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### Bram Stoker's Americans and Questions of Gender

Bram Stoker identifies America as a place where practicality and utility unite with personal freedom. This depiction is conflicting insofar as such insistence on efficiency and utility might dampen notions of true freedom, and the bustling, industrious society only imposed a different set of constraints on Americans. Stoker's Anglo-Irish and English peers, like Oscar Wilde, William Butler Yeats, and George Moore, felt they would bring art and culture to the barren country through their tours of America, which suggests that these authors perceived the early United States' cultural landscape as lacking. Stoker, however, found the American insistence on practicality in regards to their gender expectations to be less constraining than the traditional gender norms he experienced in England, and he discovered an inherent beauty in the landscape and the people from all levels of population. He found beauty in the efficiency of the cities, grandeur in the solitary mountain landscapes, and, most importantly, artistry in the expressionistic freedom of the people. Regardless of the backdrop and emphasis on efficiency, Stoker believed America to be a place of emotional and expressive freedom, which was vastly different from the "shackles" he felt in England.

The budding writer entered the American landscape as a business manager for the actor, Henry Irving, and the Lyceum Theatre Company Tour in late 1884 to early 1885. Stoker's experiences in America occurred long before publication of his magnum opus, *Dracula* (1897), but the influences the American landscape had on the novel remains apparent. His time in America left a lasting impression on Stoker as it influenced the creation of several of his novels

including *The Shoulder of Shasta* (1895), set fully in the American West, as well as three others titled *The Mystery of the Sea* (1902), *The Man* (1905), and *Lady Athlyne* (1908), all of which incorporate American characters or landscapes. Though his own forays into the American landscape were purely related to theatre productions, Stoker analyzed the countryside with a critical eye by calculating temperature differences and mileage between cities with a curious accuracy. In a lecture at the London Institution, published in a collection later titled *A Glimpse of America*, Stoker acknowledged his fascination with America and that he considered America and England as “the same in blood, religion, and social ideas, with an almost identical common law” but America was immense beyond the English imaginary (*Glimpse* 11). He suggested the size of the country and its vastness were the key factors that allowed its people and principles to differ from those in England. A common tradition or a countrywide set of absolute expectations could not bind the immense and varied American landscape in Stoker’s eyes.

Stoker entered the American landscape during the years following the Frontier’s closure, and in this period, strenuous life on the Frontier enabled more flexible gender roles for both men and women. This is not to say that American women did not feel the strain of Victorian gender norms and ideals, but that American women simply had to focus on survival, especially those women who were traveling west. This principle only concerns upper and middle class women since lower class women working as servants, in factories, or as prostitutes consistently had to disregard propriety for means of survival. Margaret Walsh, a professor of American history, explicitly states, “People on the frontier...can be viewed in a more flexible way encompassing the identity of gender. Both sexes were essential to frontier life” (Walsh 248). In the mid-nineteenth century, twenty years before Stoker’s American tour, strict social conventions could not hold up in the burgeoning society where women often had to take on traditionally masculine

roles. Women approached their new duties with flexibility as they were called to cook, clean, and raise children as well as farming land or running profitable businesses (Walsh 244). Women travelling to the western half of the United States were required to partake in building a homestead, and men were required to cook and clean for themselves as well as do their own laundry. Disproportionate populations, where men far outnumbered women, on the Frontier forced men and women alike to enter the opposite gender realm and to perform tasks not usually associated with their respective genders. They begrudgingly began to disregard Victorian notions of gendered behavior in order to serve their families better. Moving away from those social norms was a means of survival and was a necessity that trickled into generations after, which allowed for men and women to have a certain amount of freedom in regards to their gender roles and take on new positions. However, the period of gendered freedom on the Frontier did not last long; once families were established, Victorian propriety was the standard once again. Stoker adapts the flexible gender roles he observed in frontier America to his representations of not only the American West but other locations.

With this era fresh in his mind, Stoker began to formulate his own assumptions and opinions about Americans. He noted one stark difference between the treatment of middle and upper class women in America as compared to their counterparts in England. He found that the American public held women in the highest regard and from each corner of the country “there [was] greatest deference, everywhere a protective spirit” (*Glimpse* 19). In other words, he believed that women were treated with the utmost respect and chivalry was alive and well. Stoker speculated that in the United States, women could enjoy more freedoms, and by “freedoms,” he meant, “the relaxing of those petty restraints which, with us, are rather recollections or traditions than social needs, or a logical outcome of the spirit of the age”

(*Glimpse* 19). Stoker's stance on female freedom in America involved the lessening of strict and traditional English standards for behavior. The strict notions of propriety imposed upon middle-class English women did not allow them to freely move outside the domestic sphere. Stoker called this traditional gender dynamic "petty" and did not find it logical. Barbara Belford notes in her biography of Stoker that "America fascinated Stoker.... He reveled in America's freedom and openness, a welcome antidote to the strictures of Victorian England," (Belford 190). He believed that American women were liberated from the staunch and restrictive traditions that were so common place in England, and the American female he observed was free to not only "walk abroad as safely as she can remain at home" but she can also be free "to think and act for herself as a young man is" (*Glimpse* 19). Movement outside the domesticated world allowed women to make decisions about their own lives, and, for Stoker, was a marked difference between the treatment of middle-class English and American women.

The American men Stoker encountered also offered a refreshing respite from English propriety. During the tour with the Lyceum Theatre, Stoker had the privilege of meeting with one of his personal heroes, Walt Whitman. Whitman was a pivotal figure in shaping Stoker's perspective on the American male. Stoker viewed Whitman as a "true man" and an ideal albeit aged standard of masculinity to which he held himself; Stoker envied Whitman's literary freedom and wrote, "You [Whitman] have shaken off the shackles and your wings are free. I have the shackles on my shoulders still-but I have no wings..." (Belford 40-41). The idea of a "true man" seems to stem from the freedoms afforded in America where they were unrestricted by traditional custom. Stoker found Whitman's poetry liberating, and he felt "shackled" by Victorian restrictions on conduct and respectability.<sup>1</sup> Stoker was also impressed with the openness of American men outside the literary circle. Stoker felt a certain kinship with the

United States insofar as he felt British citizens and their American counterparts shared the same blood. He attended gentlemen's clubs that were of English design but emphasized hospitality and congeniality (Belford 164). The men of these clubs impressed Stoker by welcoming the outsider with open arms where he was not snubbed or censored but represented.

