

FROM THE EYES OF MONSTERS: LITERARY TRANSFORMATIVE MONSTERS AS
AGENTS OF EMPATHY

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The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in English.

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DEDICATION

To my loving parents and grandparents who have supported me during my education and my dear teacher and mentor, Katie Lanning

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ABSTRACT

Literary monsters, the embodiments of human fear and anxiety, have existed in narratives for as long as stories have been told. Traditionally the monster is an antagonistic force, but what happens when the audience begins to understand or even identify with monstrous characters—especially when that monster exhibits some level of queerness? By analyzing multiple narratives that feature a monstrous protagonist, I hope to track the evolution of the monster as an empathetic figure. Works such as the medieval poem *Bisclavret* by Marie de France and the Victorian novel *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson are narratives that feature monstrous characters that work to establish a level of empathy with non-monstrous readers. My thesis frames this discussion with a specific focus on critical monster theory in tandem with queer theory and narratology—specifically how monsters’ function as aberrations of gender and sexuality allow us to understand the cultural significance of these monsters and how the narration of a text might alter the perception of the reader.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Undressing Monstrosity: Medieval Queerness in Marie de France’s <i>Bisclavret</i>	9
a. Medieval Queerness in Context.....	11
b. Bisclavret Dressed: The Werewolf and His Wife.....	14
c. Bisclavret Undressed: The Werewolf and His King.....	21
d. Conclusion.....	27
3. What Mr. Seek has to “Hyde:” Queer Narratology in <i>Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde</i>	30
e. Setting Boundaries: Queer Anxiety in Victorian England.....	31
f. Utter Narration: Distant Subjects and Selective Details.....	34
g. Mr. Utterson: Gentlemanly Performance.....	39
h. Mr. Hyde: The Freedom of Intimacy.....	44
4. Conclusion.....	50
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	55

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The monster is a literary construct intended originally for antagonism. It is a creature who, through its existence alone, poses a categorical threat to human beings. Monsters, derived from the Latin word of origin *monstrum*, meaning “a thing that evokes fear and wonder,” speaks to their potential to affect people (wordsense.eu). They exist to reveal and warn us of ourselves through their powers of fear and the sublime. Through their externalized othering, they are inextricably tied to our own identity and their status as being simultaneously superior and inferior, beautiful and hideous, feared and scorned, is ultimately connected to how we as humans view each other. This pattern has been disrupted overtime, however. Rather than being a harbinger of antagonism, the inward significance of the monster figure can achieve a different purpose that requires an understanding of how reflective of humanity monsters are. This relationship between readers and literary monsters can achieve empathy through their innate introspective nature.

Storytellers across history have realized the empathetic potential of the monster, engaging in inversion of the archetypal monster to critique the demonization of real identities by cultural majorities. This inversion has been further amplified by the use of transformative monsters, beings that shift between human and monstrous identities. My thesis aims to examine two particular instances of this repurposing of the transformative monster in order to analyze how the monster operates as a vehicle for empathy. The works examined, Marie de France’s *Bisclavret* and Robert Louis Stevenson’s *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* are narratives that

feature transformative monstrous characters that exist, at least in part, to forge an empathetic bond with readers.

At the core of my analytical work with these texts is monster theory. Officially termed by Jeffrey Jerome Cohen in his formative text, *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*, monster theory analyzes the cultural significance of the monster figure. Cohen posits that monsters are reflective of the fears and anxieties of the culture that they antagonize. Because this antagonism can take so many forms, monster theory often intersects with other theoretical lenses such as race and queer theory. My research focuses primarily on the latter. In this way, I take the tenants offered by Cohen's work and further complicate them by offering a distinct hybridity of theoretical frameworks. Cohen's initial work however, excludes a robust conversation on how storytellers continue to complicate the understanding of the monster figure as a solely antagonistic force. While one of the primary theses of *Monster Theory* identifies that monsters are abject beings, simultaneously attractive and repulsive, the attraction discussed is predicated on the assumption that there is always repulsion. My thesis shows that analyzing the functions of these transformative monsters suspends repulsion completely, leading to an effect on readers that blurs the boundaries between literary monster and human reader.

Although this nuanced view of the monster has existed for a millennium, historicizing the transformative monster is not my primary focus. Instead, I am interested in the ways that transformative monsters establish this empathy. I investigate this through the theoretical lens of literary affect theory, which explores the ways that literature can affect audiences emotionally. While affect theory is at the core of my analysis, both texts require additional theoretical lenses to access and understand how the monstrous figures impart empathy. While monsters are as flexible as humans in the ways that they can be read, I focus particularly on queer elements

surrounding them as just one of the ways we can understand them as cultural others. Both texts approach the monster figure as a queer one in differing ways. Both texts, through their narration, adopt different attitudes towards the queer other, therefore warranting narratological analysis alongside a queer one. *Bisclavret* begins the narrative with the image of a monster and assures the audience that the subject is not the destructive monster of legend. The narrator is invested in showing empathy for the eponymous monster. With *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the narrator actively seeks to censor and omit details that might garner Dr. Jekyll any sort of empathy as a monstrous figure. The presence of narrative agendas establishes a need to not only discuss the effect that the monster figure has on readers, but also how the narrator actively participates in influencing how the readers are affected by the monster. Therefore, as part of my thesis not only will I read these monsters in a queer way, I will also through a narratological lens interrogate the narrators of these texts and their agenda to either impart or impede empathy for the monster. Each chapter works to contribute to understanding how literature uses the transformative monster as a way to create empathy for cultural minorities and spark criticism of their respective cultural attitudes that victimize individuals represented in these monsters.

What distinguishes my work on monster theory is my focus on monsters as beings capable of establishing empathetic connections with readers. Suzanne Keen defines empathy as “a vicarious, spontaneous sharing of affect...” that “can be provoked by witnessing another’s emotional state, by hearing about another’s condition or context, or even by reading” (208). Monsters, beings who already defy cultural boundaries, also complicate boundaries with the emotional response of readers. The abjection that Cohen discusses already identifies an effect that monsters exude. Through narratives that feature transformative monsters with empathetic qualities, the repulsion can be dissolved. This provides empathy accessible to audiences who

may initially identify with the othered figure as well as those who initially do not. The dual nature of the transformative monster alone speaks to this potential. Hybridity, a quality that can cause a being to be deemed monstrous, also allows for a situation where the reader may readily empathize with the human form of the monster, but is challenged then to also empathize with the monstrous aspect of that being. For, when human and monster are one and the same, it is impossible to delineate empathy for either aspect of that particular being.

I contend through my work an analysis aimed primarily at complicating current literature on monster theory. Monsters have been analyzed and discussed in scholarship prior to the establishment of monster theory as its own form of literary criticism. In the case of *Bisclavret*, scholars such as David Leshock and Paul Creamer have identified the work as an early act of displaying hatred and unfairness towards women. Leshock in particular discusses how “[a]lthough the wife displays many negative qualities, Bisclavret is a werewolf, an association that carries overwhelmingly negative implications” (155). The focus on monstrosity in Leshock’s article, however, lacks the nuance of understanding the deliberate inversion occurring in the narrative. Conversely, other scholars such as Michelle Freeman and Caitlin Giacopasi have focused on the positive, more sympathetic view of Bisclavret the werewolf that Leshock and Creamer discourage. I offer a different view: one that realizes the text as a cultural critique that displays the toxicity of the heteronormative relationship expected of Bisclavret and his wife. That monstrosity is not a clear signifier of villainy as Leshock contends, and that we are meant to feel for Bisclavret because of our shared feelings of love, rather than sympathizing through pity. These conclusions come from evaluating the inversion present in the narrative, particularly that of the role of the monster.

The scholarship surrounding *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* has explored the ways that Mr. Hyde is representative of a form free from the cultural restrictions and expectations of the Victorian era. Scholars such as Robbie Goh and Kellen Williams have gone in depth as to the ways that Hyde represents qualities such as “the perverse violence of male sexuality” (Williams 413). While Mr. Hyde can widely be read as an “other,” what the current scholarship surrounding the text fails to analyze is the novel's character of focus and its narration. The issue, I believe, across the scholarship that discusses the works I cover in my thesis is a lack of viewing monsters in a way that first interrogates the status of monstrosity within the text. This is why scholarship specific to monster theory, such as the foundational texts of Jeffrey Cohen and Jeffrey Weinstock is crucial to understanding texts with monsters. Because monster theory as a concept is still in its infancy, my complication is crucial to the expansion of the field and conveying the critical potential that literary monsters have. My intervention, while pointed at monster theory, also works to question existing literature on affect theory and narrative empathy. To push further than mere sympathy and to realize the nuance of stereotypically antagonistic figures in literature.

Through my analysis, I seek answers to questions such as: How can monsters act as representations of marginalized cultural others such as queer individuals? What effect can monsters achieve as agents of empathy? What is the significance of empathetic messaging towards cultural others in literature? With these questions in mind, I aim to convey the analytical potential in reframing how scholars might view monstrous figures in literature as agents of empathy. This reformation, I believe, will further expand the burgeoning scholarship in monster theory to include how monsters might act as bridges for empathy. The answers to these questions reveal that monsters can embody not only cultural fears and anxieties, but also act as mediators for empathy between the real individuals who fear and are feared within their given culture.

My first chapter, “Undressing Monstrosity: Medieval Queerness in Marie de France’s *Bisclavret*,” contextualizes the medieval understandings of monstrosity, queerness, and the werewolf figure in order to analyze a holistic reading of the narrative poem or lai. Through this contextualization, the werewolf figure can be understood as a microcosm of medieval debates over queer sexualities, especially of those between men who have sex with men. The speaker of the lai is empathetic towards the monster from the start, ensuring the reader that although Bisclavret is a werewolf, he is not the monster that they might fear. This treatment of the monster marks an early iteration of inversion of the monster figure. Just as the monster figure is inverted in the lai, so too are other archetypal figures of medieval romances such as the knight, damsel, and king figures. Inversion is the primary tool used in this text to garner empathy for the queer monster. As these literary archetypes are queered, de France displays how the monster can be objectivized, feminized, and desired, just as the maiden figure can be malicious, masculinized, and othered. Through this analysis, I reframe *Bisclavret* as a work that in itself is an intervention in the ongoing religious debate on what qualifies as natural sexual activity and relationships. Bisclavret’s artificial relationship with his wife, a representation of heteronormativity, is what leads to both of their undoings; however, Bisclavret’s queer relationship with his king is what restores him and provides the happy ending that audiences might expect of a medieval romance. By displaying this relationship, the text garners empathy and actively advocates for same-sex relationships that are built on genuine love.

