

Performative Gender and Pop Fiction Females: “Emancipating” Byronic Heroines through a
Feminist Education

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Introduction:

“I can be a regular bitch. Just try me.”¹ With this phrase emblazoned across her t-shirt, Lisbeth Salander, pierced, tattooed, and bedecked in leather, waltzes from the pages of Stieg Larsson’s *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. This woman who subverts authority, maliciously tattoos and sodomizes a man, and intentionally distances herself from close relationships of any kind has somehow managed to capture both the attention and admiration of the American audience. This disheartening phenomenon stems from a renewed interest in the Byronic heroine, a female possessing those traits traditionally assigned to Byronic heroes and men, and the rise of the Byronic heroine, as I will discuss, is intrinsically linked to the ebb and flow of the Third Wave of feminism. Hermione (*Harry Potter*) offers a picture of a heroine that embodies the Second Wave’s agenda; she is intelligent, independent, and only barely Byronic. While Katniss (*Hunger Games*) and Lisbeth (*Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*) are thoroughly Byronic, the plots surrounding these heroines greatly contrast the fates of previous Byronic heroines.

Unfortunately, though their lives may be saved, their futures are lost. The breakdown of the gender binary, as seen in the rise of the successful Byronic heroine, does not bode well for the future of a society that insists on culturally-constructed gender. Though the First and Second Wave produce innocuous literary ripples, such as Hermione Granger, the leap into the deep end of the Third Wave, accompanied by characters like Katniss Everdeen and Lisbeth Salander, is not only alarming, but it is also cause for immediate concern. By first examining the history of feminism and its literary products, and then by establishing a connections between Byronism and education, I will lay the groundwork for my argument, ultimately establishing that the cultural reception of each of these two Byronic heroines, Katniss and Lisbeth, indicates the permeating,

¹ Larsson, Stieg. *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. 399.

damaging effects of the Third Wave's attempt to eliminate gender binaries, seen to its fruition through emancipatory education.

The History of Feminism

While her success is disturbing for those familiar with her story, Lisbeth Salander exists and flourishes in contemporary society only because of the strides made by feminists in the past century. In a world where best-selling authoresses line the shelves, female CEOs lead board meetings, and girl protagonists headline a majority of books, television shows, and movies, it appears that feminism² has reached its height. As America rides out the remains of the Third Wave, the progress made by all three waves of feminism are undeniable, and while many of the First Wave feminists would knowingly disapprove of the development of Lisbeth's character, unfortunately we can credit her existence to the progress made by these women. The First Wave formally began at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848 when three hundred men and women gathered in order to encourage equality for women. The principle goal of this First Wave was legal equality—meaning that women were seeking primarily to ratify what would later become the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution (1920). Though there were other concerns that certain sects chose to champion, such as involvement in the temperance and abolitionist movements, the main concern of the First Wave was suffrage, a goal that they achieved in less than forty years following the Seneca Falls Convention.

From the beginning of the feminist movements in America, literature has played a large, influential role in advancing each wave. *Women in the Nineteenth Century*, by Margaret Fuller, is considered the first major feminist work printed in the United States. Published in 1843, Fuller's work offers a critique of the inferior perception of women during this time. She argues

² Defined by Jennifer Baumgardener and Amy Richards in *Manifesta* as “the movement for social, political, and economic equality of men and women” (56).

that women were being compared more often with children than with men, and this lack of a true, equal partnership diminished the divine love that men and women should be sharing. Fuller notes that only in seeking self-dependence can women begin their lawful expansion into equality, “bringing divinity to new heights.”³ Ultimately, Fuller’s proposed solution and the consensus of the First Wave suffragettes was much more moderate and conservative than that of the feminists to come. Groups like the American Women’s Suffrage Association and National Women’s Suffrage Association worked with senators and governors, wealthy donors and slews of supportive suffragettes in order to get the right to vote. These women believed that only by working within the political system and by gaining the sympathy of men in power could they evoke profitable change.

