Victor confesses he was “unable to endure” (34). This description of Victor's attempted assumption of the female's role in the process of reproduction indicates a compensation for the masculine threat imposed by the shift to Darwinism. By overtaking the now all-powerful, feminized nature, the figure of the male scientist has textually reclaimed his masculine power over her. However, this reclamation proves unsuitable as it leads to the creation of a wretched, dangerous monster, rather than the expected pinnacle of male perfection, reasserting nature's superiority over the scientist. Frankenstein's self-professed
repulsion at the monster’s initial animation only reinforces this personal failure.

The descriptions surrounding the process of creating the monster itself also call science into question by infusing it with the supernatural. Upon his initial pursuit of the “animating power of life” it seems as though Frankenstein would have been well-served to take superstitious heed of the graveyard. This muddles objective modern science with the superstitious qualities that it attempts to reject. Victor describes how his research ultimately leads him to study “the natural decay and corruption of the human body” by unearthing buried corpses. While he admits that this would be frightening work for most, Frankenstein justifies his indifference to the process by explaining that in his youth, his “father had taken the greatest precautions that [his] mind should not be impressed with supernatural horrors,” and adds that he did not ever “remember having trembled at a tale of superstition” (30). While seemingly innocuous, this admission implicitly questions the validity of rational science, asking readers to ponder whether Victor’s early exposure to such superstitions might have prevented him from such excavations and thus, creating such a horrific monster. Again, the text actively questions the validity of objective science seemingly in favor of supernatural fears by raising the question of whether such superstitions might have spared its characters the destruction and hardship wreaked by the monster that such objectivity allowed Victor to create. This questions the rationality with which the male scientist is expected to conduct his work in favor of often-belittled superstitious notions, again pointing to a weakness in contemporary scientific thought.

Stevenson’s The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde demonstrates a similar sense of male scientific failure. Jekyll’s laboratory is, at the end of the novel, found looking “as though [the result of] an experiment in which the unhappy man had been prevented” (Stevenson 49-50). Not only is Jekyll deprived in this passage of the title of scientist, but it is suggested that his “experiment” was never even attempted, let alone productive. While we are aware of Jekyll’s scientific undertaking and accomplishment, no matter how wretched, the text’s deliberate refusal to acknowledge what Jekyll has done demonstrates its apparent opinion of the magnitude of his failure. This, paired with Lanyon’s previous description of Jekyll’s endeavor, despite his firsthand experience of his friend’s transformation, as “unscientific balderdash” allows the text to deride any notions of Jekyll’s relative, although destructive, scientific achievement as completely inconsequential (14). This external refusal to admit that Jekyll has achieved anything, whether good or bad, asserts the extent to which the male scientist’s efficacy has been called into question by his contemporary social deprivation of divine power.

Also indicative of the male scientist’s socially problematic powerlessness are the text’s animalistic descriptions of Hyde and the ease with which he overpowers Jekyll. In his own statement of the events, Jekyll asserts that he “fell in slavery” to Hyde, slowly “losing hold of [his] original and better self” (66, 70). He admits that after creating Hyde, he felt the “animal within” threatening to overtake him at any moment (73). It becomes clear, not only that Jekyll is at the mercy of the overpowering Hyde, but that his civilized, masculine, scientist self is being actively usurped by one who hisses, “snarls” as a “savage,” cries “out like a rat,” jumps “like a monkey,” and screeches “as of mere animal in terror” (16, 17, 44, 46, 48). Hyde’s overpoweringly animalistic qualities demonstrate the power nature exerts over Jekyll’s scientific undertaking, suggesting that science, once a process that allowed man power over nature, only subjects him to nature, through Hyde, now more than ever before. The text’s mixture within Hyde of such primal characteristics and a marked sense of femininity not only subject Jekyll to nature, but nature as a dominant feminine force. Jekyll’s loss of control to one “knit to him closer than a wife,” one described as being on the verge
of “hysteria,” characterize Hyde as an overpowering feminine force who easily dominates his creator in a markedly animalistic way (77, 58). As Jekyll loses control over his ability to resist transforming into the beast-like Hyde, nature’s power over this male scientist is reaffirmed, problematically placing masculinity at her mercy and actively demonstrating the slipping grip of masculine power over its feminine opposite.