The contrast Stoker notices between people of the American middle class as opposed to their English counterparts accentuates the two countries' differing views on necessity and propriety. Stoker thoroughly immersed himself in his tours of America, and the creative freedom and openness of the people inspired him. Belford attributes Stoker's time in America as the spark in which he rededicated himself to his writing career (169). America altered the way he understood gender roles. The lasting effects of life on the Frontier expanded the gender roles for both male and females, and Stoker observed American men and women differed from the English as a direct result of such histories. Stoker's experience with bending and fluid gender norms influenced the way he wrote his characters. Quincey P. Morris, the Texan in *Dracula* (1897), is bound and motivated by duty. His practical and reliable nature makes him the obvious choice to aid in the search for Count Dracula, but it is his emotional freedom that makes him an asset, which is a feature the female characters focus on. Since he is the token American character, the novel first presents him as the dutiful cowboy, but upon closer inspection, he is highly feminized. Stoker's earlier and lesser-known novel set in the Shasta Mountain range in California, *Shoulder of Shasta*, presents a similar character, Esse, who, for portions of the novel, disregards strict gender constraints while deep in the American West. The novel first describes her as the dainty but beautiful heiress heading into nature for her health, but her courage and sense of duty is dramatically revealed later in the novel. Stoker's American characters have a fluid approach to their gender constraints; both genders internalize aspects traditionally

associated with the opposite gender, which enables them to obtain the highest amount of expressive freedom. This fluid approach to traditional gender roles represents the social adaptations needed to survive when settlers first ventured into the Frontier; however, Stoker takes this brief period of flexible gender norms, embraces, and extends it years beyond the reality. Stoker's American females possess traditionally feminine characteristics as well as the ability to harness traditionally masculine characteristics and the same principles apply to his American male characters. This duality allows for a more complete character and one perceived as having more freedom.

Stoker explores fluid gender roles in America in his only novel fully set in the West, *The Shoulder of Shasta*. The arguments Stoker makes in *A Glimpse of America* suggest he found that the American Frontier enabled women to harness the power of their gender. In the opening pages of the novel, Stoker uses the age-old stereotype of "the woman in nature" as a way for Esse to gain strength. Esse originally heads to the Shasta Mountains to restore her health, and upon seeing the lofty mountains her "pale cheeks began to show some colour...and her dark eyes flashed with unwonted animation" (*Shasta* 6). Even by simply viewing the mountains, Esse regains vitality. The sudden and drastic change in Esse's health suggests cities, even those like San Francisco, which was stationed firmly in the Wild West, are not conducive to human health and nature. By living in the city, Esse has disconnected herself from nature, which, for Stoker in *The Shoulder of Shasta*, is the source of physical and emotional well-being. The bustling city of San Francisco is detrimental to Esse's health; it is stifling and causing her lethargy, and by entering the wilderness, Esse will experience life in the mountainous countryside and, in turn, regain her health. Though Esse only travels into the mountains for leisure rather than rigorous homesteading, the fact remains that life away from civilization is still considerably more

difficult. It is ironic that Stoker believes Esse must put herself into a relatively perilous landscape in order to regain her health. Nevertheless, in this landscape, Esse must reconnect to nature and restore the unity between her body, and this suggests that the trials found in the American landscape are formative for character.

Esse meets a man called Grizzly Dick to guide her party into the mountains, and Stoker uses Grizzly Dick as a stereotypical epitome of a man in the West. Esse describes Grizzly Dick as a virile man suited up in Native American garb; his “huge bowie knife” gleams at his waist, and “there was about him a free and resolute bearing – the easy natural carriage of one conscious of his power, and that complete absence of fear, and even of misgiving, which marks the King of the Beasts” (*Shasta* 8). The description given marks the quintessential and stereotypical ideal of an American man in the West. Every facet of Grizzly Dick’s being is immense and aggressively male. The Wild West hardened him, and it shaped him, molded him, and made him the apex form of masculinity. He adopts indigenous tradition and assimilates into the landscape. Additionally, women are immediately attracted to him. Esse’s socialite friends find him so “fresh, and wild, and free – so noble a simplicity and manhood” that there is no wonder as to why Esse asks him to visit San Francisco (*Shasta* 114). Even Esse’s fancier friends recognize his manly prowess and his vitality attracts them. However, Grizzly Dick’s jovial nature drastically contrasts his looming appearance. Though he is brawny, dark, and decked with an arsenal of weaponry, Grizzly Dick has a joyful countenance and a great sense of humor. He laughs with great ease and “[throws] back his head and [laughs] with a glee and resonance which plainly [shows] that not only his heart, but all his other vital organs were sound” (*Shasta* 9). This contrast reveals that Stoker’s ideal of the archetypal American man in the West is one who balances his capabilities as well as his nature. If he were only rough, tough, and manly, then he

would be too closely aligned with savagery. He must have considerable skill and proficiency to survive, and he must retain his sense of friendship and chivalry.

While the wilderness setting influences the characters' physical appearance, it also acts as a mode to restore health which contrasts the source of physical well-being found in England and in *Dracula*. While the main premise of *Shasta* lies in resolving Esse's frailty, the characters in *Dracula* are also on their own unique quest to ward off sickness. However, for the characters in *Dracula*, specifically the women, the threat of vampiric infection forces them to find safety indoors. The contrast between healthy locations acts as a commentary on the country's overall health. In England, smoke from the industrial boom caused miasmatic fog and permeated the air, which drove citizen indoors to escape the poisons. Nevertheless, Lucy and Mina are not always safe indoors. Count Dracula has the ability to travel through the night air as "quaint little specks floating in the rays of the moonlight" (*Dracula* 65). His ability to transform himself into dust particles renders both the indoors and the outdoors in Europe unsafe. It is no wonder that Stoker found the wide, sweeping landscapes of the United States refreshing. The setting found in *The Shoulder of Shasta* is absolutely vital to the movement of the plot, and this novel could not take place in any other location. The mountain air is free of the smog and pollution found in the city, and it is out-of-doors where Esse can ward off sickness.