While the First Wave had a common goal of suffrage, the two following waves began to disperse and lose focus. The Second Wave of feminists, lacking the single-mindedness of their predecessors, rallied for many different causes. In the forty years that divide the two movements, the Great Depression and World War II ravaged the country. The dancing and singing housewives who merrily picketed for “Votes for Women,” as seen in movies like *Mary Poppins*, were then forced into steel mills and factories, filling the void while their husbands and brothers fought overseas. The aims of the feminist agenda seemed to pale in comparison to the task of survival. However, the 1960s saw an upswing in morale and movements as the Second Wave gripped the United States. Shaking off the shackles of their KitchenAid mixers and apron strings, women finally decided to become activists once more. Picking up the racial thread dropped by a few members of the First Wave, feminists in this Second Wave rallied around civil rights and anti-war movements, sexuality and reproductive rights, and equality in the workplace.

³ Fuller, Margaret. *Women of the Nineteenth Century*. 29.

Organizations began to spring up all over the country that centered on various causes of the feminist agenda, and Betty Friedan became the first president of the newly-established, highly-influential National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966. While the early feminists fought for legal equality, their followers now fought for social equality. And though they were very successful, seeing many verdicts and bills passed in their favor,⁴ perhaps the Second Wave's greatest contributions came in the form of their literature and their development of the discussion of gender roles.

Two leading voices of the Second Wave began to record, define, and oppose gender roles long before the every-woman took up this crusade in the Third Wave. Simone de Beauvoir, a French writer and existential philosopher, created one of the primary works that contributed to the building of the Second Wave: *The Second Sex* (1953). De Beauvoir, building on Hegel's premise, writes that women are the Other, claiming that men have falsely imposed an air of mystery around women, consequently subjugating them and perpetuating a male-centric ideology.⁵ According to de Beauvoir, this mystery permeates literature, leaving very little realistic or faithful writings about females: "The absence or insignificance of the female element in a body of work is symptomatic. . . . [I]t loses importance in a period like ours in which each individual's particular problems are of secondary import."⁶ De Beauvoir wanted to dispel the myths surrounding women by discussing "the horror of feminine fertility" and the "everlasting disappointment" of women.⁷ By shattering the illusions surrounding women, she argues that men would no longer be able to hide behind their false interpretations as a means of understanding,

⁴ Equal Pay Act of 1963, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the *Griswold v. Connecticut Supreme Court* ruling of 1965, the Equal Credit Opportunity Act (1974), the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978.

⁵ De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. Third section entitled "Woman: Myth and Reality" (260-283)

⁶ Ibid. 265.

⁷ Ibid. 168, 213.

and therefore they must resign their stereotypes of women and begin to offer legitimate assistance instead of stoic indifference. De Beauvoir's work is one of the first to discuss explicitly the detrimental effects of such rigid gender expectations and divisions, a precursor to much of the feminist agenda in the Third Wave.

De Beauvoir's work undeniably helped produce the second-largest contribution in the fight against gender roles from the Second Wave—Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). What began as a survey of her Smith College classmates, in order to commemorate their 15th anniversary reunion, spawned a new view of woman; at least this was Friedan's intention. By discussing the widespread unhappiness of her female classmates, those women who chose to get married, have children, and live out their roles dutifully as middle-class mothers, Friedan identifies perhaps the most harmful result of the mystique that de Beauvoir dissects: the resigned, almost catatonic, housewife. While she criticizes the theories of Sigmund Freud, Friedan attempts to build her case that women's education, then viewed suspiciously, was the key to ending this cycle of indentured servitude in the home, and she argues that the media's portrayal of women constantly in the home, holding a child, or behind a sink in the kitchen, only further limited women's potential. She writes, “[W]omen's magazines insist that women can know fulfillment only at the moment of giving birth to a child. . . . In the feminine mystique, there is no other way for a woman to dream of creation or of the future. There is no other way she can even dream about herself, except as her children's mother, her husband's wife.”⁸ Ultimately, Friedan simply longed for women to be afforded the option of abstaining from motherhood or marriage and encouraged to follow in their free-thinking foremothers' footsteps: “The real joke that history played on American women is not the one that makes people snigger, with cheap

⁸ Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. 105.