Science functions similarly in Bram Stoker’s Dracula as in Frankenstein and The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. The text’s most obvious abandonment of science appears in Dr. Van Helsing’s desertion of his scientific practices, those for which he was sent to employ in order to save Lucy from the, as yet, unknown cause of her deteriorating health. Once Van Helsing suspects the involvement of a vampire in causing Lucy’s illness, he discards his modern scientific practices in favor of mythic remedies in order to save her. Rather than using modern instruments or cures to aid Lucy’s recovery, Van Helsing brings “wreaths” teeming with “wild garlic” to place around her neck and on her windowsill, Dracula’s point of entry into her home (Stoker 157). Rather than immediately relying on simple blood transfusions or a diagnosis of anemia, Van Helsing interprets Lucy’s symptoms through legend and superstition and attempts to remedy her sudden illness through an unconventional overuse of garlic. This unexpected shift on Van Helsing’s part demonstrates the contemporary crisis in masculine scientific thought by rendering science completely ineffective in the face of what seems to be an unstoppable monster, and instead making legend, religion, and folklore the only tools through which Dracula’s threat can be mediated.

In the cases in which Van Helsing does resort to objective science, he does so in conjunction with such superstitious remedies. He fuses the two when he is forced to both replace Mina’s blood with transfusions as well as use crucifixes and garlic in order to save her from Dracula’s interference. The text’s depictions of such a fundamental dualistic collapse ultimately works to demonstrate masculinity’s contemporary vulnerability. In “Kiss Me With Those Red Lips,” Christopher Craft takes up the issue of these collapsing binaries and argues that the “oscillation” thus pictured in the text between Dracula’s “vampiric transgression” and Van Helsing’s “medical correction” of such transgressions, and the blur such interferences make in the distinction between this science/legend binary “exercise the text’s ambivalence toward...fundamental dualisms” in nineteenth century British society. Craft argues that Van Helsing’s most important task, as “protector of patriarchal institutions,” is to “reinscribe the dualities that Dracula would muddle and confuse...but Dracula as a border being...abrogates [these] demarcations,” making “such distinctions impossible” for Van Helsing to sustain (117). This collapse threatens the distinction in gender between masculine and feminine, which Van Helsing, as the text’s conventional paternal figure, must try to uphold in order to maintain a semblance of traditional patriarchal order. As he administers transfusions of the male characters’ blood to Lucy, and Dracula subsequently drains her of these attempts at revival, the gender binary is collapsed. The mixture of the bodily fluids of all of these male characters in Lucy’s body, and their subsequent abstraction from her by the ambiguously gendered Dracula, collapses this male-female divide at the most fundamental level. Not only have the fluids of these males been mixed with each other, a compromise in heteronormativity, and thus masculinity, itself, but they are also mixed with that of Lucy, an emblem for Victorian femininity, and subsequently deliberately consumed by a figure who embodies this consumed mixture of masculine and feminine. Thus contemporary science, in the form of these blood transfusions, works to destabilize masculinity as it breaches the division between male and female at a literal level.
Use of Embedded Narratives for the Female Voice

These texts also employ an epistolary form in order to demonstrate a restriction in male agency and control, further reflecting the masculine crisis resonating in contemporary British society. *Frankenstein* uses a frame narrative, over which the ambiguous female figure, Mrs. Saville, resides, removes control over the narrative from the male figures who tell and create it, placing it in the hands of an unknown, external, feminine filter. While the monster’s narrative is presumably the most convoluted, due to its placement at the very center of the frame, vulnerable to reinterpretation by three different sources, the narratives of the conventional Western male figures are also vulnerable to distortion as they are filtered by those passing them along. Victor’s story must pass through, and thus be subjected to the interpretation of, both Walton and his sister, taking ultimate control of this story out of his hands. Also compromising is the fact that all that we hear from Walton is filtered by his sister, of whom we know nothing. Both of these masculine figures’ and their stories’ subjection to the control of a female filter functions at a formal level to further demonstrate the problematic loss in the male’s control over his voice, another way in which his power and thus, masculinity are depicted as threatened in the text.