It is deep in the American wilderness that Esse learns to thrive and take care of herself. In the face of adversity, she reveals her true nature. In the Shasta Mountains, Grizzly Dick teaches Esse to wield and fire a revolver. It was a necessity for young women to be comfortable with firearms in the West since the men, who traditionally wielded weapons, might not be around to keep them safe, and this idea refers back to the vastness of the country and the smaller population of people inhabiting the edges of the Frontier. Middle class women in England would

have been less likely to find themselves out of doors without accompaniment, but in the West, it is a matter of necessity. Women must feel capable of performing typically masculine tasks. Grizzly Dick has been on a long hunting trip when Esse encounters a bear while out painting, and she finds herself completely alone while facing the beast. When she saw the female bear, her “brain began to throb. She could not think all at once, but her instinct was to remain still, and she obeyed it” (*Shasta* 51). Esse is similar to Mina insofar as she, too, must overcome her body and utilize her intellect to navigate the situation. Her experience with the masculine reminds her that a hunter in this situation would feign death, but her feminine side “felt an almost irresistible desire to scream out” (*Shasta* 51). This inner battle between her instinct and her rationality highlights Esse’s emotional growth whilst being in the wilderness; the setting alters her instinctual response, as her first inclination is to remain rational rather than scream in fear.

Although Esse manages to maintain her composure, the onslaught of bear attacks has only just begun. Stoker specifically notes the genders of the two bears that attack Esse and Grizzly Dick. The first is female bear, which Grizzly Dick kills with his personal bowie knife. This phallic symbol, which is strapped to his hips and displayed for all to see, is plunged into the bear’s heart when a standard rifle cannot do the job. The physicality and brutality of the act is assuredly masculine, and the phallus-like knife wielded by the epitome of masculinity brings down the female bear. After the death of the female bear, Grizzly Dick informs Esse that once the “old gentleman.... sees that I’ve sliced up his missus he’ll come in on the tear” (*Shasta* 53). The “old gentleman” refers to the massive male bear Grizzly Dick has been hunting for days. In a display of courage, Esse decides to face the male bear as he lumbers into the clearing, but her revolver is on the opposite side of the meadow. As the bear charges in fury, Esse wads her handkerchief into a ball and “instinctively threw it at him, throwing it in that high, helpless, over-

arm fashion which is woman's method" (*Shasta* 54). Stoker once again uses the word "instinct" to describe Esse's actions. Her instinct is to throw her "weapon" at the bear in an attempt to disorient it, and then she has time to reach for the more masculine revolver. The combination of the lacy pocket-handkerchief and her quick thinking, heroic actions give insight to the duality of her character. She harnesses a feminine weapon to thwart the male bear. Though the gun administers the final deadly blow, her handkerchief acts as a vital distraction, and this combination indicated that she can dually harness both the masculine and the feminine.

Though Stoker allows Esse gender flexibility and the ability to go beyond the constraints of traditional femininity, these moments are brief and must conclude with an assertion of overt femininity. Esse's conquering of the bear and daring rescue of her friend are tasks based in freedoms that would be unheard of in England. Esse is enjoying the wilderness alone; she is painting and napping in the forest, without accompaniment of a chaperone, and only her revolver beside her. Just this simple act of being out-of-doors alone would be a less likely occurrence for an English woman of a similar class, but the American wilderness allows Esse this freedom. However, for all the empowerment and glory Esse gains by killing the massive bear, she must maintain her girlish femininity. The bear grazed her clothing with his claws and left her virginal white dress ravaged and in shreds; before she can tend to Grizzly Dick, she "threw the remnants of her torn dress around her and pinned them together; this was just enough to protect her modesty and did not impede her efforts" (*Shasta* 56, 61). This line suggests that Esse can be capable as well as feminine, which further blurs the lines of her gender but does not allow her to fully crossover. Though she has just saved a man's life, she must take a moment to make sure her modesty is in order, but as Stoker notes, this brief check of her femininity does not take away from her skill or bravery. She is not tainted by the wild male bear's assault, and she manages to

protect herself with her masculinity to protect her virginal femininity. She can still perform masculine tasks while remaining feminized.

As the bear fight shows, there is a wide gap between Esse and Mina in their abilities to maintain a balance between masculinity. One specific example of this wide distinction between Esse and Mina involves the discussion of guns. Although Stoker gives both women certain amounts of flexibility with their gender roles, Esse harnesses both masculinity and femininity as forms of empowerment, while Mina is trapped between perceptions of overt masculinity and femininity and is at risk of being demonized. The opportunity for the women to wield firearms distinctly depicts this inequality. Esse is quite comfortable around guns. Grizzly Dick teaches Esse how to carry and fire a “heavy revolver” and he asserts that even if she does not encounter a threat while alone in the wood at least “the exercise of carryin’ it won’t do [her] muscles no harm” (*Shasta* 49-50). Grizzly Dick firmly believes that women should carry such firearms regardless of circumstances, and that even if those weapons were not in use, women would still benefit from keeping them near. This is a nonchalant approach to firearms, and it emphasizes the American approach to weaponry. In this period and setting, a gun was an expectation and a necessity where Esse would be in more danger without it. Again, the necessity of such an object overrides traditional gender stereotypes in the American landscape. The novel acknowledges the predominately male tradition when Mrs. Elstree balks at the thought of her daughter carrying a gun “but when she saw that [Esse] soon acquired a certain dexterity in their use she solaced herself with the thought that at any rate they meant protection” (*Shasta* 50). The value of the weapon outweighs the gender bias. This confession also suggests that Esse has sufficiently mastered the weapon, and she can use it with “dexterity.” This confirms a woman’s capability to wield such a weapon in the face of danger.