Freudian sophistication, at the dead feminists. It is the joke that Freudian thought played on living women, twisting the memory of the feminists into the man-eating phantom of the feminine mystique, shriveling the very wish to be more than just a wife and mother.”⁹ Friedan was fighting for the dismantling of the stereotypes surrounding women, the dissipation of the mother and wife expectations. This battle cry resonated deeply with the entire Second Wave, producing much fruit by the end of the movement in the eighties.

Education in Feminism

Education has always played an invaluable role in the feminists’ agendas.¹⁰ In the First Wave, this education took place in many of the materials printed and performed during the suffrage movement. From poetry to pamphlets, plays to street performances, these women used every medium available in order to teach their sisters and mothers the importance of the vote. Maggie Rehm discusses the pedagogical effects of suffrage literature, and she notes that “suffragists understood themselves to be part of a larger community and were very much invested in its success and progress; professionals and amateurs alike felt a civic responsibility to contribute to a project they believed would improve their country as well as advancing the sex, and through suffrage literature, they found a way to do so.”¹¹ As they saw the oppression around them, from the voting booths to the schoolrooms, these First Wave feminists began the trend that would later be modified in the Second Wave¹² and fully realized in the Third: social pedagogy,

⁹ Ibid. 102.

¹⁰ For more information on the history of the feminists’ battle against classroom education, see Appendix 1.

¹¹ Rehm, Maggie Amelia. “The Art of Citizenship: Suffrage Literature as Social Pedagogy.” 27.

¹² Consciousness-Raising (CR) became a large focus of the Second Wave. Essentially, women, who felt stifled or gagged in a normal, public environment, gathered together to discuss their lives, their troubles, their strengths, their oppressors, etc. Ultimately, these groups helped shape the aims of the Second Wave as feminists were able to better and more directly address the pressing concerns of the modern woman. These CR groups simultaneously acted as a small classroom in which ideas were shared and tenants of the feminist agenda finally took root with the common woman. For more on this, refer to Rose Weitz’s “Feminist Consciousness Raising, Self-Concept, and Depression” (1982), and Jodi O’Brien’s “Consciousness-Raising” (2009).

or the process of educating as a means of social action.¹³ Indeed, in this effort to educate, many suffragettes presented memorable speeches and interviews. In one such interview with *Harpers Weekly*, Mary Shaw, suffragette, feminist, and playwright, states, “To me the vote, as the symbol of political expression, means part of my freedom as an individual. I don’t want anybody else voting for me, any more than I want anybody else trying to shape and mold me in any other way.”¹⁴ These women longed to have their own voice, a voice un-muzzled by society’s rigid expectations. They sought to teach and mold, to inform and challenge. Suffragists knew that if they could educate women, they could bring about change.¹⁵

What began in the First Wave as nothing more than a few printed pamphlets soon transformed the entire feminist protocol as social pedagogy took on an attainable and centralized goal—the fight against traditional gender roles. Accordingly, the approach and success of this First Wave set a precedent for the feminist movements: educate, and change will come. Initially, while feminists claim to seek solely an “understanding of power relations between the sexes and of the role structures and socialization processes which maintain these power relations,”¹⁶ their end goal is not simply an acquisition of knowledge or understanding. Feminine consciousness¹⁷ exists as fuel for the feminist agenda, an agenda that in the Second Wave sought to recycle traditional gender roles into a less oppressive, more fluid structure. According to Marjorie DeVault, the heart of the feminist movement is change, change that will produce both its desired effects and the overthrowing of oppression: “Feminists seek a methodology that will support research of value of women, leading to social change or action beneficial to women.”¹⁸ Aiding

¹³ Rehm. 2.

¹⁴ Young, Rose. “Suffrage as Seen by Mary Shaw.” 456.

¹⁵ The 19th Amendment, granting women the right to vote, was finally ratified on August 18, 1920.

¹⁶ Weitz, Rose. “Feminist Consciousness Raising, Self-Concept, and Depression.” 231.

¹⁷ Defined by Baumgardener and Richards as “understanding that women can and should be whole human beings, not measured in relationship to the male supremacy.” 11.