In *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the same convolution of the male protagonist’s story occurs. The majority of the novel is told in the third person limited narratorial style, focalizing on Utterson who has virtually no knowledge of Jekyll’s true behavior. Once Jekyll/Hyde has died, the true story of Hyde surfaces first through “Dr. Lanyon’s Narrative,” and then in “Henry Jekyll’s Full Statement of the Case.” While it seems as if the majority of the narrative attempts to present the story in complete fairness to Jekyll by focalizing upon his oblivious and sympathetic friend, its move to first unearth Lanyon’s biased experience of Jekyll and his alternate identity, and then disclose Jekyll’s own explanation of his mysterious behavior inherently casts a negatively biased shadow on Jekyll’s attempt to defend himself.

Not only has Jekyll’s explication of his failed experiment been tainted and potentially tampered with by the external forces that present it in the narrative, but his own agency in the process of transcribing what has occurred is also questionable. Jekyll decides to write this statement once he finds he has no control over his transformations into Hyde and is in danger of running out of the mysteriously contaminated powders which ever allowed for this transformation to take place. Jekyll admits that the moment in which he finishes his transcription of the story “is the last time…that Henry Jekyll can think his own thoughts or see his own face (now how sadly altered!) in the glass” (Stevenson 78). The structure of this sentence and its parenthetical is ambiguous. Is the despaired-over alteration located in Jekyll’s face, his thoughts, or both? This ambiguity makes Jekyll’s own narration of his case unreliable. We are again forced to question the reliability of this statement when Jekyll admits that “the throes of change” might very well “take [him] in the act of writing” and, should this happen, “Hyde will tear [the statement] to pieces,” but also admits that “if some time shall have elapsed” after Jekyll has finished and *then* Hyde finds the document, that he might not destroy it after all (78). Jekyll’s admission of his own lack of control over the document’s fate, due to his unreliable mental state, his vulnerability to transformation, and Hyde’s own ability to tamper with the document work to further convolute Jekyll’s story strips him of his masculine agency in telling his story and subjects it to that of the disapproving Lanyon and Hyde’s animalistic, feminized self.

*Dracula* also expresses this sense of masculine instability through its portrayal of the female usurpation of the male voice. Mina Harker, the female protagonist of the novel proves herself an expert at shorthand, a manner of typing in which words are systematically abbreviated. Mina, the only person within close proximity of her friend
Lucy as she unwittingly succumbed to Count Dracula's attempts to transform her into a vampire, recorded the sequence of events. Once Dr. Van Helsing arrives to attempt to save Lucy and thwart Dracula, he asks to read her record of the events. Because the diary is in her shorthand, Van Helsing will, presumably, be unable to read it, but without telling him, Mina gives her notes to him anyway. She admits, in her diary entry recording this interaction with Van Helsing, that she “could not resist the temptation of mystifying him a bit” and blames this small flare of mischief on the “taste of the original apple that remains” in the woman's mouth. It is then that Van Helsing must ask Mina to read her record of the events because he does not know how to read her shorthand. She admits “by this time” that her “little joke was over, and [she] was almost ashamed” so she instead hands him the “typewritten copy” that she had all along (Stoker 217-218).

This interaction clearly demonstrates the control Mina retains by writing such records in a coded manner, illegible to all the men in her company. Van Helsing’s gleeful and “grateful” reaction to Mina handing over the legible materials, which “open the gate” to this mystery for him further suggest the power Mina wields over this narrative, as it is later decided that she will retypewritten copy” that she had all along (Stoker 217-218).

entire story, subjecting the male stories and presences in the narrative to her own filter and interpretation. As a feminized figure in his own right, Hyde does the same for Jekyll's narrative, allowing all three of these texts to display a sense of male vulnerability and loss in control to the female through their formal construction.