Women are unable to wield firearms in *Dracula*, which disadvantages them in the fight against Dracula. The group of men wield guns with gusto, and they are at complete ease knowing their destructive power. They intend to use the weapons to kill Count Dracula. Mina cannot join in on the hunt, but they want her to carry a gun for protection. However, Mina discovers she cannot physically carry a gun because “the scar on [her] forehead forbids that” (*Dracula* 510). The scar Mina refers to is the mark Dracula bestowed on her identifying her as one of his victims. It marks her body’s eventual change into an uncontrollable, insidious female figure. This token indicative of femininity is the only thing that forbids her from utilizing the traditionally masculine weapon. The group of men do not object if a woman in these circumstances carries a weapon for protection; in fact, Jonathan Harker insists Mina should carry a revolver (*Dracula* 510). In this instance, tradition and propriety are not hindering her. The dire supernatural circumstances create an environment reminiscent of that in America insofar as necessity is made priority over propriety. It is her body and her ties to femininity that keep Mina from protecting herself, and this only reinforces the divide between her mind and body since her feminine body is exposing her to mortal danger without means of protection.

In the American landscape, Esse’s body does not hold her back as Mina’s does. In fact, Grizzly Dick confirms the West’s vital position in Esse’s transformation. Grizzly Dick believes that Esse “kem up here as white as a lily; but me an’ Shasta soon set her up, an’ she went away like a rose” (*Shasta* 89). This could be read simply as a reference to her poor health at the onset of the novel, but the comparisons to flowers have an obvious connection to notions of femininity. The rugged mountain landscape combined with the tutelage of the quintessential man turned Esse from being naïve, pure, and virginal into a capable woman. The age-old metaphor of a white lily in Victorian literature can only suggest purity and virginity while the rose often stands

for passion and sensuality. This change into a “rose” does not suggest that she is a fallen woman, but she is no longer a white “lily.” The West enabled her transition from her virginal girlhood and her experiences molded her into a woman. The bear tears away part of Esse’s virginal, white dress, and this is an illustration of the American wilderness stripping her of her naivety and purity; the West hardened and wizened her. Grizzly Dick acknowledges that Esse went through a physical change, and it was change in which he took part. This acknowledgement suggests that Esse’s growing romantic interest in Grizzly Dick also instilled a change from girlhood to womanhood.

This transformation occurs after her own sexual awakening. After experiencing such trauma together, Esse begins to fall in love with Grizzly Dick. He became “the man who had saved her, whom she had saved, and with whom she had undergone [an] adventure so sweet” (*Shasta* 66). They share a mutual bond that ties the pair together. However, Esse’s newfound interest in Grizzly Dick is not based on her physical attraction to him, but also her own personal growth she has experienced. She transforms from “the pale girl whose pulse... [was] felt in the veranda” into the woman who “had herself carried the huge bulk of the wounded man up the side of the mountain” as she went through trials and self-discovery (*Shasta* 64). Her feelings for Grizzly Dick are only a byproduct of the discovery of her own power. The landscape pushes her beyond her limits physically and mentally, and she develops into womanhood as a result. The deeper emotional connection she feels when she is near Grizzly Dick is actually indicative of her own inner strength and acceptance of her body.

Furthermore, Esse’s crush on Grizzly Dick wanes soon after she returns to San Francisco. She views her love for Grizzly Dick as firmly belonging “to the school-girl phase of her existence” (*Shasta* 96). Esse suggests that her feelings for Grizzly Dick were the equivalent of a

schoolgirl's infatuation. Her "love" for Dick is actually a love and respect projected onto herself, and she is actually in love with the idea of Grizzly Dick because she harnessed her power in order to save and change him. She loves her mastery over him. By describing her love for Grizzly Dick as no more than a schoolgirl's crush, she takes away the empowerment she felt beforehand. She reduces these complex, nuanced, and arguably introspective feelings to the mere stages of childhood or adolescence instead of understanding her own personal growth. This refusal to acknowledge her own growth suggests that she forgets her personal development when she returns to the San Francisco. In fact, she "quite overlooked if in deed she had not forgotten, the fact of Dick's existence" (*Shasta* 95). The memories of the feats and freedoms accomplished in the Shasta Mountains are slowly fading. They are becoming mythic rather than tangible, and she does not "[connect Grizzly Dick] now with her own life" (*Shasta* 95). If Grizzly Dick is truly a metaphor for her own self-awakening and self-discovery, then the fact that he is firmly rooted in the past suggests the same for her embrace of fluid gender roles. The Esse in San Francisco is no longer a gun-wielding bear fighter. Her movement from Shasta to the city relegates her firmly back into stereotypical femininity rather than allowing her the freedom of gender flexibility.

After she returns to San Francisco, Esse falls in love with a man named Reginald Hampden. He contrasts Grizzly Dick physically, mentally, and emotionally. Hampden is a dandy English painter who is enamored with natural landscapes. The fact that Esse's new fiancé is an Englishman solidifies her regression back into traditional femininity. However, Hampden bounced from institution to institution keeping his "imagination fresh" and unfettered by art school's "inevitable littleness" (*Shasta* 94). His views towards conventional art school indicate that he is a burgeoning Bohemian artist rejecting standards of traditional art, and he is the ideal

character to encourage Esse to embrace nontraditional gender roles. Stoker primes Hampden to be a liberating character, the one who can allow Esse to complete her transition from girlhood to womanhood and retain her empowerment from masculinity. Nevertheless, he does not act in such a manner. Stoker cannot make this scenario viable, and Hampden turns into a patronizing figure who will not even allow Esse to speak for herself. The character who is supposed to be her supporting partner continuously interrupts her and speaks to her in a condescending manner. When she attempts to confess her past love for Grizzly Dick, Reginald, preemptively thinks “as a man of the world knew that, as a rule, the sins which well-bred young ladies have to confess to the fiancés are merely...minor indiscretions” (*Shasta* 96-97). Instead of listening to Esse disclose information in which she finds important and distressing, he jumps to incorrect conclusions cutting her off several times. Even though Hampden finds the “freshness and artless simplicity of Esse...akin to those grand simplicities of Nature,” he does not find value in her (*Shasta* 95). Hampden is superficially in love with the idea of Esse being representative of nature. Grizzly Dick, on the other hand, views Esse in a completely different manner after she saves his life. He reveres her and is completely deferential to her, and he believes Esse “is the truest and bravest comrade that ever a man had,” and she would “do with [him] what she likes, an’ how she likes, an’ when she likes” (*Shasta* 92). Stoker’s epitome of manhood in the West defers all power to a young girl. She proved her mettle fighting a bear and saving his life, and now he respects her autonomy.