My second chapter, “What ‘Mr. Seek’ has to Hyde: Queer Narratology in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*” I discuss the status of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde as a monster in order to display the narratological complexities of the text. What I found is that through the narration of the novella, the narrator actively works through manipulation of the narrative to maintain Dr. Jekyll and Mr.

Hyde's status as a monster by impeding formations of empathy with Dr. Jekyll. In doing so, the narrator reinforces a real phenomenon of suppressing queer sexualities in Victorian society—denying or discouraging queerness without warrant outside of cultural distaste. Because of this bias, Dr. Jekyll's final chapter is significantly more effective for the audience in feeling for the plight and cultural disdain for identities that he represents.

Though the work has been discussed in scholarship for decades, it has focused on the obvious circumstance of Jekyll and Hyde; however, this oversight has caused a glaring blindspot in the wider understanding of the relationship between Mr. Utterson and the narrator. Mr. Utterson is a character that is victimized by the cultural sphere that the voice of the narrator enforces; ultimately serving as a microcosm displaying how the boundaries and regulations of gender and sexuality harm individuals who consider themselves to be not queer. Mr. Utterson exhibits queer thoughts and suppresses his need for intimacy with his fellow male friends throughout the narrative. By the end of the novella, after Dr. Lanyon and Dr. Jekyll have passed, Mr. Utterson's fear of being alone comes to fruition, leaving everyone involved in the narrative either dead or destitute. Even the narrator fails in their mission to subvert empathy for Dr. Jekyll, as Mr. Utterson's reading of Dr. Jekyll's letter allows both him and the audience the potential for understanding the plight of what drove Dr. Jekyll to his experiment. In regards to my larger work, this chapter once more explores the innate humanity of monstrosity, how Mr. Hyde is an embodiment of something dormant within all human beings. Additionally, in regards to empathy, the more a person or group seeks to suppress identities, the greater potential there is for empathy and identification with individuals who are similarly scorned.

Through my work with both texts, it is clear that monster figures—specifically that of the transformative monster—can act as agents of empathy. Their potential for forming this empathy,

I believe, is unique, as their identities are simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar to those being affected.

CHAPTER 2
UNDRESSING MONSTROSITY: MEDIEVAL QUEERNESS IN MARIE DE FRANCE'S
BISCLAVRET

Marie de France's *Bisclavret* is a medieval narrative that features a werewolf as its primary protagonist.¹ Monsters in literature during the period had primarily served as a foil to 'normal' bodies and personalities and were defined as 'other'. The otherization of medieval antagonists highlighted the differences and enforced an "us vs. them" mentality. 'Others' could take many forms: deformed descendants of Cain, giant green knights, or cannibalistic tribes from the east². Inward and outward queerness are profound in the monstrous villains of Anglo-Saxon literature. Anglo-Saxon works such as *Wonders of the East* and *Beowulf* feature antagonists with a present, physical queerness. What makes these monsters innately queer is not only their difference from the 'typical' or preferred anatomy, but that their difference in anatomy navigates and blurs sexual binaries. While storytellers of the medieval era were fixated on the physical and noticeable bodily queerness, a more abstract queerness resided in the literature that does not garner as much attention. *Bisclavret* introduces this new, abstruse form of queer monstrosity, that has been overlooked in scholarship as an inherently queer text. Marie de France's lai presents a critical argument for the acceptance of queer relationships by inverting the established understanding of what a monster should be. Rather than a being that inflicts harm, harm is inflicted upon him. This, alongside the aspects of queerness found within the text, manifesting through an inversion of the medieval concept of courtly love by making a same-sex couple the focus of the story. In doing so, de France causes the readers to abandon their notions of medieval

¹ For this essay, the translation of *Bisclavret* used comes from the Broadview Anthology of British Literature. This analysis focuses on a perspective based on a Modern English translation, rather than the original script from the 12th century. Further investigation in both variations in individual translations, and from the original may reveal further information and be valuable in further studies.

² Medieval monsters and works referenced in order: Grendel from *Beowulf*, The Green Knight from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and the many monstrous others from *The Wonders of the East*.

archetypes such as the heroic knight, the damsel in distress, and of course, the terrifying monster; and tells a narrative that forms empathy with the monstrous queer figure.

The plot of the lai focuses on Bisclavret, a noble knight who is loved by everyone in the land. He is married, and is beloved by his king as well. However, Bisclavret conceals a grave secret which is revealed after significant scrutiny from his wife. After discovering her husband is a werewolf, Bisclavret's wife steals his clothes which disables him from transforming back into a human. Bisclavret then lives in the woods until he is discovered by the king and his hunting party. Amazed by the beast, the king takes Bisclavret into his castle and develops a close companionship with it. Bisclavret, through lashing out at his wife, leaving her physically deformed, exposes her treachery. After undergoing torture at the hand of the king, Bisclavret's wife reveals the location of Bisclavret's clothing and he is able to turn back into a man. The lai ends with Bisclavret and the king embracing and kissing in his bedchamber, and the wife being exiled to another land carrying the deformity which marks her torture and infidelity. At its core, *Bisclavret* inverts Medieval conceptualizations of masculinity, monstrosity, and nobility. Marie de France presents a monstrous protagonist whose queer body is engaged in relationships that reject the standards of the time including idolized constructs of courtly love and chivalry. This essay argues that *Bisclavret* challenges both the normative values of male figures at the time and the relational institutions prevalent during the period.

2.1 Medieval Queerness in Context

Archival research regarding the medieval period reveals an evolving discussion of heteronormativity, queer sexualities, and whether these sexualities were ‘natural’.³ Bisclavret, when viewed through a critical queer lens, rebukes preconceived notions of queer understandings during the medieval period that other critical analyses on the poem have failed to realize. The period around which Marie de France wrote coincided with an ideological shift as to whether same-sex relations were acceptable in society. The most substantial debate was centered on whether ‘homosexuality,’ or at least what the 21st century understands as homosexuality, was natural. ‘Natura’ or what was natural was a primary influence within literature during this period, comparable to the modern ‘Mother Nature’. This ideal was present in literary works and often materialized as a feminine figure within nature-based poetry (Boswell 312). The image of what was natural was a feminine and fertile woman. This contradicted the circumstances of unions which did not produce offspring, like those between members of the same sex. As Warren Johansson and William A. Percy suggest, medieval perceptions of gay individuals were captured more in the concept of “sodomites” (4-6). Same-sex relationships were seen as driven by lust, or, as Latin Christians described it “luxuria” or in a more extreme form, peccatum contra naturam, or "sin against nature" (5). De France’s depiction presents a new form, one which views homosexual relationships as equal to heterosexual marriages. Scorned for their lack of reproductivity, gay unions were increasingly condemned. Natura in her image reinforced heterosexuality and doomed queerness to be viewed as unnatural.

The answer to which sexualities were natural was provided in the observation of beasts. Religious figures observed homosexual behaviors in animals and surmised that beasts and their

³ Naturality is the predominant reason for condemnation of homosexual behaviors in the Middle Ages, and therefore will be discussed substantially throughout the essay.

close relationship with nature meant that these behaviors were natural and accepted by God. This stance was challenged by an opposing view of beasts and their place in nature (Boswell 306-8). The queerness was instead viewed as something unacceptable because beasts engaged in it. Humanity was hierarchically above beasthood, and therefore engaging in the increasingly questionable homosexual acts was to be as mindless and instinctual as a beast. Beasts and queerness did not stop at the observations of homosexual activity. In fact, the medieval period was hyperfocused on the relationship between beasts and queerness and transposed this focus to human beings by comparing their queer personalities to specific animals.

Writers of the medieval era displayed a keen focus on the activities of animals and engaged in early forms of zoomorphism. When discussing a monster that is part beast, it is crucial to understand the ways in which a bestial form might be interpreted by a medieval audience. *The Bestiary of Philippe de Thaon* (approx. 1120), a bestiary written in the same period in which Marie de France is believed to have written her *lais*, catalogs animals by describing their habits and bodies and attributing them to certain human behaviors. For an example of both bodily and sexual queerness, look to Thaon's bestiary entry on the hyena: "Physiologus says further of the beast, that it is **male and female**, and therefore **a filthy beast**. **The hyena signifies**, I will not omit to tell you, **a man of covetous wealth**, who is luxurious..."(bolded words to add emphasis, Thaon 25). Thaon's description of the hyena is transfixed on the queer body of the hyena. It exhibits bodily traits of both sexes, and draws the conclusion that it is a "filthy beast" because of its queerness. In addition to the demonization of queerness found within the first line of the passage, Thaon attributes moral evil unto the hyena, observing that hyenas signify avaricious men. The passage goes on, stating, "When he is covetous he **imitates the manners of a woman**; a man is of steady mind, and a woman

changeable, which is the signification of a beast with this quality” (bolded words to add emphasis, Thaon 25). Not only does Thaon attribute bodily queerness to a signification of sin, he ties the sin to sexual queerness; men that are covetous imitate women.

The argument that the nature of beasts cannot be compared to humanity is both present and contradicted in Thaon’s work. His comparisons are cyclical in what is being signified by both man and beast, conveyed in the previous quote: “The hyena signifies... a man of covetous wealth,” and “he imitates the manners of a woman... which is the signification of a beast with this quality” (Thaon 25). Despite implying that bestial nature, specifically queerness, cannot be justified because humans are above beasts, Thaon brings them to the same level by introducing circular justifications. The relationship between being covetous and taking on mannerisms prescribed to females brings to question what manners are imitated. Partaking in something sinful transforms the individual into something that defies gender boundaries and expectations. Additionally men are “steady” whereas women are “changeable.” Transformation is a process that is essential to the narrative of *Bisclavret*, as the protagonist is a man who transforms into a beast. By Thaon’s logic, Bisclavret’s masculinity is defined by his bestial side. The observation of beasts and their particular relationship to morals and humanity convey the medieval usage of didacticism through narrative.

Western medieval culture found comfort in natural boundaries. The boundaries concerning sexuality manifested in the debates over “natura” previously mentioned. One boundary which featured substantial debate was between man and beast. Dana Oswald, in her book *Monsters, Gender and Sexuality* studies medieval understandings of men, beasts, and monsters. Monsters blur the boundaries of man and beast, or as *Mandeville’s Travels* defines them: “a monster is a thing deformed against kind, both of man or of beast or of anything else,

and that is called a monster” (quoted, Oswald 2). There is a clear relationship between the medieval fixation on transformation and navigating binaries such as man and beast and male and female. Fundamentally, monsters constitute a fear that transcends the simple fright: people are afraid of monsters because they are others. Their bodies and personalities exhibit queerness that helps audiences define their humanity through constructed binaries and boundaries such as gender, appearance, and sexualities. In the same ways that monsters blur the line between man and beast which form their monstrous bodies, they exhibit masculine and feminine features which further queer these entities. Oswald contends: “A monster, in the Middle Ages, is a creature with a body that differs from the norm in significant ways” (7). While monsters may differ physically, this explanation overlooks the more nuanced aspects of queerness that these monsters represent.⁴ The monster this chapter focuses on, for example, might have a body that “differs from the norm,” but it is only sometimes. Rather than differences that are solely physical, the ambiguous activities and desires of Bisclavret suggest differences that are more internal. My reading expands medieval understandings of monstrosity precisely by focusing on the ways that Bisclavret deviates from traditional medieval masculinity and sexuality as well.