Neutralizing the New Woman

In an attempt to dismantle and undermine the powerful feminine forces threatening contemporary masculinity, these texts move on to condemn the figure of the New Woman, or in Frankenstein's case, her predecessors, in order to neutralize the threat of the feminine overtaking the masculine as the dominant gender. In order to vilify this New Woman figure, these texts portray her in monster form, using textual monsters to convey contemporary fears over her violence, rejection of maternity, and sexual aggression, all qualities which worked to imbue this new female figure with a sense of masculinity that threatened the masculine/feminine duality upon which men and patriarchy relied. By infusing these frightful textual monsters with characteristics so contemporarily emblematic for the New Woman, these texts actively work to vilify and destabilize her position in society, giving the male an opportunity with which to reclaim his social dominance.

Frankenstein's characterization of the monster as a socially marginalized figure allows him to inhabit the same social space at this time as contemporary forward-thinking females who wished to engage in the intellectual and political realms of society from which they were excluded. Frankenstein's monster inhabits a feminized space in his marginalization from society. Clearly demonstrating the intellectual and emotional capacity to partake in and benefit society, he remains excluded solely on the basis of his physical characteristics. This places Frankenstein's monster in a similar position to women of this time who were largely barred from matters of the intellect due to their biological sex. Much like the later emerging New Woman, the monster repeatedly attempts to defy the
practices of those shunning him. Just as the monster tries to integrate himself into society through the DeLacys, the New Woman attempts to do so in her attempts to break into the intellectual sphere by seeking primary and secondary education. Both are met with resistance and constructed as a threat, the monster immediately assaulted by those he tries to help, and the New Woman derided as masculine and a danger to the traditional family when looking beyond the confines of the home.

This text’s primary demonstration of this sense of forced exclusion appears in the scene in which the monster is violently shunned from the DeLacys’ home. After months of sitting by, silently helping the family through a harsh winter while teaching himself how to speak and read, the monster decides to approach the patriarch of the family, in an attempt to integrate himself into their family. While the blind Mr. DeLacy listens to the monster, because he is unable to register his revolting physical appearance, “Felix, Safie, and Agatha,” the rest of the DeLacy family, enter and immediately regard the monster with “horror and consternation.” The monster then recounts how “Felix darted forward, and with supernatural force, tore [him] from his father to whose knees” the monster clung (Shelley 91). This scene functions to equate Frankenstein’s monster with the similarly marginalized intellectual woman of the time, like Mary Shelley herself, who was so actively and painfully refused from the intellectual company of her male companions (Poovey). While this scene constructs the monster as one with whom to sympathize, his unjustifiable violence in killing Victor’s cherubic little brother, subsequent allowance of an innocent young woman to die for this crime, and his brutal murder of Elizabeth, a highly celebrated and idealized female figure in the text, demonstrate the danger of such a sexually ambiguous figure to the noble, celebrated female figures in society and their innocent young charges. By socially equating the monster to the progressive female in contemporary society, and then making him responsible for such atrocities, Frankenstein works to destabilize positive opinions of the female figures who will contribute to and fight for the validation of the New Woman. This restabilizes masculinity by implicitly placing the traditional female figure, whose passivity enables masculine dominance, above that of the marginalized monster whose social equivalent is the threatening New Woman.

The monster’s potential mate is also constructed as a progressive feminine threat through concerns over her unbridled sexuality and her ultimate destruction because of it. After toiling away over the creation of a new, female, monster, in order to meet the demands of that existing, Frankenstein decides to destroy her before she is ever even animated. He defends his decision by stating that “she might become ten thousand times more malignant that her mate,” and that the female monster might even “delight, for its own sake, in murder and wretchedness.” Continuing to explain his fears, Victor reaches the horrified realization that “she might turn in disgust” from the existing monster “to the superior beauty of man,” and comes to his final, least horrified conclusion, that even if this female did desire her male monster counterpart, “a race of devils would be propagated upon the earth” (115).

Frankenstein’s need to inhibit the primary biological function of both females of the human race, as well as that of the female monster, demonstrates a fundamental fear of female sexuality, especially that which might exist uninhibited by the monster and his lack of society. Frankenstein’s failure to simply disable the female monster’s reproductive system suggests a fear not only of her ability to propagate this new monster species, but of her potentially deviant sexuality in general. His anxiety over her potential transgression into desiring man, rather than her monster mate, with whom she would be unable to reproduce, further the text’s condemnation of female sexuality that cannot result in the creation of a new being. His horrified revelation that he is bringing another monster into the world and
subsequent destruction of the female monster demonstrate the threat of unrestrained female sexuality, embodied in contemporary society by the New Woman, to masculinity, the foundation of patriarchal power.