Although the novel presents Grizzly Dick as a capable, resourceful figure, he only has those attributes when he is deep in the Shasta Mountains. When Grizzly Dick attempts to assimilate back into society at Esse’s engagement party he is made a fool. He arrives to the event with his “great bulk and free, sinuous carriage” dressed in many shades of plaid, masses of

pleats, and fringed studs to match his newly curled, oiled, and scented hair (*Shasta* 101). The effect is less than charming. The clothing not only restricts his physical movement but also incapacitates him; on the Frontier, Grizzly Dick has status, prowess, and confidence, but in this environment he is reduced to a bumbling sideshow act. Other attendees ridicule his name and his accent calling him “Greezly Dick of Shost-ar.... Crazy Dick Shostoo....” (*Shasta* 100). They take his name, which is indicative of his famous hunting prowess, and make it absurd.

Additionally, he is unable to understand social cues from the socialites in attendance, and they lead him to believe that Esse is waiting for his proposal as a cruel joke. He asks Esse to marry him, and “having spoken, he looked calmly around him, as one does who has done a meritorious action, and done it well” (*Shasta* 107). He does not recognize his mistake; his attempts to assimilate into the higher society fall flat and make him foolish. When he is removed from the wilderness, he loses all credibility. The epitome of a man cannot navigate or survive in high society, and he must remain in his domain to retain any semblance of power.

Nevertheless, once Grizzly Dick understands his mistake and the crowd’s subsequent jeering, he flies into a primal, animalistic rage. He draws his massive bowie knife from his coat, and “with a sudden spring” he catches the man who lied to him “by the throat with his powerful left hand, and held him in a vice” (*Shasta* 109). Like a coiled panther, Grizzly Dick shoots into action. These violent movements are muscle memories, and he depicts the savagery of the American West. Mention of Esse’s distress finally pacifies Grizzly Dick and he regains a level head and his jovial nature. His rage fades as quickly as it comes on, but the implications remain clear. Grizzly Dick, the embodiment of American masculinity, cannot function in a structured hierarchical society. All of his knowledge and skills fail him when in such an intricate setting. In the end, Grizzly Dick ascends into the Shasta Mountains, back to his domain, alone.

Stoker's most famous novel, *Dracula*, features characters who have aspects of the aforementioned gender flexibility, but this flexibility does not come without a high cost. Femininity in *Dracula* leads to corruption and even death. The ultra-feminine Lucy and the highly emotional Quincey both find deaths due to their connection to and acceptance of their femininity. Furthermore, since embracing femininity is dangerous in the novel, the female characters must overcome and reject their own gender to survive Dracula's curse and the male characters must be fully masculine in order to kill Count Dracula. Though there are a few circumstances in which the English characters adapt the opposite gender roles, Stoker's firmness in relegating characters back into their assigned gender reinstates traditional gender norms.

Quincey Morris is a charming and dutiful cowboy from Texas. His male peers recognize him as overtly masculine, but his female counterparts acknowledge his more feminine tendencies. Even upon their first meeting, Van Helsing immediately comments on Quincey's manliness when he looks Quincey straight in the eyes as he says, "brave man's blood is the best thing on this earth when a woman is in trouble. You're a man and no mistake" (*Dracula* 213). The group perceives him as brave without fail, and this quick judgment of character suggests that his masculinity equals bravery and dutifulness. Stoker does not provide a clear description of Quincey's appearance, but that does not affect perceptions of his masculinity. He is entirely red-blooded, hardy, and robust.

Quincey has long been billed as a hardy Texan, and he is the only American character in *Dracula*. As an American, he succumbs to the stereotypical perceptions of his English counterparts. He is an avid hunter and pays close attention to his surroundings. During a conversation about the significance of the Count's boxes of earth Quincey abruptly leaves the meeting to shoot at a bat he saw perched outside the window; he is in the habit of killing every

bat he sees (*Dracula* 254). Although Quincey is unsuccessful in this attempt, his action displays a keen awareness of his surroundings. He alone notices the bat listening in to the group's conversation, and he only involves himself in its destruction. Dr. Seward recollects, "in all our hunting parties and adventures...Quincey Morris had always been the one to arrange the plan of action, and [we] had been accustomed to obey him implicitly" (*Dracula* 322). Dr. Seward's recollection reveals Quincey's undeniable power and his prowess while hunting. Additionally, his status as an excellent hunter solidifies his abilities to kill and dominate another creature. This stereotype stems from a perception of the American West as a place with a built from nothing but a wealth of wild resources. To live in the West, one must be an avid and capable hunter, and since Quincey owns a thriving ranch in the west, then he upholds the stereotype.

The two main cowboy tropes are on opposite ends of the spectrum: on one end, there are the ruthless criminals without morals, and on the other end reside the chivalrous, honorable, but celibate cowboys. Quincey is firmly in the latter category. He proposes to Lucy by asking her to "just hitch up alongside of [him] and let [them] go down the long road together, driving in a double harness" (*Dracula* 85). Lucy ultimately rejects his simple proposal, which leaves him alone and without the prospect of marriage. Although, he hides his breeding well, in moments of pure emotion Quincey's true self seeps through. He uses terms Lucy would be unfamiliar with, and the proposal comes across as comical. The way he confesses his love indicates a romanticized view of a ranch culture. After Lucy rejects Quincey's proposal, he gallantly says, "I'm a hard nut to crack, and I take it standing up" (*Dracula* 87). Momentarily, Quincey drops his tough demeanor, but it returns almost instantly. He will not show emotion to this response, and he takes her rejection as a "man" would without begging or pleading. All of Lucy's rejected suitors maintain their composure after her decision, but Quincey responds differently since there

is a subtle emphasis on his inevitable loneliness. He will “have a pretty lonely walk between this and Kingdom Come” (*Dracula* 87). He states that he will never love another before his death, which seals his fate as celibate. This vow of celibacy is reminiscent of the chivalrous and honorable cowboy who does not get the girl and must ride off into the sunset alone. It also foreshadows his imminent death, and he truly will not love another woman in his lifetime.