¹⁸ DeVault, Marjorie L. *Liberating Method*. 31

this goal, the Second Wave's CR groups were created to "produce new knowledge about women's lives as a basis for activism."¹⁹ These bases for activism benefitting women lay the foundation for the fight against traditional gender roles, a noble cause that later spawns unwarranted and destructive ends as the Third Wave develops at the turn of the century.

The Third Wave: From Bending Gender Roles to Denying the Gender Binary

The Third Wave, beginning in the early 1990s and continuing through present day, is not as easy to define as the First and Second Waves. As Jennifer Baumgardener and Amy Richards, two leading voices of the Third Wave, observe, today "the presence of feminism in our lives is taken for granted. For our generation, feminism is like fluoride. We scarcely notice that we have it—it's simply in the water."²⁰ The Third Wave is elusive and fluid, lacking the single-mindedness of the First Wave while having even more interests than the Second. In this wave, women not only care about the residual problems from the First and Second Wave (such as the passage of the ERA), but they are also concerned with issues of sexual freedom, sexual abuse, international, racial, and economic concerns, and primarily the destruction of the gender binary.²¹

While the Second Wave fought against the confines of traditional gender roles, the Third Wave tackles the question of gender altogether by addressing the binary. Judith Lorber, a leading Third Wave voice and foundational theorist in the social construction of gender difference, discusses the problem of dividing the world into two groups based on gender, noting the fact that people "often find more significant within-group differences than between-group differences."²² Lorber argues that these differences validate the claim that the gender binary is arbitrary, leading to false expectations of both genders. Instead, support is growing for the possibility of utilizing

¹⁹ "Consciousness-Raising." Ed. Jodi O'Brien. N.pag.

²⁰ Baumgardener, Jennifer and Amy Richards. *Manifesta*. 17.

²¹ As a gender system, gender binaries can be defined as the classification of sex and gender into two distinct, opposite and disconnected forms of masculine and feminine

²² Lorber, Judith. "Believing is Seeing: Biology as Ideology." 571.

additional categories that compare people without “prior assumptions about who is like whom.”²³ According to these Third Wave feminists who remain unsatisfied after seeing the progress made against traditional gender roles, only the total rejection of the gender binary can produce accurate and sustainable groupings that naturally emerge: “When we rely only on the conventional categories of sex and gender, we end up finding what we looked for—we see what we believe, whether it is that ‘females’ and ‘males’ are essentially different or that ‘women’ and ‘men’ are essentially the same.”²⁴ With Lorber’s concerns picked up by several other feminists, the Third Wave is now leading the charge against the breakdown of the gender binary, a costly goal that demands both the neutering of traditionally masculine characteristics and the complete resignation of traditional gender roles.

While their end goal is misguided, as the total destruction of the gender binary will do little to establish the sense of natural groupings that these feminists are seeking, the Third Wave’s crusade against the gender binary grows out of a long-standing quarrel between the feminists and traditional gender roles. As Friedan and de Beauvoir offer explicit problems inherent in traditional gender expectations, the evolution of the cultural understanding of gender roles has shifted dramatically in the past fifty years, and only by dissecting and discussing the semantics of gender can the Third Wave’s argument to disassemble the binaries in place gain expression. Psychologist John Money, the first author to define *gender role* in his work *Man and Women, Boy and Girl* (1972), makes a clear distinction between one’s *sex role* and one’s *gender role*. According to Money, one’s gender role is behavior defined by social conventions and expectations,²⁵ versus the sex role, defined biologically. As Third Wave feminists seem to ignore

²³ Ibid. 578.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Quoted in Udry, J. Richard. “The Nature of Gender.” 561

this distinction, the original separation of these terms is important, and this dichotomy lays the foundation for further discussion regarding gender.