Hyde's disruptive monstrosity in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is also representative of the threat imposed by the figure of the New Woman. Hyde merges the masculine and feminine within his monster body to represent what were seen contemporaneously as alarming perversions in gender by the developing New Woman. Many of Hyde's qualities are congruous with contemporary cultural descriptions of femininity. While Jekyll attempts to mediate the domestic space of his home, by differentiating his private self from his public masculine identity, he finds he cannot, and instead relies upon Hyde to aid in this transition as one would a wife. Hyde's description as “a sort of murderous mixture of timidity and boldness” conflates traits emblematic of the masculine and the feminine into his single monstrous body (Stevenson 18). This parallels Hyde with a New Woman-like wife, suggesting how she, after mixing traits of masculinity and femininity, can easily transform into the demon of the house. Hyde contributes the same terror and division perceived in the New Woman, allowing this text to condemn her ambiguous mix of masculinity and femininity through its display in an irredeemable monster. Hyde's invasion of Jekyll's previously peaceful existence demonstrates the social destruction of which this New Woman figure is capable and helps to reestablish masculinity by vilifying the autonomous feminine figures who threaten it. Hyde's representation of the feminine, despite his apparent characterization as a male, manifests itself most symbolically in his identifying feature: the appearance of his hands. Jekyll's primary manner of recognizing that he has transformed into Hyde is by the “corded, knuckly” hand, “thickly shaded with a swart growth of hair” that meets his gaze, replacing his own which is described as “large, firm, white and comely” (88). While the juxtaposition of Hyde's hairy hand against Jekyll's might suggest a difference in species, hair in nineteenth century Britain, as Doane and Hodges cite in “Demonic Disturbances in Sexual Identity,” was largely emblematic for the Victorian woman. Hair evoked a woman's buried energy, a trait potentially threatening to the man attempting to control her. This particular power, as Doane and Hodges point out, becomes even greater as Stevenson uses it in relation to Hyde, due to its ability to signal that such a drastic transformation has taken place. Hyde's distinct identification with this contemporary female emblem, allows his character to inhabit a similar space as the New Woman, a figure who was seen as a dangerous embodiment of both the masculine and the feminine.

The text moves beyond Hyde's strangely feminine hand description to further develop Hyde's characterization as a figure emblematic of the same problematic mixture of masculine and feminine seen in the New Woman in various other descriptions. Lanyon describes Hyde upon their meeting as one “wrestling against the approaches of… hysteria,” an emotional state used to describe a deeply unsettled woman, traditionally attributed to a “disturbance of the uterus” (Stevenson 58, “hysteria” def. 1). In Jekyll's own narrative of his slow loss of control to this monster, he describes Hyde as being “knit closer to him than a wife,” suggesting his habitation of a feminized space, placing Hyde in the same position as a married New Woman horrifyingly bound to her disapproving spouse (Stevenson 77). Jekyll's description furthers this parallel between the social space of Hyde and that of the New Woman when he mentions how Hyde “resented the dislike with which he himself was regarded.” Hyde's resentment of social judgments and marginalization of his character allow him to occupy a similar inferior social space as Frankenstein's monster who also bears a representation of the New Woman.