While Quincey has a hyper-masculine appearance, his heightened connection to femininity allows him to have a deeper emotional response. He has a stronger connection to the women around him, and he responds emotionally in a way that the other male characters do not. In a letter to Mina, Lucy writes how Quincey “[laid] his very heart out and soul at my feet” but she “[supposes] he saw something in my face which checked him, for he suddenly stopped” (*Dracula* 86). Quincey is not only comfortable with sharing his deepest feeling and emotions with his beloved, he acutely aware of her emotions. He recognizes her apprehension by seeing something in Lucy’s face, which is probably an expression she did not even know occurred. Mina often reflects this same attentiveness and connection to the emotions of others, and thus aligns Quincey with the feminine. After Lucy tells him there is someone else, Quincey tells her “my dear, I’m going to have a pretty lonely walk between this and Kingdom Come. Won’t you give me one kiss? It’ll be something to keep off the darkness now and then” and then he leaves “the room without looking back, without a tear or a quiver or a pause” (*Dracula* 87). His apparent disappointment contrasts his stoic exit. Quincey’s passionate confession of love and his request for one kiss undermines his brave façade. He leaves the room as if he is unchanged or unmoved, but his hidden sensitive connections destabilize his aloof front.

Quincey also shows his connection with the feminine when Mina asks the group to kill her when the time should come. She chooses her words carefully and asks the brave men what

they would give to her instead of outright asking them to kill her. Mina “avoided her husband’s face. Quincey seemed to understand; he nodded, and her face lit up” (*Dracula* 474). Quincey, again, notices the nuance of Mina’s words. He understands what she is asking them to do, and he gives her the support she needs to ask them directly. He is so receptive to human emotion that he can recognize the unspeakable facets of expression where language fails. He is also the first to rise and kneel before Mina, saying, “I swear to you... I shall not flinch from the duty that you have set us” (*Dracula* 475). This exchange between Mina and Quincey sheds a curious light on Johnathan Harker. He is the dandy figure in *Dracula*, and his sprightly clothing and well-manicured facial hair suggests that he cares about his outward appearance, which one would assume would align him more with the feminine. Yet, Mina deliberately looks away from her husband when making this ultimate request. She may not be able to bear looking at her beloved while contemplating her own death, but she also knows Quincey will better understand her. Appearances in the novel do not necessarily correlate with inner masculinity or femininity. Even though Harker looks the part of a dandy, he still lacks the manly strength to do what his feminine empathy tells him he must.

Quincey’s acceptance of femininity seals his fate in *Dracula*. Mortally wounded by Dracula’s henchman, Quincey plunges his great bowie knife into the Count’s heart only to die “a gallant gentleman” a moment later (*Dracula* 540-541). This is reminiscent of Grizzly Dick killing the female bear with his knife of the same make, but this feminized character cannot wield the phallic symbol. Stoker cannot allow a character who bends the confines of their gender to walk away from the narrative unscathed, and Quincey shows his connection to femininity time and time again. Even as he is dying, Mina notices Quincey’s acute sense of emotion as he recognizes

“the anguish of [her] heart in [her] face” (*Dracula* 540). His innate ability to detect emotion lasts until his dying breath.

As Quincey’s fate portrays, flexible gender roles in *Dracula* are deadly and insidious, and two other characters in the novel, Lucy and Mina, have a similar proclivity for pushing the confines of their gender. It is important to preface discussions of two other highly feminized characters in *Dracula*, Lucy and Mina, insofar as the definition of “femininity” varies between the two. Close analysis of both characters ultimately suggests that within the context of the novel, femininity leads to corruption and death. However, femininity associated with Lucy is vastly different from the type of femininity associated with Mina. From her opening letters, Lucy is a boy-crazy, dollish, coquette who would prefer the attention of three husbands rather having to choose just one (*Dracula* 87). Lucy revels in the attention of her suitors and she exudes new, fresh-faced, girlishness. She is a girl on the cusp of womanhood, beautiful and ready to align herself firmly with a more matronly view of traditional femininity. Additionally, all the men in her life absolutely adore her, and they all want to marry her as Dr. Seward, Quincey Morris, and Lord Godalming offer their proposals in succession. She is tantalizing and a near-ripe fruit to be picked. The transfusions Lucy undergoes are intimate affairs between lovers. Lord Godalming gives her the first transfusion as it is his duty as her fiancé, but Dr. Seward gives her the second since Godalming is in a weakened state. He attempts to describe the sense of pride felt but he can only surmise that “no man knows, till he experiences it, what it is to feel his own lifeblood drawn away into the veins of the woman he loves” (*Dracula* 184). Though the men attempt to save the life of the woman they love, Count Dracula preserves her in in her coquettish femininity at stage between girl and woman with his vampiric venom.

Mina, however, illustrates a matronly, traditional, and highly revered depiction of femininity. From the earliest stages of the novel, she is engaged to Jonathan Harker. She has moved from the flirty, sexual stage of femininity into the role of a traditional wife. In fact, Mina is desexed. The following pages will explain that she cannot embrace any aspects of the girlish femininity or sexuality, as this type of femininity has insidious consequences, in favor for reliance on her “man brain.” She becomes the mother figure of the group and the men hunting Dracula see her as such. She is infected by Dracula’s disease, as Lucy was, but transfusions are not an option for Mina. The passionate and intentional blood mixing is not a viable alternative to restore her health due to the sexual implications involved in the act of transfusing. When she faces the impending consequences of the infection she is described as a poor, shivering lady who clutches her husband and buries her face in his chest but then “[raises] her head proudly, and [holds] out one hand” for Van Helsing to stoop at and kiss it “reverently” (*Dracula* 410). This scene is vastly different from the descriptions of Lucy wasting away whilst waiting for her beau to revive her. Mina embraces her husband and then accepts aid while keeping her pride and dignity intact. She is stately, regal, and queen-like as she accepts help. She will not receive midnight transfusions from multiple men (intentionally) as she must maintain her air of reverence.