2.2 Bisclavret Dressed: The Werewolf and His Wife

While the majority of monsters in Medieval literature carried an innate queerness, Bisclavret the werewolf represents a different kind of monster: A monster that can alternate between the two forms of man and beast without maintaining a permanent state. Bisclavret has a flexibility that other medieval monsters did not. With the Medieval definition of what a monster

⁴ For instance, the many monsters present in *Wonders of the East* exhibit physical queerness, and they fall in line with Oswald’s categorization of monstrosity; however this othering of individuals from a different area of the world was not only to aid in defining the humanity of the audience, it was also a tool for cultural supremacy. The abrasive huntresses and craven cannibals of *Wonders* contain queer personalities alongside their physicalities that contribute to their overall queerness. Monsters must be viewed in a multi-dimensional way in order to fully understand their purpose within their respective literature.

is, both man and beast at once, Bisclavret introduced audiences to a new form of monster. The act of transformation between two identities is queer, the knight that is respected and revered and the bestial monster that is feared and rejected.

Even Bisclavret's name is flexible. Similar to his forms and identities, his name can be obscured due to multiple meanings, or "forms." The narrative begins with the introduction of the werewolf identity which the speaker notes as a 'garwuf': "*Bisclavret* is the name in Breton; / the Normans call it *Garwuf*. / there was a time when one would hear, / and it often used to happen, / That many people became werewolves and kept house in the woods. / The werewolf is a wild beast; / When it is in that frenzy, / it devours people and does great harm. / It lives in and roams the great forests. / Now I let this matter be; / I want to tell of the *bisclavret*" (3-14). There are four separate entities introduced in these lines: 'werewolf', 'bisclavret', 'garwuf', and *the* Bisclavret precluding rampant ambiguity throughout the work. This ambiguity fuels a queer reading as typical medieval protagonists feature unquestioned identities and sexualities. The separation and clarification to the audience on each identity and the legends that surround them differ between culture and perspectives. The Norman *Garwuf* is a werewolf that fulfills this monstrous legacy of causing terror, living in the forest, and eating men. Bisclavret functions as both the Breton term for werewolf, but also the title of the lai and name of the protagonist.

The etymology of *bisclavret* has caught the attention of scholars. William Sayers suggested the combination of *bleiz*, or 'wolf', and *claffet*, or 'ill; rabid' and is regarded as the most plausible solution to *bisclavret's* etymology (Boyd 199). Boyd observes the critical distinction the parts of the word play in giving us clues as to the status of the beast. Bisclavret is still a man who is afflicted with a 'wolf illness': "He does not tell her that he *is* a werewolf, but that he *becomes* one—or rather, that *bisclavret* is a description of him in his animal state" (Boyd

199). Boyd's interpretation focuses on the dual-identity of the Bisclavret. This sort of etymological analysis identifies a feature of the character, but lacks a concrete functional analysis outside of the reason de France chose the name. My reading suggests that the ambiguity of identity and etymology exists to signify that de France is compelling the reader to abandon preconceived notions about monstrosity, both in the literal sense of lycanthropy, *and* the monstrous, queer condition the protagonist carries. Bisclavret is affected by this bestial condition, but is still a man, just as men who exhibit the queer traits of hyenas are still men.

The wife of Bisclavret plays a key role in the narrative both as an actor and partner in a toxic heterosexual relationship. Throughout the poem, there is a strong focus on the nobility of the baron and knight, Bisclavret. He is loved by everyone in the kingdom for his status and virtue and reinforces his image as a knight in shining armor. Bisclavret is married to "a very worthy wife / who seemed lovely" (21-22). Her presence aids in building the image of medieval masculinity (Keiser). The speaker's omniscience characterizes both Bisclavret and his wife by relaying that the wife is apparently worthy of a great man such as Bisclavret. However, the wife's treachery is foreshadowed by noting that she 'seems lovely,' creating a characterization of deceit due the implication of seeming one way, but in actuality being another. The traditional masculinity surrounding Bisclavret's knightly identity prioritizes heterosexual courtly love as evidence of virtue leads to the undoing of both participants. What makes this relationship toxic is the artifice behind it. Three days of the week, nearly half of the time, Bisclavret is absent from the house. She fears losing him, that he won't come back, that he will find someone else: "It is my belief you are in love, / and if it is so, you do wrong" (51-52). She is transfixed on his sexual activity being the reason for his absence. When confronted about his secret, Bisclavret warns, "Trouble will come to me if I tell you, / for I will divide you from my love / and destroy myself

in doing so” (54-56). He feels that his secret will ruin this relationship and his own identity. Ideally, true love would overcome something as innate as this ambiguous curse, but Bisclavret’s warning becomes the reality. At this point in Bisclavret’s confession, the wife is fine and even pushes him further to expunge details of this secret: “she cajoled and flattered him so much that he told her his situation” (60-61). Her remark implies a sort of emotional torture to extract this information that he has resisted to share. Bisclavret is unwilling to share his secret because it is something that he knows will bring both his reputation and their marriage to ruin. She persists by applying pressure and guilt to him into a confession. He reveals his lycanthropy, and the reaction to this admission on the wife's account is not one you would expect. Before the horror, the realization of the bodily queerness her lover exhibits in navigating between bodies of both man and beast, she poses a curious question, “When he had told her everything, she inquired and asked him whether he undressed or went clothed” to which he responds, “I go quite naked” (70). Whether your lycanthrope husband leaves clothed or nude seems like a peculiar fixation to have, but it actually makes an incredible amount of sense.

Full moons may be what is associated with contemporary lycanthropic transformation, but for Bisclavret, the removal of his clothing is what transforms him into a werewolf. Transformation is something that Bisclavret takes shame in, as the noble knight is coerced into revealing his monstrosity to his wife after resistance and warning that it may ruin their marriage. Is Bisclavret a monster of self-loathing? The resistance to transforming into his bestial identity implies that it is something primal that urges him to transform. The act of declodding itself is not innately sexual, but it is an urge similar to arousal, demonstrated in the lines: “Lady, I become a werewolf: / I go into that great forest, / to the deepest part of the woods, / and live on prey and plunder” (63-66). His transformation is a process that he lacks agency over initially. It

is as if he were a beast going into, or responding to heat, that makes his transformation tied to sexuality. These lines also establish the natural setting of “that great forest”, “the deepest part of the woods” where his bestial side thrives, a foil to the civilized sphere which his knightly identity is adored. The original Anglo-Norman version uses the word “ravine” in place of “plunder” on line 66. “Ravine” carried multiple meanings, primarily signifying some kind of crime. The usage of this word at the time of de France’s writing meant “rape, ravishment” (anglo-norman.net).⁵ This definition characterizes Bisclavret’s bestial identity as an uncontrollable, savage, and sexually deviant.

If Bisclavret’s transformation *is* a symbol for unsated sexual appetite, is there any proof that it is homoerotic? There is. Look once more at the details given about his transformation, “I put my clothes under the bush; / until I return home” (95-96). If Bisclavret becomes a werewolf whenever he is unclothed, then had the couple copulated, the wife would already be aware of his condition. The wife is convinced that Bisclavret leaves her half of the time to engage in adultery of some sort. As much as the poem has suggested that the couple love each other, Bisclavret’s lycanthropy disproves any sort of sexual activity amongst the two. The wife questions him on his nudity because Bisclavret’s lycanthropy exposes parts of Bisclavret the wife has never seen, parts that legitimize their heterosexual relationship, what makes them ‘natural.’ The speaker places great emphasis on their mutual love: “He loved her and she him, / but she was greatly troubled by one thing;” (23-25). But their love is not sexually intimate. There isn’t a reason to assume that Bisclavret’s sexual distaste for his wife is personal, but instead his distaste applies to the entire

⁵ See Thomas’s *The Romance of Horn*, (approx. 1170) for an example of “ravine” in the same context. Marie de France is believed to have lived from 1160 to 1215. This makes the usage of word weighted in a sinister, and sexual connotation.

sex.⁶ Once Bisclavret has acted on this urge, then he retrieves his clothing and transforms back into a man and returns “to his house joyful and happy” (30).

Monstrous transformation in *Bisclavret* is a sign of dual nature, but also pleasure that Bisclavret actively seeks. The mechanics of the transformation imply that there is deliberateness in the removal of his clothes. After engaging in his monstrous activity, he remembers where they are and cannot change back into a human unless he puts his clothing back on. As Caitlin Giacopasi observes, “Unfortunately, the price for such freedom is a monstrous form: horrific in its unquantifiable hybridity” (27). Giacopasi explores how the werewolf figure has evolved into a heteronormalized figure where it was once queer. Bisclavret is used as an example, but outside of the discussion of lycanthropy, Giacopasi avoids discussion of other queer variables found in the lai. Although Bisclavret is able to switch into his bestial form to fulfill these homoerotic desires, being unable to switch back is a death of his human identity. Sexuality within *Bisclavret* is most identifiable with ambiguity, as Carl Grey Martin notes, “Obscurity is central to the literary mode and mission of Marie de France”(Martin 23). Ambiguity allows de France to lace the text with a compelling representation of both monstrous queerness and homosexual desire.

While interrogating, the wife’s questions so far have fixated on the realm of sexuality. That Bisclavret does go nude implies a truer self when he is a werewolf, but the focus is still on his sexuality which is unsatiated by his wife. Bisclavret’s secret is harmful to both him and his wife. Bisclavret is not to blame. It is the fault of the ideals which Marie de France criticizes such as the constructs of medieval masculinity, heteronormativity, and courtly love. However, the wife’s mistrust and actions taken against Bisclavret help to further complicate traditional archetypes of medieval romance. By taking action and using her voice, she is already violating

⁶ The distant relationship between Bisclavret and his wife foils the intimate relationship that Bisclavret has with the King. This is similar to the contrast in relationships shown in the other knight the wife marries after being exiled whom she does reproduce with.

the traditional image of a submissive or captive maiden. This role confusion also helps to build empathy for Bisclavret since as the maiden figure is masculinized, the knight/monster Bisclavret begins to fill that role.