*Dracula* too derides the New Woman and her “overt” sexuality through its characterization of the women whom the Count turns into
vampires. When faced with the threat of Dracula's female vampire companions, Jonathon Harker becomes overwhelmed by a passive sense of desire. Instead of initiating contact with the women, he submits to his desire for them to penetrate him, both threatening his status as an active masculine agent, and his life. Harker describes the vampiric female aggressors in his initial encounter as inspiring within him both "longing and at the same time some deadly fear." He goes on to explain their advances and his subsequent "wicked desire" for the vampires to "kiss [him] with those red lips." As one of the females makes her way over to Harker, he describes the feeling of the "soft shivering lips on the supersensitive skin of [his] throat, and the hard dents of the two front teeth." After this final advance, Jonathon can do nothing but "close his eyes and [wait] in languorous ecstasy" (Stoker 48-49). The threat that these female vampires pose to Harker's well being indicates anxiety over the subversion of traditional female passivity in favor of overt sexual expression. The vampires' subversion of these gender norms threatens Harker's masculine identity by assuming the male role as aggressor and placing him in a feminine position of passivity, welcoming penetration instead of desiring to penetrate. These "sexually aggressive concubines depict a reversal of categorical gender sexual roles" putting these "vampire wives/daughters" in a position to "usurp the male prerogative of initiating sex" (Brock 125). Deviations from this standard, on behalf of the woman, are depicted in the novel as a representation of her physical and moral degeneration into monstrosity. The threat of death implicit in this particular female-initiated sexual encounter obviously marks the text's interpretation of this reversal as horribly wrong as well as threatening to her male subject.

The text continues to deride notions of female autonomy and removal from traditional domestic roles in its portrayal of the female monsters' demonstrations of perversions in maternity, as they prey only upon innocent children. These sexually charged vampire women not only seduce men, but they use their physical beauty to lure helpless young children into their clutches in order to feed on their blood, their only source of nourishment. When Van Helsing confronts Lucy in her monstrous form, she is, at one point, described as one transformed into a figure filled with "heartless cruelty" and "voluptuous wantonness" As she sees her adoring friends from another life, she draws back "with an angry snarl" and "with a careless motion," flings "to the ground" the child from whom she was drinking, "callous as a devil." Vampire Lucy remains stoic as the child gives another "sharp cry" in response to her "cold-blooded act" (Stoker 250-251).

This act itself represents the ultimate embodiment of contemporary fears of the New Woman and her rejection of motherhood. Lucy has reversed the process of nursing by drinking from this child, and clearly evidences her animalistic lack of concern for the child's well being by carelessly tossing it to the ground. The female vampire's avid defiance of feminine gender prescriptions in her overt physical sexuality and challenge to expectations of female maternity allow this odious figure to inhabit the space of the New Woman, vilifying this contemporary cultural figure. This subversion of what is expected to be an inherent sense of maternity taps into man's anxieties over his inability to halt the potential transformation and destruction of the traditional family, by the mother, wrought by changes in feminine models.

Dracula himself also embodies the New Woman's threat to the angel in the house and the male-dominated family. Judith Halberstam develops the concept of this anxiety further in her assertion that Dracula, "blends power and femininity in the same body," demonstrating a textual reversion to the one-sex body, corrupting and transforming venerated female figures into callous sexual monsters as he makes them into vampires (Halberstam 344). Dracula's infusion of masculine sexual power into the novel's female characters, as well as his own inhabitation of feminine qualities liken his threat to that of the emerging New Woman. Dracula distorts the
process of reproduction as he is the only one of his kind with the ability to reproduce, while female vampires are left to defy any sense of maternity by preying on children and cruelly tossing them to the ground, in a similar way to Hyde when he tramples the little girl, once they have satiated their thirst for children’s blood.

In a startlingly similar way to Hyde, Dracula’s physical differences to his human companion are partially emblematized in Jonathon’s description of his hands, the backs of them “had seemed rather white and fine; but seeing them...close” they appeared “rather coarse” and showed “hairs in the centre of the palm” (Stoker 25). Again, we see this female emblem appear as a distinguishing characteristic for a sexually ambiguous monster figure, demonstrating a disturbing physical link between the woman of nineteenth century and this destructive monster. Also suggesting Dracula’s reflection of the New Woman is Van Helsing’s description of the vampire as not having a “full man-brain;” he is no doubt “cunning and resourceful, but he be not of man-stature as to brain” (401). Van Helsing’s detraction from the ease with which Dracula seems to outwit the four men against whom he is working appears in his description of his acts as attributable to mere manipulation and cunning, attributes commonly ascribed to women, since Genesis, who manage to outwit their male counterparts. Van Helsing’s assertion that Dracula, while he may appear to be smart, is simply not of the intellectual constitution of a real man places him in the same socio-intellectual space as New Women attempting to break into the intellectual sphere. This reasserts masculine dominance and superiority over such marginalized individuals who might appear to be of this “man-stature,” deriding their triumphs as manipulative and snake-like, rather than valid and earned. All such characterizations of the New Woman-figure’s horrifyingly destructive tendencies and subversions in its intellectual capability demonstrate deliberate textual attempts to maintain traditional male strength and dominance over this convoluted and monstrous emerging feminine form.