Though Mina represents a matronly depiction of femininity, her “man brain” masculinizes her, which enables her to be pivotal figure in locating the ever-elusive Dracula. She is severely constrained by her male counterparts due to her perceived weakness stemming from her gender. In fact, the constraints and relegations she faces almost end up killing her. In *Dracula*, masculinity equates with survival. Mina narrowly avoids death due to her ability to utilize her “man brain,” that is to set aside her feminine tendencies for hysteria and to think

cogently and logically. Van Helsing describes the “man brain” as “a brain that a man should have were he much gifted” (*Dracula* 335). This “man brain” sets her apart from the other female in *Dracula*, Lucy Westenra. Both of these women fall under Dracula’s spell, but they have two very different outcomes. Lucy represents femininity aligned with the savage or the primitive, which was a stereotype of nineteenth century Gothic literature. She represents the irrational body and the corruption of sensuality. Mina, on the other hand, provides a contrast to Lucy’s degeneration. Mina combines a feminine body, which is susceptible to Dracula’s power, with a man’s brain, which allows her to overcome the deadly venom. The contrast between these characters shows the importance of masculinity because both women face the same fate. However, Lucy’s body overcomes her mind, which leads to her downfall, and Mina uses her “man-brain” to overcome her body.

Lucy’s body, in fact, cannot be controlled. At night, under the moon, Lucy takes to sleepwalking. The novel strongly indicates that she is drawn to the creatures and spells of the night, and since the phenomena occurs at night when her mind is at rest, it is specifically her body that is awakened. The sleepwalking divides her mind from her body and makes them two separate entities, and Lucy’s body is much stronger than her mind. The uneven match causes her to fall right into Dracula’s clutches as she enters the churchyard where Mina finds her “half reclining with her head lying over the back of the seat.... she was still asleep. Her lips were parted, and she was breathing...in long heavy gasps” (*Dracula* 132-133). Dracula influences her body while leaving her mind untouched and blissfully asleep. Additionally, threats to women in *Dracula* lurk out of doors. Dracula can only attack Lucy when she goes outside or when she opens the window and invites the outside in. Indoors, he is nothing more than a bat flitting at the window (*Dracula* 136). Lucy eventually succumbs to the vampiric attack on her body and she

dies, but her body still lives. Passion and desire drive her, which is similar to the brood of female vampires Harker meets in the early chapters of the novel. Lucy begins to take children from the neighborhood surrounding the graveyard, and when Van Helsing and his group visit the graveyard to investigate, they find that their poor Lucy's "sweetness was turned to adamantine, heartless cruelty, and the purity to voluptuous wantonness" (*Dracula* 301). This undead Lucy has her feminine sexuality ramped up, and her body is completely taken over and even physically changed by her death. However, she also carries a "fair-haired child" against her breast, which both suggests her would-be prominence as a maternal figure as well as a perversion of motherhood in her current state (*Dracula* 301). Viewing her in such a way acts as both a wistful reminder of what could have been while simultaneously demeaning overt embrace of femininity. Lucy perverts motherhood through the change in her body, which now disregards purity in favor for voluptuousness. Additionally, she is creating her own offspring; she has so much power through her own femininity that she no longer needs a male partner to produce her own children.

Lucy represents a relatively straightforward view of corruption stemming from overt femininity. Her mind succumbs to her body, and she becomes perversely and insidiously oversexed. Mina, on the other hand, walks a more conflicting gender line. She cannot embody femininity, as this would lead to a fate like Lucy's, so she must take on masculine qualities to prevent a similar outcome. Nevertheless, she maintains enough femininity to remain beautiful and a protectable in the eyes of her male counterparts. They still feel the need to shield her from Count Dracula's threats. Mina finds herself confined to an era where she is required by Victorian standards to maintain femininity, but due to supernatural circumstances, her femininity could kill her. She must balance femininity and masculinity in a way that does not tip the scale in either

direction. If she goes too far into the masculine, the dynamics of the novel will render her as corrupt and insidious as the overtly feminine Lucy.

Stoker struggles to find a place for Mina that both fits the period as well as the supernatural world he has built. As a way to confirm her traditional femininity, he has Mina completely discredit the idea of the “New Woman,” which was a new construction of femininity in the Victorian Era. This term referred to women who pushed the boundaries of traditional womanhood in a patriarchal society; they were educated, often unmarried, women who sought jobs and careers outside of the home. The supernatural setting of *Dracula* does not allow women to push the boundaries of set gender norms, and those who pushed the boundaries of their gender end up dead. Therefore, Mina’s dismissal of the “New Woman” should function in a way that sets her definitely apart from their more masculine ideals and roots her in traditional femininity. However, this strategy completely fails when one considers Mina’s role in the novel. She is a typist for the group and she records and transcribes their discussions. She is essentially a secretary, which happens to be the most popular career for the “New Woman.” In an attempt to separate Mina from being a masculinized woman, Stoker only draws attention to the similarities between them.

Mina only survives Dracula’s attack due to her connection with the masculine. The “man brain” Van Helsing continuously praises is exactly what allows her to overcome Dracula’s disease. Mina singlehandedly discovers the whereabouts of Dracula’s body when the group is planning their final attack to kill him. She uses maps, portions of their meetings that she personally typed, and logical deductive reasoning in order to predict Dracula’s route (*Dracula* 503-506). Her conclusions are correct and she ultimately leads the group directly to Dracula, and her mental connection to traditionally masculine notions allow her to participate in this portion of

the hunt. Immediately after she proposes a location, the men decide their positions and strategy without considering Mina's participation, and they are more concerned about who will care for her when they are gone (*Dracula* 580-509). They infantilize her and take away her own agency; they do not consider her participation in the attack on Dracula even though she directly discovers his location with her astute observations. Additionally, Mina's infection at the hands of Dracula is redirected as an offense towards Jonathan. Van Helsing voices the consensus that it is specifically Jonathan's "right to destroy [Dracula]. That, which has wrought such woe to you and yours" (*Dracula* 508). By diverting the power away from Mina, it also strips her of her right to vengeance, and the attack made upon her body is discredited as an attack on Harker's manly pride. This disregards her agency as the threat made directly onto Mina's body and life is left in the hands of her husband.