The wife's fixation on the sexual activity of Bisclavret keys the audience into her own thought process. This thought process, as scholars have noticed, includes torturing Bisclavret emotionally. Perhaps this is the reason why she does not truly provide a reaction to his admission until he reveals that he goes into the woods naked. This baleful act was motivated because of a realization: Bisclavret's chaste nature was not out of virtue, but to hide this bestial, instinctual transformation in which he returns home satisfied. Bisclavret's secret is one that was enough to ruin their relationship almost immediately. A lack of virility questions Bisclavret's masculinity and indeed, his sexuality. The wife's reaction is better understood if lycanthropy is replaced with homosexuality. His wife—even her lack of name leaves her title as her primary point of reference—is under the assumption she is in a heterosexual relationship; a relationship that has provided no physical love, or children.

The wife's role as a 'wife' seems to be only in name, at least to medieval understandings of marriage. Finding out her husband was not attracted to her physically due to her sex, and instead disappears for half of the week only to reappear visibly satisfied, explains the urgency behind disposing of him. Her plan becomes consummating her own womanhood with a former suitor who will enable her to fulfill her namesake. Her actions, while self-determined to fulfill a role which ironically sacrifices much of the autonomy she owns in the faux-heterosexual relationship she has, are still evil. However, she is not solely to blame for the exile-from-humanity that Bisclavret endures. Bisclavret is complicit in this in some way as well. Bisclavret maintains his beloved status across the land as a model of a courtly knight. He is a

baron, a knight, and a husband, these statuses clothe and protect him from an implied defamation. When his marriage goes to ruin, a layer of his clothing is stripped, as he is no longer a husband. His guise of suiting the ideal masculinity diminishes as his wife has discovered what lies beneath the finery. That his marriage is the layer which jeopardizes his legitimacy as a male, so too is his heterosexuality called into question. In keeping this queerness from his wife, he has harmed both of them, and protecting himself through his 'clothing' is indeed selfish. However, I argue that even if scholars see Bisclavret's retaliation against his wife when he disfigures her as justified, it is the societal constructs of heteronormativity and masculinity which are the direct cause for the secret having to exist in the first place. A queer man is vilified for closeting himself and using a straight female to further legitimize his guise, or else face persecution.

2.3 Bisclavret Undressed: The Werewolf and His King

Bisclavret's betrayal is one intended to exile him from humanity permanently. Without his clothing to return to his human form he is transformed into a werewolf indefinitely. This presents an issue, as he loses the autonomy he had over his monstrosity. For a year, Bisclavret resides in the woods preying on its wildlife (remember, he is not the werewolf that eats men). Then, out of coincidence the king and his hunting party discovers Bisclavret. Their meeting seems by fate, as Martin puts it: "As if drawn together by some magnetic force" (28). If Bisclavret's bestial identity is a representation of a societally repressed sexuality, and the king while hunting, discovers Bisclavret, it would seem that the king is complicit in this desire as well. While initially afraid, the "beast [Bisclavret] has intelligence and understanding" and is what enamors the king with him; in other words, the king has observed an object of fear and witnessed that the narrative surrounding it is untrue (157). This relationship between the beast

and the man ordained to rule other men by God creates a justification, and dissolution of growing medieval heteronormativity.

The role of hunting plays a role in both male figures: Bisclavret hunts beasts and the king does as well, but instead finds a bestial man. Beasts and nature play a role in forming a sphere in which the boundaries and societal constructs do not exist. This is the reason why the relationship between the king and Bisclavret starts *here*. While Bisclavret and the king have a friendship at court, which at times appears to be a master-pet relationship, it is only the space of the wilderness where they begin to establish one that is homosocial. Their relationship inverts the contextual understandings of naturality. In essence, Bisclavret's bestial form and the wild serve as de France's representation of queerness and its natural appearance in humanity. The king's hunt and capture of Bisclavret mirrors the archetypal tale of a knight saving a princess. The roles however, are inverted. The beast (Bisclavret) and the damsel (the wife) switch roles, and the king who would typically send the knight out on his quest instead fills the role of the "knight in shining armor" in place of Bisclavret. The role reversal also sets up the relationship dynamics between the king and Bisclavret to be romantic, and is further solidified later in the lai when: "more than a hundred times he hugs and kisses him" once he reverts to his human form (501). And what Knight doesn't kiss his princess? Even if the princess is a male werewolf! The hunter/prey relationship both replaces courting and satirizes its process, as the similar relationship suggests that within any relationship there are differing levels of power.

Bisclavret's capture submerges him into the homosocial realm of the king's court. Perhaps the most glaring evidence of its homosociality is the lack of a queen, or any children, such as a prince or princess, within the court. Bisclavret fills this vacancy in the king's court as a sort of pet who lives amongst the kingsmen: "The king turned back at once. / The werewolf goes

along following him;/ It stayed very close, it would not leave, / It has no desire to part from him. / The king leads it into his castle; / He was very happy about it, it was delightful to him,/ For he had never seen such a thing. / He considered it a great wonder / and held it very dear” (161-169). The absence of any other relational ties the king may have makes his relationship with Bisclavret ambiguous; however, their proximity alone suggests something more than a platonic bond. These lines also establish a mutual connection between the two: “He was very happy about it, / it was delightful to him, / for he had never seen such a thing” (166-167). This is similar to the line mentioned previously concerning the initial relationship between Bisclavret and his wife: “He had loved her and she him,” (23). De France uses similar language to create relational dynamics between the two men similar to a male-female relationship. Bisclavret’s bond and proximity to the king is greater than any other men of the court: “Every day it [Bisclavret] went to bed / among the knights and close to the king. / There is no one who does not hold it dear;”...”Wherever the king had to go, / it did not care to be apart from him; / it always went along with him. / He could see well that it loved him” (176-184)⁷. This portrayal of a male-male relationship is both a textual display of same-sex love but also serves as means to affect the audience by showing that the monster figure is capable of this love.

Bisclavret has a place amongst the homosocial sphere, sleeping amongst the knights and King. The proximity to the king however, transcends all of those around him. Previously, Bisclavret was a knight to the king as well, presumably amongst the ranks of the ones mentioned in the passage. Bisclavret’s lycanthropy has brought him and the king closer, as if his secret was a feature the king was looking for. The role of the knight could be viewed as similar to a hound

⁷ The English translation places a focus on pronouns, with “him” being the King, and Bisclavret in his bestial form being “It”. This creates a dynamic which forms a new non-traditional look at a relationship compared to the stark heteronormative courtly relationships of the medieval era. As scholars such as Keiser have discovered homosexual activity had a place in the medieval courts, but it was often secretive due to rising heteronormativity and homophobia.

as well, an unfaltering fealty and loyalty to the king, doing whatever he demanded regardless of the situation. Bisclavret seems to share a unique bond with the king in that he embodies these traits of a loyal hound quite literally. This bond transcends the merely homosocial surroundings and suggests a deeper intimacy between the king and Bisclavret demonstrated specifically in lines 181-184: “it did not care to be apart from him; / it always went along with him. / He could see well that it loved him” (181-184). Though the narration omits any discussion of details of Bisclavret’s relationship to his wife, especially any sexual details, there is a clear foil in the length the narration goes to describe just how intimate the bond is between the king and Bisclavret. This focus, in effect, furthers the signals to empathize with the budding relationship between these two men.

In addition to proximity to the queer character Bisclavret, the king becomes Bisclavret’s favored partner. This is seen when, after discovering that Bisclavret has been taken in by the king, Bisclavret’s wife goes to see for herself, “She dressed herself becomingly; / The next day she goes to talk to the king, / She has a rich gift brought to him” (228-230). The wife dresses ‘becomingly’ and bears an unspecified gift as a symbol of her feminine sexuality, the same way she was able to exert power over her new lover. Unfortunately for the wife, Bisclavret lashes out at her, leaving her permanently disfigured. Bisclavret’s vengeance, when considering the previous lines, forms a dual-motive for his attack. Bisclavret the knight would understandably attack for the wife’s infidelity and deception. However, Bisclavret the werewolf conveys more instinctual urges. De France’s focus on the wife’s intent to sexually influence the king makes Bisclavret’s attack a sexual defense, warding off competition, marking territory.

Though Bisclavret cannot speak for himself, he is advocated for by both the narrator and even members of the king’s court when Bisclavret attacks his wife. This attack is explained by a

character, the wiseman, who serves as a voice for the otherwise mute Bisclavret. The wiseman is yet another male figure in the masculine court of the king. His explanation for Bisclavret's attack highlights just how masculine the court is, that Bisclavret's exemplary behavior to the men of the court was proof this attack was a determiner of the wife's evil. The wiseman couples Bisclavret's good nature, and the fact that the woman attacked was the wife of the beloved knight that had been missing, to conclude that Bisclavret must be the beast in disguise. The longest span of dialogue comes from the wiseman reasoning with the king. It is the last few sentences which exemplify the immense homosociality in this realm: "Put the lady under duress about this,/ to see if she will tell you anything/ about why this beast hates her;/ make her tell it if she knows!/ We have seen many a wonder/come to pass in Brittany" (255-260). The men of court seem significantly more interested in getting their beloved knight back in an almost pack-mentality. The wiseman's judgement is enough to convince the king to put the wife to torture, which as Carl Martin notes, would be to a medieval audience, as gruesome as a contemporary one (23)⁸. Such torture, which in the last two lines, sounds out of desperation to get the knight back "We have seen many a wonder/ Come to pass in Brittany." The wiseman recommends the King to "Put the lady under duress about this". In other words, brutally torture the wife just for the chance of getting human Bisclavret back. The wife is seen as a disposable source of information in respect to the strong bond amongst this group of men.

The sole female character and her faux-heterosexual relationship pale in comparison to the care and intimacy found between the males of court, specifically between Bisclavret and the

⁸ Torture plays a significant role in the narrative, specifically in scholarly discussions of Bisclavret's wife. She does indeed practice a form of emotional torture when she guilts Bisclavret into revealing his secret lycanthropy: "After badgering her husband into revealing that he is a werewolf, she adulterously conspires with a hapless admirer to prevent the creature from ever regaining its human form, thereby committing, Suard contends, 'un véritable meurtre'" which translates to "a real murder" (Martin 23). The wife commits an act which is deemed evil and her eventual punishment is seen as justified by most scholars. The dynamics within the relationship are more complex than this.

king. After restoring the lost clothes to Bisclavret on the king's orders, there is a notable instance of inversion which again suggests sexuality between the two. It is the wiseman once more, who after the king offers Bisclavret back his clothes, states: "Sire, you are not doing this properly:/ he wouldn't, for anything,/ put his clothing back on in front of you/ nor change his animal appearance./ You have no idea how important this is:/ he feels terrible shame about it" (283-288). Typically, shame is associated with nakedness. For Bisclavret, being clothed in front of the king is shameful. This is a stark contrast to the clothed relationship Bisclavret had with his wife, but it involves that naked, real, and intimate relationship you would expect from a marriage. There is the possibility that the shame could stem from the King knowing that Bisclavret was a werewolf and the King might feel guilty.