Following after Money, Judith Butler's development of her Theory of Performative Gender provides the Third Wave with the terminology to launch their attack against the gender binary. Butler, in her works *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies that Matter* (1993), debates the validity of Money's division and discussion of gender, and she builds her claims on the social construct theory regarding gender.²⁶ Performative Gender, Butler argues, implies that gender is at once fixed by society and repetition and yet still incredibly fluid. For Butler, gender is both a choice and a cultural construct, both a source of oppression and freedom, should one understand the nature of performativity. In an interview with *Big Think*, Butler describes her theory: "We act as if that being of a man or that being of a woman is actually an internal reality or something that is simply true about us, a fact about us, but actually it's a phenomenon that is being produced all the time and reproduced all the time, so to say gender is performative is to say that nobody really is a gender from the start."²⁷ Essentially, Butler, and the many feminists who have adopted her theory, argue that gender is not assigned at birth, nor is it determined apart from an individual's choices. Rather, society constructs both of these roles through the religious repetition of norms, resulting in absolute artificiality of both divisions.²⁸ Butler continues to say, "We act and walk and speak and talk in ways that consolidate an impression of being a man or being a woman."²⁹ And this impression, according to Butler, is one's chosen, performative gender. Culler offers a succinct summary of Butler's involved argument: "A man is not what one is, but something one

²⁶ As defined by Lober, the "The social construction perspective on sex and gender suggests that instead of starting with the two presumed dichotomies in each category-female, male; woman, man-it might be more useful in gender studies to group patterns of behavior and only then look for identifying markers of the people likely to enact such behaviors." 571.

²⁷ Butler, Judith. "Your Behavior Creates Your Gender." n.pag.

²⁸ Culler, Jonathan. *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. 103.

²⁹ Butler. "Your Behavior Creates Your Gender." n.pag.

does, a condition one enacts. . . . You become a man or woman by repeated acts, . . . which depend on social conventions, habitual ways of doing something in a culture.”³⁰ Butler sees gender as a set of actions resulting from a series of choices, and these actions conform to or reject societal expectations, resulting in clear distinctions between male and female.

While the Second Wave argued that traditional gender roles were unhealthy, Butler and other theorists now assert that these gender roles are not only unhealthy, but they are also unrealistic, culturally constructed, and of little use to society. Spurred on by the Second Wave’s success and perhaps diluted by their own ideas, the Third Wave has traded in their mothers’ successful fight against gender roles in order to fight against the entire gender binary. By Butler asserting that culture defines gender, now a fluid concept, feminists of Third Wave are able to then insist that the cultural expectations must be changed, traditional gender roles must be extinguished, and gender must no longer limit the choices of both men and women.

Fueling Butler’s theory and the desire of feminists for freedom and fluidity in this Third Wave, postmodern and post-structuralist mindsets permeate society and cultural thought. In “Deconstructing Equality-versus-Difference,” Joan W. Scott notes, “Poststructuralists insist that words and texts have no fixed or intrinsic meanings, that there is no transparent or self-evident relationship between them and either ideas or things, no basic or ultimate correspondence between language and the world.”³¹ Thus, while structuralism focused primarily on the study and emphasis on binaries, such as male/female, post-structuralists view these binaries as “artificial constructs created to maintain the power of dominant groups.”³² Therefore, one of the main objectives of the post-structuralist thinkers overlaps perfectly with one of the main objectives of

³⁰ Culler. 104.

³¹ Scott, Joan. “Deconstructing Equality-versus-Difference.” 35.

³² Ibid.

the Third Wave: to destroy this clear division of male and female, thereby limiting the power of the seemingly dominant group, the men.

While the Third Wave has made some wonderful contributions to the feminist cause, the attempt to break down the gender binary cannot be credited as one of them. Though, as Butler asserts, there is a distinction between sex and culturally constructed gender, and this distinction is important, that does not mean that no connections exists between one's sex and one's gender. Unfortunately, Third Wave feminists have used the tools that aided the waves in the past—education and pushes for emancipation—in order to perpetuate this myth that the two are separate entities. As a result, literature is beginning to reflect society's struggle with its own understanding of gender through characters like Katniss and Lisbeth. While these girls clearly defy traditional gender roles, which in the past has been rewarded with nothing short of death, they have admirable, Byronic qualities that appeal to the seemingly empowered but agentless women of our time. And so the feminists continue to promote their own agenda through fictional Byronic females that confront previously held concepts of gender and demand recognition in their own right, apart from their conformity to gender roles. While the Third Wave feminists are well intentioned, this shift is ultimately destructive.