Discussions pertaining to Mina's femininity and masculinity always consider the body and the mind as two separate and unrelated aspects. One of the ways Mina becomes an absolute asset to the group is through her ability to connect hypnotically with Count Dracula, and she is able to hear the things he hears and understand where he is in the world. However, this process occurs under a very strict set of standards. Van Helsing hypnotizes Mina and "gradually her eyes closed, and she sat, stock still. Only by the gentle heaving of her bosom could one know that she was alive" (*Dracula* 448). Mina must mentally die to have access to the effeminate Dracula, and she is only a body channeling him. In this specific context, her "man-brain" is absolutely useless, and she must completely detach her mind from her body. There are only two ways she can offer assistance: through the utilization of her "man brain" to make complicated, detailed, and information-based connections or she can enter a corpse-like state where she is a mindless vessel for funneling information. These dichotomies do not value the female body and they only

discredit femininity further. Even though she appears to be “helping,” she is not gaining any agency or autonomy. If anything, she is giving up more control by allowing Van Helsing to hypnotize her.

Mina attempts to balance both types of femininity, the girlish and the matronly, as well as masculinity. All of these factors must work together in order for her to have agency and to survive the events of the novel. She cannot be overtly masculine or feminine but only somewhere in between. Mina must navigate the strictures imposed by Victorian setting as well as those thrust upon her by the vampiric disease’s misogynistic nature. As with Esse, Quincey, and Grizzly Dick, characters who gender bend or push the limits of their gender must be punished or firmly returned to the confines of their assigned gender. For Mina, this means that she becomes the ultimate mother. Throughout the novel, she is a matronly figure, but by the end, she has completed her maternal journey and gives birth to a baby called Quincey (*Dracula* 541). She ends the novel in the highest position for a married woman, a mother. Mina solidifies her place as a matronly female, and she has now completed the final stage of that category. She no longer needs to balance her masculinity with her femininity insofar as she marked herself as a mother and she no longer has use for her “man brain.”

This tedious balancing act is reminiscent of the challenges faced by American women on the Frontier. The era subjected these women the same type of gendered constrictions and expectations, but they would have to choose between propriety and survival in the harsher landscape. In *The Shoulder of Shasta*, the main female character, Esse, can embrace her own gender while participating in activities traditionally viewed as masculine, and the setting of the novel allows such fluidity. Stoker cannot allow Mina to have such freedom insofar as he firmly stations her in the heart of English propriety.

The bear fight in *The Shoulder of Shasta* as well as the final fight against the Count in *Dracula* depicts contrast in the way the two events present the female gender. In *Shasta*, characters do not view the embrace of femininity as a weakness. Esse overcomes some stereotypical aspects of femininity, like refusing to scream when she is afraid, but she also harnesses her femininity to, as Grizzly Dick puts it, kill the “biggest grizzly on the Pacific Slope with her nose rag” (*Shasta* 55). However, femininity remains deadly in *Dracula*, and the acceptance of femininity kills both Lucy and Quincey. Mina is only spared because she actively denounces her femininity in favor for her “man-brain.” However, Van Helsing does find a use for her lifeless feminine body in its hypnotic connection to Dracula. This gendered contrast across nationalities insinuates that there is something intrinsic in the American West that changes people, both man and woman. Famed historical scholar, Frederick Jackson Turner, postulated at the 1893 meeting of the American Historical Association that “the wilderness masters the colonist. It finds him in European dress.... It strips off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin.... Little by little he transforms the wilderness.... Here is a new product that is American” (3). America takes an Englishman into its arms and turns that man into an American. Jackson’s frontier theory excludes females, but the development of Esse’s character insinuates that the American West also transforms women.

Stoker presents two separate types of women in *Dracula*; a woman can be girlish, on the cusp of sexuality, and full of desire, or she can begin her transition into matronly motherhood where he is respectable, revered, and her sensuality is neutralized. This dichotomy places strict limits on perceptions of femininity, and, when one considers Lucy’s fate, the novel demonizes characters who overtly embraces sexuality. Esse, in *Shoulder of Shasta*, depicts the transition from girlhood to womanhood in a world where femininity is not disgraced or feared. She, in the

landscape of the American West, has the freedom to transition peacefully. Esse is a culmination of both Lucy, with her coquettishness, and Mina, with her adoption of more masculine tendencies. Esse is the middle stepping-stone between Lucy and Mina. She is able to have her girlhood crush as well as her English husband.

Though Stoker imagined an America where gender constraints were lifted allowing for a wider range of expressivity and emotion, this ideal world does not hold up in his fiction. He found the creative and expressive freedom in America to be uplifting, but Stoker chooses to end both *Dracula* and *The Shoulder of Shasta* in a manner that solidifies the hegemonic gender norms imposed upon society that he attempted to eliminate in his characters. In both novels, the characters who pushed the boundaries of masculinity or femininity are either severely punished or firmly relegated back into the proprietary standards for their genders. Stoker's perception of the American West enabled an environment conducive for natural growth and for flexible gender roles. The landscape in the *Shoulder of Shasta* coupled with the American spirit Stoker endeavors to capture allows for women to completely transition from girl to woman, while the oppressive scenery and attitudes in *Dracula* forces the characters in to specific categories and does not allow them to stray outside of these constraints. Stoker's experiments with subverting gender norms could not hold up in Victorian society, and, therefore, he puts all of his characters neatly back into their gendered boxes.

#### Note

1. Stoker knew Whitman was homosexual, and he was indeed liberated by Whitman's openness. Scholar and English professor Talia Schaffer writes that Stoker's own

homosexual confession remains “reticent,” and can only be understood through close examination of his private letters. Even in the most intimate epistle, Stoker dances around any acknowledgment of his sexuality and can “only hope that [he and Whitman] may sometimes meet and I shall be able perhaps to say what I cannot write” (Schaffer 383).

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