The wiseman infers however, it isn't for that reason. In fact, Bisclavret would rather stay in this bestial form, perhaps to maintain his proximity to the King. That Bisclavret has to be alone to put his clothes back on is further proof of inversion, but the location in which he does is both a revelation and a portrayal of just how intimate the King and Bisclavret are. Bisclavret dresses himself on the King's bed, indicative of intimacy, as the King does not have another person he shares his bed with. Entering with two male guards, The King enters to find Bisclavret reverted back to his human form. Upon seeing Bisclavret sleeping in his bed, "The king ran to embrace him; / More than a hundred time he hugs and kisses him / As soon as he could get an opportunity, / He returned all his land to him; / He gave him more than I say" (300-304). The king shares his bed with Bisclavret while restoring his clothing and humanity. This interaction highlights their physical intimacy, using diction suggestive of romance, such as "embrace" and hugging and kissing "more than a hundred times". The king is so occupied in showing physical affection the speaker notes that the king needs "an opportunity" before he can restore the

Bisclavret's material losses. The speaker provides the audience with the suggestively ambiguous line, "He gave him more than I say." Here is an instance of manipulation of the narrative, an activity that I extensively scrutinize in my next chapter. If the king has restored Bisclavret's clothing, land, and status, what more could the king give? His bed? Is the reason the speaker cannot say it is because they feel it is inappropriate? The king and Bisclavret's relationship becomes something more than just friends, more than comrades, more than the pet/master relationship they had during Bisclavret's time as a werewolf. The King's embrace of Bisclavret upon his bed is a consummation of their relationship which restores everything to Bisclavret. The king, the highest authority in the land participating in this relationship seems to override the clothing formerly required for Bisclavret's lifestyle. The king entering with two barons at first seems as a defense, these men act as witnesses of this "ceremony", both legitimizing the visibility of Bisclavret and the King's relationship, and enhancing the homosocial realm of this narrative.

2.4 Conclusion

Bisclavret's artificial and barren relationship to his wife is representative of false, superficial, expected relationships within the rising heteronormative cultural narrative. While the wife represents the ideal medieval female figure, she violates expectations during this superficial relationship with Bisclavret, harming both the male and female figure in the heterosexual couple. It is only through deformity, torture, and exile that the wife can fulfill the expectations within a true heterosexual relationship. One that allows her to bear children, the females of which carry the same feminine monstrosity caused by her overstepping of feminine boundaries. Bisclavret's lycanthropy is symbolic of a homosexual appetite and desire. Through the loss of his clothing,

his heterosexual guise, he becomes even closer to a male figure to which he was beloved. The bareness of his true nature, although without a voice, is understood by the men around him and leads to his restoration. Despite the objections to homosexual behavior in the period the relationship between Bisclavret and the king, is the resolution to the conflict of the poem. Their relationship transcends commonly observed sexual relationships amongst men. Their pairing is not out of sexual convenience, mere friendship, or mindless lust. Instead their relationship captures the ideals of what a marriage would signify. This level of recognition and portrayal of the legitimacy of a sanctioned gay relationship is non-existent in medieval literature.

Bisclavret shows the futility in upholding a culturally enforced heterosexual relationship by its barrenness, in essence, equating false heterosexual relationships to the lack of reproductivity of homosexual relationships. While gay marriage, relationships, and sexuality was present prior to the debates over naturalness, Marie de France's work must be reframed as a critique of these arguments. Not only does the poem depict this form of relationship, it advocates for it. Indeed, Marie de France meant for the poem to be didactic in some form: The adventure you have heard/ Was true, have no doubt./ The lai of *Bisclavret* was made/ To be remembered forevermore 315-319). Placing stress upon the lai's reality and suggesting the audience must remember the substance of the poem's message. The importance placed upon remembrance conveys that the poem is an argument, a rebuttal towards regressive views on homosexuality and a condemnation of developing heteronormativity during the Middle Ages. Viewing *Bisclavret* in light of its queer elements aids scholars in framing medieval queerness in relation to a larger discussion of queerness in literature and substantiates the contextual debate on homosexuality during the period. *Bisclavret* is a subtle social critique that utilizes inversion to illustrate liberation through personal sexual integrity. Literature such as this disrupts negative perceptions

of a fluid transition, challenges the casual acceptance of the demonization of homosexuality, and complicates uniform acquiescence of changes in medieval dogma.

CHAPTER 3

WHAT “MR. SEEK” HAS TO HYDE: QUEER NARRATOLOGY IN ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON’S *DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE*

Since Elaine Showalter’s seminal reading of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), the novella has been regarded as a “fable of *fin-de-siècle* homosexual” (4). These readings tend to focus on the relationship between Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, such as Wayne Koestenbaum’s assertion that Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde must be one entity in order to safeguard against homosexuality, or Antonio Sanna’s interpretation that Dr. Jekyll’s dilemma mirrors the situation that queer Victorian men faced, suggesting that Hyde manifests Jekyll’s repressed queer desires. Both analyses focus solely on Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. These readings, however, overlook an important aspect of the narrative: Mr. Utterson. As the rules-bound lawyer at the center of the novella, Mr. Utterson’s interest in the strange case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is roused by his own personal conflict with what Mr. Hyde represents: freedom from the bondage of restrained same-sex relationships. The case forces Utterson to confront his own internal Mr. Hyde and reveals that the cultural heteronormative boundaries are what antagonize the characters of the novella.

My reading of Utterson reflects Gerald Prince and Robyn Warhol’s understanding of “unnaration.” This concept explores the importance of what is not said in a narrative. The omission of details present in the narrative provides understanding of the narrator’s goal and Mr. Utterson’s character. I pinpoint the intentional boundaries present in the narration that reflect and reinforce historical cultural boundaries. Ultimately, I show that queer figures like Mr. Hyde are not the primary destructive force of the narrative. Rather, the strict homosocial boundaries and the distance they create victimize both Mr. Utterson and Dr. Jekyll. The narrator personifies a

strict form of masculinity that works to distance the reader from seeing Mr. Utterson as a man who shares the same desire for intimacy as the subject of the novella, Dr. Jekyll. As Utterson delves deeper into the strange case, he realizes that Dr. Jekyll's requirement to separate his own personality in order to experience this need for intimacy is what leads to Jekyll's destruction and his own desolation.

3.1 Setting Boundaries: Queer Anxiety in Victorian England

Victorian heteronormativity is the cause of the destructive homosocial boundaries and performative gender present in Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. To better understand such heteronormativity, I turn first to a historical contextualization of both masculinity and the anxiety surrounding queer individuals during the period. While the rigid ideals of masculinity continued to persist, the culture had to simultaneously negotiate the ways that same-sex activity and desires could be discussed, while also maintaining the criminality of same-sex sexual intercourse. This dilemma, however, creates the very paradox that Mr. Utterson experiences in the novella. His efforts to find comfort in his own performative gender causes him to become obsessed with the figure of divergent masculinity of Mr. Hyde. Mr. Utterson is representative of this cultural dilemma just as much as Mr. Hyde is representative of the perceived monstrosity of same-sex desire. Robert Louis Stevenson lived in the product of the increasingly restrictive cultural definitions of gender and sexuality of the 19th-century and conceived of his novella at a time when he felt the furthest from the definitions of masculinity. As Stevenson suffered tubercular illness, "it is tempting to view Stevenson's authorial labor as one of male confinement" (Cohen 181). At this time, Stevenson did not fit in the attributes of being a pivotal social and commercial presence that a male should be. Though a contemporary definition of the term, this is also a time

where Stevenson felt a queering of his masculinity. According to Ed Cohen, Victorian masculinity was defined “by taking the ‘properties’ of what they designated as ‘the body’ to determine the ‘natural ground of differences between individuals. Middle-class Englishmen legitimated those practices through which they constituted and consolidated their positions as economic, political, and sexual agents, over and against all ‘others’” (Cohen 182). In *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, this separation of “middle-class Englishmen” and “others” is at the forefront and represented even in the title itself. Dr. Jekyll, the middle-class Englishman, and Mr. Hyde, the cultural other.

Not only was there the need to suit this regulated form of masculinity, there was also the need to safeguard against the anxiety of being labelled queer. Queerness was made illicit “by favoring a heteronormative and patriarchal status quo, late-Victorian law described homosexuality as an unhealthy form of malady... [it was] unacceptable by contemporary society and threatened to punish its practitioners, commanding them not to indulge in any form of physical contact” (Sanna 23). While Mr. Utterson follows this distance, he, like Victorian men who had sex with other men must “hide their own nature as much as their sexual practices” (Sanna 24). Mr. Hyde, however, is free of this boundary and through him, Mr. Utterson is able to vicariously experience the freedom of open same-sex desire. Just as queer men of the period had to conceal their activities to secure themselves socially, so too does the text obscure same-sex desire through ambiguity as “such sins are never explicitly mentioned by Stevenson and Wilde” (Sanna 26).

Mr. Utterson’s abject view of the anomalous figure of Mr. Hyde illustrates the ambiguity of his feelings. Julia Kristeva defines abjection in part as “a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible... It lies there, quite close,

but it cannot be assimilated,” and as something that causes a “loss of the distinction between subject and object or between self and other” (1). We must understand Mr. Hyde and the feelings that surround him as a product of the abject. The characters who encounter Mr. Hyde are unable to vocalize their feelings due to the abjection they experience. An example of this is Mr. Enfield’s inability to communicate the effect that Mr. Hyde has on him:

‘He is not easy to describe. There is something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something downright detestable. I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I scarce know why. He must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn’t specify the point. He’s an extraordinary-looking man, and yet I really can name nothing out of the way. No, sir; I can make no hand of it; I can’t describe him. And it’s not want of memory; for I declare I can see him this moment’ (10).

At this moment Enfield does not provide a concrete explanation as to why Mr. Hyde is so perturbing. Therefore, the ambiguity of his very being is what makes him abject, queer, and monstrous. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde represents an existence outside of what is licit, moral, and culturally acceptable and disrupts the rigid Victorian categorizations of gender and sexuality is what makes him monstrous. The freedom that Dr. Jekyll is able to exercise as Mr. Hyde, the ability to violate the Victorian homosocial boundaries, is both revolting and appealing to Mr. Utterson.

As the novella progresses, the confined Utterson becomes increasingly intimate with the male figures of both Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. While Utterson establishes the cultural anxiety surrounding homosocial relationships, Dr. Jekyll’s indulgence in illicit activity as the monstrous Mr. Hyde highlights the cultural taboo of homosocial bonds that are too intimate. These boundaries are what push Mr. Utterson to further his investigation into the strange relationship

between Jekyll and Hyde; and they are what cause Jekyll to don the persona that is free to practice an existence that is not confined by the strict Victorian social boundaries, chief of which is the intimacy between men.