While these texts vilify the figure of the New Woman in order to offset a significant threat to traditional masculinity, they further attempt to reestablish masculinity as the unquestionably dominant gender through their positive characterization of the angel in the house. These texts’ efforts to identify and celebrate the angel in the house present her as the only viable model to ensure the success and health of the family. Such depictions glorify her as an ideal, compassionate, pillar of passive support to her dominant male counterparts, while those of her absence and destruction all result in the eventual annihilation of the family unit, or its cornerstone: the dominant male. These texts thus assert the importance of the angel in the house in order to maintain patriarchal norms and masculine dominance by ensuring the survival and dominance of this submissive female model.

Frankenstein openly explores familial structure, strengthening notions of the importance of the traditionally domestic maternal figure to the health of the family and thus, the maintenance of a masculine-dominant society. The text uses Frankenstein’s abandonment of his biological family, as well as his abandonment of his monster-child to demonstrate the necessity of the private, compassionate care offered only by the angel in the house and her domestic accommodations to the health of the family.

Frankenstein’s downfall becomes inevitable when he forsakes his family for his egotistical devotion to his creation of the monster. The story’s ultimate devastation, wreaked by the separation of masculine work from domestic affections, is directly attributable to Frankenstein’s maniacal devotion to creating the monster which ends in the destruction of his entire family, save one member, at the hands of his unnatural creation. Frankenstein openly acknowledges his voluntary entrance into single parenthood when he celebrates the idea that “no child” would be able to “claim the gratitude of his child so completely as” he (Shelley 23). In conventional reproductive endeavors, a child
would owe his gratitude to both his mother and father, this monster however, will only have Victor to thank once born.

After establishing his solitude in the process of creation, Frankenstein describes his complete disconnection from any sort of compassionate interaction. He openly expresses that he “wished... to procrastinate all feelings of affection until the great object,” the animation of the monster, “which swallowed up every habit of [his] nature, should be completed” (33). Thus, Victor openly states his complete and deliberate removal from any sort of domestic affection. While he anticipates that this will only improve his concentration on the task of creating his monster, in the end it becomes clear, when Victor expresses his utter revolt at the sight of the monster after his “birth,” that he is without the compassion needed to accept the monster as his “child.” Frankenstein, as a male isolated from the compassion of the domestic sphere for such a time, does not have the emotional capacity to look past the monster’s deformities to properly care for and raise his offspring like the angel in the house figure presumably would. This inability exposes the gap between Frankenstein and the monster as an incomplete family unit, headed by a sole paternal creator, and that of the traditional family graced by a female domestic who can provide the emotional care that the monster requires in order to contribute, rather than destroy, the health of both his family and greater society. Had a proper angel in the house been by his side, Victor not only would have avoided such a parental deficiency in himself, due to the frequent exercise and strength of such elements of his self, but the monster would not have been without a caring maternal figure, preventing his lethal episodes of anger and outrage over his complete rejection from society.

Victor, after realizing the error in his ways, even confesses this misguided self-deprivation to Walton. He insists that “if the study to which” Walton applies himself “has a tendency to weaken [his] affections...then that study is certainly unlawful.” Victor continues by asserting that “if this rule were always observed; if no man allowed any pursuit whatsoever to interfere with the tranquility of his domestic affections,” that much of the national destruction and calamity that has occurred throughout the world, the fall of great civilizations, might never have transpired (33). Victor’s recognition of the problematic absence of “domestic affection” at the time of his creation of the monster suggests the destruction that will certainly follow, not only if men turn away from the traditional domestic system, but women as well. For, without an angel in the house to whom a man can turn, such calamity will follow anyway. This statement works not only to guide Walton in his pursuits, but to powerfully suggest, albeit implicitly, that women who break their domestic roles as angels in the house leave contemporary society vulnerable to the same destruction, inherently romanticizing the angel in the house as one with the power to maintain a happy and healthy husband, family, and society.

While Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* depicts a society almost devoid of females, it is through this flawed masculine world that it implements its male concession for the necessity of a female figure to mediate the domestic space, while demonstrating a simultaneous rejection of the female who does not fit the prescriptions of patriarchal norms. In the beginning of the novel, Jekyll experiences an identity crisis due to the fact that he must transition from the public to the private sphere without a female domestic to mediate this transition. The marked absence of females in the novel allows its male characters, particularly Jekyll, to develop their role in the private sphere and their occupation of domestic space, which is usually dominated by women, allowing these bachelor characters to “redefine masculinity” and “remodel the domestic sphere” (Brock 173). These bachelors are given “fluid and mutable...characteristics” which are “usually associated with the feminine,” transforming the “traditional domestic sphere into one that includes the bachelor,” successfully creating a world in which women are not only no longer
wanted, but also no longer necessary (176). Because he must do this on his own, however, Jekyll's masculinity, and thus, his public identity, is threatened by this constant shift into domestic mode, ultimately necessitating his transformation into Hyde. Hyde's ultimate destruction of Jekyll's morality and facilitation of a reclusive life without a wife or family evidence the imperative of such a female domestic figure in order to maintain the life and honor of the male in society.

*Dracula*, alternatively, romanticizes the angel in the house figure through its portrayals of the pre-vampiric Lucy and Mina and its evident horror and despair at the changes they face during their unwitting transformations into female vampires. In their idealized forms, Lucy and Mina are marriage-oriented, subservient to, and reverent of men. *Dracula* clearly demonstrates its preference for women such as these by contrasting them with the horrible, damned female vampire figures, especially that of vampire Lucy. In their early correspondence, Lucy describes Mina and herself as women who “can despise vanity,” because they are “engaged and are going to settle down soon” (Stoker 70). Positing married women as humble and inclined to dislike such a nasty trait allows the text to encourage marriage and the virtue that it must inspire. Lucy goes on to contemplate the fact that “men like women...to be quite as fair as they are,” however “women...are not always quite as fair as they should be,” and goes on to ask Mina why men are “so noble when...women are so little worthy of them” (70-73). In all of these exchanges, Lucy, a highly celebrated and swooned-over female figure in the novel furthers the stereotypes encouraged by patriarchal society, looking to assert the superiority of the masculine over the feminine. Such passages actively work to stabilize contemporary masculinity as the dominant gender by defining a true and valued woman as one who admits and accepts her station below her husband and men in general.

*Dracula* continues to romanticize this male-female, superior-inferior dynamic when Van Helsing discusses the blood transfusions used to save the ailing Mina, once she has become another of Dracula's victims. Van Helsing says with certainty that “a brave man's blood is the best thing on this earth when a woman is in trouble,” he continues by asserting that “the devil may work against [them] for all he's worth, but God sends...men” when they are needed (179). Not only is man the strongest and most suited agent to help a woman in trouble, but this passage reasserts man's connection to God, again celebrating the female's passive reliance upon man and inherently placing her above the sexually ambiguous, destructive monsters, emblematic for the developing New Woman.

While these texts deliberately attempt to expose and reverse contemporary forces jeopardizing masculinity's position as the dominant gender, such attempts to subvert these threats ultimately only reaffirm their power and that of the female in society. Taking such pains to subordinate the New Woman by comparing her to the powerful forces of these textual monsters works less to invalidate her and neutralize her threat to society than it does to reinforce her potential to upset and overcome the patriarchal forces so intent on causing her demise. Similarly, such calculated celebrations of the angel in the house, while promoting traditional feminine submission to the masculine, only demonstrate the importance of this passive group to the constitution of the desired masculine identity, again reaffirming, rather than diminishing, the social power of the woman. Despite working to overcome weaknesses in contemporary masculinity, these texts only further expose the vulnerable state in which the masculine gender finds itself in nineteenth century British society.

**Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank Dr. Colin Milburn and Dr. Peter Dale for their guidance and support, without which, completion of this project would not have been possible.
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