3.2 Utter Narration: Distant Subjects and Selective Details

The narration of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is particularly unique in its perspective and whom the narrator focuses on. Mr. Utterson is the character of focus whose own perceptions are filtered by a narrator who holds the privilege to access and sift his internal thoughts and emotions. Privilege allows narrators “to know what could not be learned by strictly natural means or limited to realistic vision and inference” (Booth 160). Though the narrator has access to Mr. Utterson’s mind and the most influence over the reader, the narrator’s privilege is limited since they do not have access to characters such as Dr. Lanyon, Dr. Jekyll, and Mr. Hyde. This reveals the potential motivation for intentional narrative distancing on the narrator’s part. Because Utterson works so hard to maintain the performance of Victorian heteronormativity, he is the most useful character to further the underlying goal of the narrator to maintain this heteronormativity and condemn Dr. Jekyll for violating it. The narrator has the privilege to access Mr. Utterson’s inner thoughts and emotions, therefore, the narrator should also have the ability to access full omniscience. They do not exercise this privilege to its full extent, as Mr. Utterson is allowed to omit specific details without the narrator revealing them when they have the privilege to. This indicates that Mr. Utterson, despite his replicative performance, is fallible, and not a perfect vessel for the narrator to further their agenda. They must be selective when they access Mr. Utterson’s thoughts, and the moments of ambiguity indicate queer thoughts and desires that he experiences himself. To focus on Dr. Jekyll would further the possibility for

empathy for the other that is both monstrous *and* queer. So instead, the narrator focuses on Mr. Utterson, who seeks to be involved in the case, but is shunted by the very heteronormativity the narrator enforces.

There is a clear sense of ambivalence and conflicting thematic messages in Stevenson's work as a result of the style of narration present. Robbie Goh's analysis presents the interpretation that *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* does not suggest an "organic, re-envisioned model of history to be uncovered," but instead poses "a moral goal through a textual performance" (165). This solidification of a singular moral goal serves as "one kind of answer to the many problems of the text" (Goh 165). It is crucial to consider the ways in which the text offers not a moral goal, but a critique of Victorian heteronormativity. My interpretation of the text works to understand Stevenson's commentary and the ways that he utilizes Mr. Utterson's feelings and emotions towards the monster of Mr. Hyde to feed upon this cultural fear of intimacy between men.

A focus on narration and narratological elements of the text elucidates a key component in understanding the queer anxiety present in the novella: proximity. The narrator distances the reader not only from the character of focus, Mr. Utterson, but the narrator's focus on Utterson distances the reader further from the true subject of the novella, Dr. Jekyll. The narrator engages in the practice of what scholars Prince and Warhol call "unnarration." Unnarration, or "disnarration," is the "narrative refusal is a strategy for addressing the unnarratable in fiction, rather than simply keeping quiet about it" (Warhol 259). Both the narrator and Mr. Utterson employ narrative refusals and the ambiguity caused by such omissions are in direct relation to the taboo subject of same-sex desire. For example, the ambiguity surrounding Utterson's fixation on the relationship between Jekyll and Hyde, particularly Mr. Utterson's interpretation of Dr. Jekyll's will, is rooted in Utterson's own vicarious queer desire. Mr. Utterson's interest

transcends his expected professionalism, “for once more [Mr. Utterson] saw before his mind’s eye, as clear as a transparency, the strange clauses of the will” (22). The narrator and Mr. Utterson are the only two who have a clear understanding of what exactly Mr. Utterson extracts from the notion of Dr. Jekyll leaving everything in his will to the younger Mr. Hyde. Utterson comes to this conclusion after just describing Mr. Hyde as a “creature stealing like a thief to Harry’s bedside,” suggesting disdain and envy for the male figure who has an intimate proximity for Dr. Jekyll, even before meeting Mr. Hyde.

The narrator and Mr. Utterson are close in narrative proximity, seen primarily in the ability of the narrator to understand and communicate some of Mr. Utterson’s emotions. This narrative refusal to elaborate forces the audience to assume. Just as many Victorian writers, Stevenson does this to address the unspeakable taboo of same-sex desire. Mr. Utterson’s narrative refusal and the narrator’s own omission of discussing Utterson’s fixation creates distance. This distance defines his fixation as being caused by Utterson’s own fear of Jekyll and Hyde engaging in a relationship that defies the homosocial boundaries established within their society. Therefore, it is crucial to interrogate the intentional omissions present, particularly as to how they relate to the underpinnings of queerness present in Mr. Utterson. Assessing them reveals how the Victorian concepts of heteronormativity and masculinity that the narrator works to reinforce ultimately destroys all of the characters of the novel who must conform to these ideals, not solely Dr. Jekyll.

The only moments where the narrator exercises their privilege is when Mr. Utterson is alone—or, when the narrator is alone with Utterson. These scenarios provide the narrator opportunities to influence Mr. Utterson, just as the ways that intangible heteronormative pressure

would. A passage that demonstrates this phenomenon can be found in the interaction between Mr. Utterson and Dr. Jekyll's butler, Poole:

“Come,” said the lawyer, “I see you have some good reason, Poole; I see there is something seriously amiss. Try to tell me what it is.” “I think there's been foul play,” said Poole, hoarsely. “Foul play!” cried the lawyer, a good deal frightened and rather inclined to be irritated in consequence. “What foul play? What does the man mean?” “I daren't say, sir” was the answer; “but will you come along with me and see for yourself?” (48)

Mr. Utterson displays his curiosity in the illicit activity that Dr. Jekyll has been engaging in, marked by his fixation on Poole's mentioning of “foul play.” There are two instances of omission in this passage; Poole refuses to define ‘foul play,’ and the narrator once again refuses to elaborate on Mr. Utterson's own suspicion that the foul play are the queer thoughts he sees in his “mind eye” earlier in the novella. The narrator is distant in this section and declines the privilege to reveal even the mere thought of queerness on Utterson's part. The passage continues showing the narrator's selective omniscience, who instead is only able to observe external mannerisms; “Mr. Utterson's only answer was to rise and get his hat and great-coat; but he observed with wonder the greatness of the relief that appeared upon the butler's face, and perhaps with no less, that the wine was still untasted when he set it down to follow” (48). In this moment, the narrator's perspective is as limited as Mr. Utterson's. The narrator chooses to prevent the audience from understanding Mr. Utterson as an emotionally-driven character, upholding the rigid image of a proper gentleman.

These instances reinforce a relationship between the narrator and Mr. Utterson is, at times, one and the same, but they are not as shown in the way the narrator exercises narrative privilege in the journey to Dr. Jekyll's house, “He could have wished it otherwise; never in his

life had he been conscious of so sharp a wish to see and touch his fellow-creatures; for struggle as he might, there was borne in upon his mind a crushing anticipation of calamity” (48). This is an instance of the narrator being intimate with Mr. Utterson’s thoughts, but once more omitting specificity of the ambiguous thoughts of Mr. Utterson. Though Mr. Utterson considers himself a gentleman and obliges himself to perform the ideal of that role, he longs for the feminized space to be populated just as Soho was when first visiting Mr. Hyde. He yearns to “see and touch his fellow-creatures,” which opens the possibility for interpretation due to ambiguity; the inhabitants of Soho, men performing heteronormative masculinity, or men who wish to “see and touch” other men. Even the combination of “fellow-creature” is a direct reference to Dr. Jekyll, the “fellow,” and Mr. Hyde, the “creature.” Mr. Utterson’s queer desires surface at this moment. The narrator must continue performing their role that is expected, but they become unreliable. Not in a conventional sense of lying or blatant misdirection, but by leaving the inner desires of Mr. Utterson ambiguous, the narrator does not have to admit that Mr. Utterson’s internal thoughts and desires are as queer as Mr. Hyde. They are able to maintain a sense of heteronormative order through their narrative distancing, also allowing them to maintain their own role in the society of the novella as a narrator capable of relaying this story.

Despite their efforts to uphold heteronormativity and maintain Mr. Utterson’s heteronormative facade, the narrator is also ultimately queer. Functionally, the narrator is a genderless, non-diegetic voice who exhibits human traits such as having an agency as when they are intimate with their subject, Mr. Utterson, and when they distance themselves from him. Additionally, the narrator chooses Mr. Utterson as a subject out of a fear of corrupting their own agenda from the perspective of the corruptible Dr. Lanyon, who dies after being exposed to the queerness of Dr. Jekyll; or Dr. Jekyll himself, who is inextricably bound Mr. Hyde, the corruptor.

The narrator eventually leaves the narrative, leaving the final chapter solely to Dr. Jekyll's first-person narration and "[i]n so doing, the novel leaves the epistolary 'texts,' which are also significantly coded as 'autobiographical,' to appear to the readers in and of the novel as its 'unmediated' concluding statements" (Cohen 186). I interpret this shift in narration as indicative of Mr. Utterson obtaining the answers to his ambiguous thoughts that the narrator has worked tirelessly to mediate. Just as Dr. Jekyll loses agency because of the strengthening of Mr. Hyde, the narrator loses privilege over Mr. Utterson as Utterson develops empathy for the queer figure of Dr. Jekyll. The similarity of this shift is an indication that Mr. Utterson has been given the answers he has sought throughout the narrative. The narrator does not reclaim narrative power once Mr. Utterson has read Dr. Jekyll's account, indicating a final attempt to keep the text ambiguous by obscuring Mr. Utterson's final reaction to receiving the answers he has sought.

3.3 Mr. Utterson: Gentlemanly Performance

The narrator introduces Mr. Utterson with a focus on his manners and his approach to friendships with other men. His manners and niceties establish artificial kindness, rather than genuine feeling and concern for those he engages with. Despite being "the last reputable acquaintance and the last good influence in the lives of down-going men," these men "never marked a change in his [Mr. Utterson's] demeanor" (2). From the narrator's perspective, Mr. Utterson is the "last good influence" because he is a reminder of the dominant masculinity of the culture. The criminals that he influences are representative of a form of divergent masculinity because they do not meet the criteria of the ideal Victorian male. Through Mr. Utterson, they are reminded of what the culture wants them to be. As discussed previously, the narrator's trust in Mr. Utterson as the representative of the heteronormative is ill-founded. The reason he is the last

good influence is because his vicarious desire for the crimes these criminals commit allows him to form an empathetic connection with them.

As a lawyer, Mr. Utterson is an agent that works with men at odds with the law; however, he always keeps proximity through performing what is expected of him to ensure that his bonds with his male clients never become too close. While his work might justify this proximity, his limited friendships and status as a bachelor designate Mr. Utterson as a distant and isolated character due to his underlying fear of violating boundaries. There is an allure to the activities that his clients indulge in, as Mr. Utterson is found “sometimes wondering, almost with envy, the high spirits involved in their misdeeds” (1). Utterson is able to exist within the boundaries of being both an agent of the law, but also someone who vicariously experiences the crimes that the men he defends commit. The “envy” that Utterson experiences at the “high spirits” of these criminals works to set up Mr. Utterson’s own desires, and foreshadows the interest that he takes in the queer dilemma of Dr. Jekyll. Through his work, Mr. Utterson is able to vicariously experience the crimes his clients commit; but he must also remain emotionally distant in order to be this last good culturally acceptable influence. This effect of this feeling is questioned by the narration, however, as the narrator notes that Mr. Utterson experiences “almost envy.” There is a significance in the narrator suggesting a liminal emotional state for Mr. Utterson that attempts to police this feeling. One cannot experience an emotion such as envy partially. The thought was there, and therefore the emotion was felt. The narrator does not want to admit that Mr. Utterson feels envy at the unnamed crimes these men commit and avoids it by suggesting the empathy was never truly formed. This vicarious envy is a representation of the queer desires that Mr. Utterson experiences. His curiosity, his envy, his desire for the case surrounding the strange case

are not “almost” emotions, they are concrete and what drive Mr. Utterson to vicariously experience the crimes of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

Hearing this story of Mr. Hyde—how he assaulted a young girl, paid her family off, then slid behind a locked door of which only he holds the key—entices Utterson. He is not only a lawyer, an agent of the law, but he is also tied to the restrictions of performative masculinity. Mr. Hyde holds the key to pass through the confines of British masculinity and into a gateway to engage in illicit, intimate activity. The title of the chapter, “The Story of the Door,” indicates that this tale is significant to the narrative and is the inciting incident for Mr. Utterson’s interest in becoming “Mr. Seek,” despite the chapter ending on a gag order concerning the event: “Mr. Utterson sighed deeply but said never a word; and the young man presently resumed. ‘Here is another lesson to say nothing,’ said he. ‘I am ashamed of my long tongue. Let us make a bargain never to refer to this again.’ ‘With all my heart,’ said the lawyer. ‘I shake hands on that, Richard’” (10-11). This event speaks to the narratological components of the novella as it is a situation where this taboo, unspoken tale gives Mr. Utterson the drive to investigate and his ambiguous thoughts concerning Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde stems from this very story.

Despite performing distance in order to uphold the image of gentlemanliness, Mr. Utterson shares connections to characters who exist outside that social sphere. One example is the usage of stimulants to access another side of one’s personality. Alcohol serves as a stimulant for Mr. Utterson, just as the Jekyll’s alchemical concoction does for him, alcohol causes “something eminently human [to beacon] from his eye,” and indicates a dormant side of Utterson that is roused when influences such as alcohol that cause him to loosen the performative control of the culturally ideal masculinity (3). Though Jekyll discovered the means to transform into a personified version of this side of his desires, this other side is established to exist within

everyone, including Utterson. Conversations that Utterson have are typically either in public, so that there are both spectators and witnesses to confirm that he is merely friends with the men he interacts with such as Enfield. That, or they occur at small parties after Utterson had consumed alcohol that causes him to interact with Jekyll such as the passage “[h]osts loved to detain the dry lawyer... Dr. Jekyll was no exception; and as he now sat on the opposite side of the fire — a large, well-made, smooth-faced man of fifty, with something of a slyish cast perhaps, but every mark of capacity and kindness—you could see by his looks that he cherished for Mr. Utterson a sincere and warm affection” (23). Utterson is most desired after he has attended these social gatherings and to be “detained” (23). In this scene, there is warmth between Mr. Utterson and Dr. Jekyll. The narrator describes Dr. Jekyll as attractive, but also hints at his “slyish cast,” indicating that he is hiding something that the narrator chooses to keep ambiguous. Focusing on external appearance, the narrator observes that Dr. Jekyll cherishes Mr. Utterson with a “sincere and warm affection” (23). The ambiguity here fulfills the same purpose as the other instances of narrative ambiguity: to prevent the narrator from admitting that the relationship between Mr. Utterson and Dr. Jekyll is one that is queer. To reach this normally suppressed, “human” side of Utterson he must meet the criteria that distances him from the other men he engages with. Not only must he be in a group, but also he must have alcohol to soften the grip of his performative identity. Substance use closes the distance that is otherwise present in homosocial interactions. . This dependence on substances, both with Utterson’s drinking and Jekyll’s concoction is further evidence of a culture that has led to these destructive means in order for men to be at ease with their own respective Mr. Hydes.

Utterson’s performative identity is further solidified by aspects of his character that he forces himself to adopt, such as his built tolerance for wine. In solitude, Utterson drinks gin “to

mortify a taste for vintages” (3). In order to be accepted and reach those more intimate interactions of the afterparty, however, he must condition himself to drink the substances he does not typically enjoy. Despite preferring gin, Mr. Utterson performs his consumption in order to fulfill expectations of what society expects of a man of his status. Wine and gin are also significant in their relation to different spaces and the different forms of masculinity that they represent. Gin carries the contextual connotation of poverty, vice, and cultural ruination due to its relation “to crime and the social ‘residuum’”(Reed 29). Consumption of “[t]he intoxicating draught itself disqualifies them... and emboldens them to commit every wicked and desperate enterprise” (Reed 29). There isn’t a specific area of London that is associated with the masculinity of the ideal Victorian gentleman, but there is the space of Soho where this idealized masculinity holds no power unlike the rest of London. When Utterson travels to Soho in search of Hyde, he encounters a “gin palace” alongside other images such as “many women of different nationalities passing out, key in hand, to have a morning glass” (29). While the narrator does not disclose the connection that Utterson has to gin, the audience understands from the first chapter that Utterson does have a connection to this place due to his preference for gin. Soon after beholding these images, a fog settles and conceals these “blackguardly” surroundings (30). Once more, the image of a key resurfaces. Rather than Mr. Hyde, these women hold the key. Mr. Utterson sees the existence of these ‘others’ as beings with access to an existence he covets. The narrator is using their privilege and power over the narrative to hide these connections by means of influencing the atmosphere itself. For a moment, Utterson sees his own desires in Soho, just as the dormant “human” side of him occasionally awakes through intoxication. Yet he is drawn back into his performance of gentlemanliness as the fog obscures those desires.

3.4 Mr. Hyde: The Freedom of Intimacy

The moments in the novella where Mr. Utterson is tempted to act out of his performance is indicative of dealing with a suppressed identity. Though Mr. Utterson does not have a physical body that represents this separate identity, his internal conflict surrounding Mr. Hyde is a physical display of his own identity crisis. Mr. Hyde embodies the taboo of people who act upon the crimes and unnamed activities that he does. The crimes that are specified in the novella are physical ones. Hyde tramples a young girl and murders a politician. Stevenson has no problem specifying these violent crimes, but consistently refers to unspeakable activities that Hyde indulges that Dr. Jekyll cannot, detailed after Sir Danver's murder: "Mr. Hyde had disappeared out of the ken of the police as though he had never existed. Much of his past was unearthed, indeed, and all disreputable... of his vile life, of his strange associates, of the hatred that seemed to have surrounded his career" (38). Mr. Hyde is described as an enigmatic figure, in that he does not have any friends or acquaintances which make it difficult for Mr. Utterson to investigate him. He does however meet with "strange associates" who also indulge in a "vile life" (43). These ambiguities that extend outside the obvious violent crimes, lends themselves to the possibility of the discussion of illicit activity that are not specified in law, activity that is not illegal, but taboo. The unspeakable nature of Mr. Hyde's lifestyle lends itself to the same ambiguity needed in discussing same-sex desire. There is an unwillingness on the narrator's part to disclose this queer anxiety as it would implicate Mr. Utterson whose own vicarious desires would be known as being queer. The narrator also does this for the reader, to maintain the cultural standard of unspoken queerness.

Mr. Hyde's actions are but one aspect of his queerness. The internal elements of queerness are avoided by the narrator, but they bind Mr. Hyde and Mr. Utterson together. Mr. Utterson's curiosity surrounding Jekyll's will and his ambiguous relationship to Mr. Hyde is what prompts Utterson to investigate, but he is more concerned with the phenomenon surrounding Jekyll than the man himself. This distance from Jekyll displays Mr. Utterson's own desires to live vicariously through Jekyll, to sustain himself off of the scandalous endeavors of Hyde. Each visit causes Dr. Jekyll to remit back into indulging in the pleasures that Mr. Hyde has access to. Every case of Utterson interacting with Jekyll is one that involves other people to create social distance between the men, one which spurs Jekyll to access the intimacy that he desires.

Because Mr. Utterson polices his friendships so closely, presumably keeping within the boundaries of Victorian cultural acceptability, he is restrained. When Mr. Utterson's demeanor is described as "undemonstrative at the best," and how "his friendship seemed to be founded in a similar catholicity of good nature," it feels as if his constraint is superficial, disingenuous, and dispassionate (2). At this point his distance within homosocial relationships exceeds just his clients, but also people who are supposed to be his friends. This is made apparent in the description of his friendship to Mr. Enfield, whose friendship was founded in "his own blood or those whom he had known the longest" (4). There is no intimacy between Mr. Utterson and Mr. Enfield, platonic or otherwise. Their distanced homosocial relationship becomes a spectacle for the narrator, who observes how "they [Mr. Utterson and Mr. Enfield] said nothing to each other," or "It was a nut to crack for many, what these two could see in each other" (2). However, their relationship is both accepted yet perplexing to the public, that they seek each other's company, but seem to have no connection. This dynamic foils the relationship between Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in that it is a homosocial relationship with an age gap, Hyde being described as younger

than Jekyll, that perturbs both the narrator and seemingly Mr. Utterson. Though Utterson performs his friendship with Enfield, a younger man, there is an allure to the relationship of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde seen in Mr. Utterson's fascination with Dr. Jekyll's will.

The object that is most disturbing to Mr. Utterson is Dr. Jekyll's will. That Dr. Jekyll would leave his inheritance to a younger male, Mr. Hyde, is perturbing to Mr. Utterson. He believes that it is "madness," that the "obnoxious paper" is a "disgrace" (13). What Mr. Utterson sees in "his mind's eye" concerning the "strange clauses of the will," is proof of a queer relationship; one that the narrator believes Mr. Utterson must disrupt, and "save" Dr. Jekyll from the disgrace he sees in the document (22). This is not Mr. Utterson's true purpose. It is the same feeling of envy that he experiences during his interactions with the criminals he encounters as a lawyer.

When Mr. Utterson seeks to confront Mr. Hyde in the pursuit of justice, he is unable to locate him because Mr. Hyde is an external representation of his own internal crisis with the queer desires that he is unable to act upon. His intimate interactions with Hyde occur because he is an exception to his otherwise guarded social attitude. Utterson, just as much as Hyde, violates social boundaries to interact and investigate Mr. Hyde to explore the freedoms that he embodies. Unlike his interactions with other characters, the interactions he has with Mr. Hyde are intimate. This intimacy that Mr. Utterson has with Mr. Hyde stems from the need to define his own desires. If he understands why Mr. Hyde is so repulsive, he will establish resolve in his own identity. It is Mr. Hyde, however, that pulls Mr. Utterson further into these intimate moments with other men. As Mr. Hyde grows in strength, so too does Mr. Utterson's appetite for intimacy. Once Dr. Jekyll dies, Mr. Hyde does as well. The physical monster leaves, but Mr. Utterson's own access to intimacy dies as well, ultimately fulfilling his fear of being alone. The queer

“other” found in Mr. Hyde cannot be destroyed, as doing so leaves men abiding by heteronormative boundaries desolate. This is why Stevenson ends the novella on an ambivalent note. Once the story of Dr. Jekyll has been told, there is no joy in Mr. Hyde being destroyed and Mr. Utterson must live in a world that fulfills the extreme same-sex boundaries of the culture—a heteronormative hell.

3.5 Conclusion

Prior to the reveal that they are one in the same, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde’s relationship is viewed as divergent from what is socially acceptable. Mr. Utterson and other characters such as Dr. Lanyon, aligned with obligatory forms of relationships, fear that the relationship between Jekyll and Hyde violates this boundary, that their relationship transcends what is expected of them. In light of the overwhelming homosociality of the text, the intentional ambiguous narratology, and the significance of Mr. Hyde as an agent of queer monstrosity, it is apparent that these crimes are queer sexual relations. Dr. Jekyll’s desire to engage in same-sex sexual activity is enacted only in the subversive guise of Hyde, but ultimately becomes uncontrollable. Mr. Hyde’s gradual corruption of his victim decays their agency. This loss and destruction of oneself constitutes Hyde, and the queerness he embodies, to be punished in the end. However, I do not read the novella as condemning queerness. The social boundaries between men are the true destructive force of the novella. Dr. Jekyll is ruined because he must be subversive in indulging in his ambiguous activities; however, the alternative, acting in a distant way like Mr. Utterson, leads to its own sort of confinement. The Victorian cultural taboo of same-sex relations between men is the true monster, one that causes Mr. Utterson to distance himself and desperately fight

for the few “acceptable” relationships he has left; and Dr. Jekyll, who must navigate through two separate identities in order to sate his queer desires.

Though most critics have focused on Jekyll and Hyde, Mr. Utterson is at the center of this cultural critique. The narrator’s selective use of privilege demonstrates their own presence as an agent of the heteronormative culture that dominates the psyche of the male characters. Through allowing Mr. Utterson’s thoughts to remain ambiguous, despite having access to his true thoughts, the narrator is able to maintain the illusion of heteronormativity in Mr. Utterson. This strategy, however, perpetuates the undefinable—the very thing that makes Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde a monster to a Victorian audience. The abjection he inspires is something that cannot be articulated in the same way as the taboo same-sex desire that he represents.

Attending to Mr. Utterson’s “unnarration” also reveals his own struggles with queerness, his own internal Mr. Hyde. This reevaluation of Mr. Utterson elucidates how Victorian concepts of heteronormativity and a rising presence of queerness in the culture manifests in the novella. Mr. Utterson is just as much a victim of these cultural expectations as Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde are. Through their narrative efforts and manipulation, the narrator works to contain Mr. Utterson and continue the façade of a Victorian gentleman. But the narrator fails. Once the narrator has quit the narrative, Mr. Utterson’s reading of Dr. Jekyll’s account of the events leaves him and the audience alike feeling empathy for the path that led to Dr. Jekyll’s demise. That Mr. Utterson’s fears of being completely alone, being void of any connections, how he “shall not live to make others” (40). Mr. Utterson has met a similar social demise through these boundaries, revealing that the entity that victimizes Mr. Utterson and Dr. Jekyll alike is the very social apparatus they inhabit. This cultural critique suggests an environment of licit queer desire would have enabled Mr. Utterson to assume a more direct, intimate role in his prevention of the case of Dr. Jekyll and

Mr. Hyde; and perhaps, preventing the need for Mr. Hyde to exist in the first place.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

My final section of my thesis will conclude the overall findings of my research by providing a summation of my analyses of both works and answers to my initial research questions. Additionally, I will elaborate on concerns I have and had for my work, and suggest where I might go with my future scholarship on the subject of empathetic monsters.

Through my work with both texts, I have constructed a profile of how transformative monsters function as agents of empathy and discussed the cultural and queer implications that surround them. Inversion and subversion are both tools that are used to both validate and invalidate the monster in each text. They are, however, unique in their ability to form empathy both with in-crowd audiences as well as those who might not immediately identify with them. This is possible due to their innate dual identity, allowing them to be simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar. So, when posed with questions such as: how can monsters act as representations of marginalized cultural others such as queer individuals? It is clear that dual identities can represent minorities or cultural “others” who must create a secondary identity in order to navigate the cultural requirements of the majority. This has manifested both in queerness, best understood through the closet metaphor, where a queer individual who is closeted acts in a way that seeks to disguise their queerness in social spaces but might manifest a truer self in private. It has also appeared in the concept of double-consciousness in relation to black Americans and the need to reconcile black identity in a predominately white society. What effect can monsters achieve as agents of empathy? Because of their dual nature, transformative monsters are able to reach a broad audience in ways that human characters cannot. Monstrosity, due to its unfamiliarity, can take many forms that reflect a multitude of cultural fears. Human characters

might be able to offer more direct or specific commentary on identities, but face more barriers to empathy for people who do not immediately identify with the marginalized character because of this specificity. And lastly, what is the significance of empathetic messaging towards cultural others in literature? There is great significance in the understanding that monsters embody the abjectiveness that monster scholars have discussed. Just as they are able to be feared, they are also able to represent the culturally oppressed identities that are feared in an empathetic way. *Bisclavret* the werewolf represents a love outside of the traditional love during the medieval period, asserting that genuine love between two men should triumph over the cultural definitions of love displayed through chivalric romances and courtly love. We see this identification and act of empathy building directly through the relationship of Mr. Utterson and Dr. Jekyll in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Despite Mr. Utterson's initial anxieties about the relationship that Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde has, he is nonetheless compelled to continue exploring the circumstances surrounding the case. As Mr. Utterson continues to delve deeper into Dr. Jekyll's divergent identity, Mr. Hyde's monstrosity amplifies. By the end of the novel, Mr. Utterson is left destitute due to the cultural restrictions that created Dr. Jekyll's need for his split personality to begin with, ultimately showing that the suppression of divergent identities harms those of the majority as well.

My first chapter on *Bisclavret* explored the role inversion of archetypes of chivalric romance and how that phenomenon worked to garner empathy for the monster figure who engages in a queer relationship. By reading *Bisclavret* in a way that analyzes its attitudes towards queerness and utilization of monstrosity, it is clear that it is a cultural critique. The lai's inversion of roles makes it so that the audience, rather than root for the knight to save the maiden, instead is told a narrative where the king saves the knight. Audiences accustomed to

becoming invested in the journey of the heroic knight must also accept the bestial side of the character. Although the monstrous aspect initially causes fear in the other characters of the lai such as the king and his court it eventually leads to strengthened bonds and displays of love between two men. Inversion in order to garner empathy for Bisclavret is ultimately how the text achieves its goal of cultural critique. The aesthetically monstrous being, something audiences might be predisposed to fear or scorn, is in reality, a more genuine form of existence and love. Rather than the fruitless and forced relationship between Bisclavret and his wife, a commentary on heteronormativity, the relationship between Bisclavret and the king is more indicative of the idealized medieval courtly love. This act of literary artifice, combining hero and monster into one, is what makes this critique possible. Feeling for Bisclavret is necessary for forming the overall critique of heteronormativity, both critiquing the rigidity of courtly love as well as arguing that genuine queer love should be prioritized over artificial heterosexual couplings idealized by western medieval cultures.

My second chapter on *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* combined monster theory and queer narratology to interrogate how the text treats monstrosity and queerness. It is clear that *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is narrated in a way that works to demonize Dr. Jekyll for monstrous transformative qualities. It is this agenda and the narrative omissions present that makes an empathetic bond for Dr. Jekyll possible. By working so diligently to distance the reader from the thoughts of Dr. Jekyll by the narrator's own work and the narrative focus on Mr. Utterson, when Dr. Jekyll provides his account in the final chapter of the novella, it is that much more effective in providing empathy for the reader. Dr. Jekyll's experiments are a result of the need to act out queered desires in a culture that idealizes superficiality and heteronormativity. The work is proof of how flexible the monster can be as an empathetic agent. Rather than having

the support of the narrator as in *Bisclavret*, who provides cultural critique in a supportive way, the narrator of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* works to enforce cultural predispositions towards monstrosity. It is only once the narrator has left the stage that the audience is able to truly empathize with Dr. Jekyll, therefore causing a reflection upon the entirety of the novella to occur. Just as Mr. Utterson's perspective is censored by the narrator, readers are being influenced by the omissions and narrative privilege of the narrator. Only after realizing the influence of the narrator, their bias and agenda, is it clear that this ideology victimizes all of the characters of the novella. Mr. Utterson's fears of being alone are fulfilled and Dr. Jekyll's need to escape the confines of Victorian cultural attitudes leads to his demise. The investigation of Mr. Hyde on Mr. Utterson's account only serves to exacerbate the severity of Mr. Hyde's crimes suggest that the policing of divergent identities only furthers the destructive need to subvert those norms.

By conducting this analysis, I hope that my work further complicates and expands the scope of monster theory and its potential as a theoretical lens. Though plenty of scholarship exists on the antagonistic nature of monsters, there is little work that exists on the possibility for monsters to be viewed as agents of empathy. Transformative monsters, I have shown, are capable of achieving this empathy and it is work I wish to continue to expand upon by analyzing a greater body of works. My thesis is certainly a start towards this expansion of understanding in regards to the monster figure, but does have limitations. I would like to build upon my future research. Namely, I work exclusively with transformative monsters in this project, and ones that are from vastly different time periods. I am curious if there are cultural throughlines that are observable by focusing more directly in a specific era. Additionally, I am curious if monsters that are not transformative are capable of achieving the same effects as transformative ones. Despite these limitations on my initial work, I feel that my research on a practical level has expanded on

the notion of monstrosity being man-made. For, if monstrosity is itself a man-made construct, then we all have innate access to understanding the ways that monsters manifest real human identities and emotions.

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