Emancipatory Education as the Key to "Progress"

The First Wave's push towards education demanded that women grow to be knowledgeable of the patriarchal power structures at play and fight for their own equality, for their right to vote. The Second Wave sought to educate women on their rights as individuals in a social context—rights to equal pay and ownership of one's body, with the end of this education resulting in serious social reform. The Third Wave now educates not for legal or social equality but for sexual freedom, including a freedom from gender, hoping that this education will result in the rejection of what feminists deem as culturally defined genders. As an important part of the

educational process, somewhere between suffrage plays, picket signs, White House bills, and boardrooms, the feminist movement has redefined education and intelligence as indicative of action, a shift that greatly aids their own fight against gender roles.

In order to avoid being shadows in their foremothers' footsteps, Third Wave feminists are anxious, adamant for change. Change, according to the success of previous waves, can only come about from education, education that will reveal the problem and prompt action.

Emancipatory education, a broad term originating from educational theory, entails educating for the sake of freeing the educated from repressive structures. Wei Bo defines emancipatory education as "helping students to recognize problems and contradictions of status quo and get out of its control. . . . [Education] is fragmentary without the necessary part of emancipation"³³

Paulo Freire, Brazilian educator and philosopher, is the father of critical pedagogy and this idea of emancipatory education. Freire developed critical pedagogy³⁴ as a progressive form of education, a form whose goal is to be an "educational movement, guided by passion and principle, to help students develop consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, and connect knowledge to power and the ability to take constructive action."³⁵ Ultimately, emancipatory education combines a growing awareness with the acquisition of knowledge and the taking of action.

This proposed agenda aligns perfectly with the feminists' manifesto. By helping women recognize the power structures surrounding them, the oppression in their lives, the subjugation of their wills, feminists can then help women throw off these structures. In referencing his own view of this pedagogy, Freire dissects the battle that rages inside a woman, and student, as they

³³ Bo, Wei. "Education as Both Inculcation and Emancipation." 4, 5.

³⁴ Critical pedagogy, though birthed by Freire, has been greatly shaped by Henry Giroux, Michael Apple, and Peter McLaren. See *Theory and Resistance in Education* (Giroux) and *Can Education Change Society* (Apple).

³⁵ Giroux, Henry. "Lessons from Paulo Freire." N.pag.

“suffer from the duality which has established itself in their innermost being.”³⁶ Ultimately, women are limited by their gender roles. A woman must not speak or dress in a way that contradicts these roles for fear of chastisement or ostracizing. But, obviously, not all of a woman’s desires are going to perfectly conform to the cultural understanding of one’s gender. Freire notes that “[women] are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalized. The conflict lies in the choice between being wholly themselves or being divided;. . . between acting or having the illusion of acting through the action of the oppressors; between speaking out or being silent, castrated in their power to create and recreate.”³⁷ Ultimately, feminists have always sought to educate women on their various subjugations in order to help them win this battle against the domineering nature of cultural expectations in regards to gender, whether that is done by making them aware of the voting booths or the glass ceilings. Freire concludes, “This pedagogy makes oppression and its causes objects of reflection by the oppressed, and from that reflection will come their necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation.”³⁸ This necessary engagement no longer seems optional, but rather this response conditioned and expected; in order to see change emancipatory education ultimately lends itself to action. Generally, feminists long for women to engage willingly in emancipatory education that will reveal the repressive nature of patriarchy, and in turn, these women will have no choice but to actively fight against traditional gender roles.

In an effort to see their own agenda promoted, feminists have been able to redirect this kind of education to be indicative of action—action that will fight against the common enemy of gender roles and the oppression of women. Education necessitates engagement, and learning

³⁶ Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 48.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 48.

³⁸ *Ibid.* 48.

demands a reflex of activity. The goal of emancipatory education exemplifies this distinction: to educate so that people can make a change, implying that if people do not make a change, it is because there was no education. This pattern is seen in the end goal of education throughout the feminists' movements; in the 1920s, if a woman was not fighting for her right to vote, then she did not understand the pressing need for suffrage. In the 1970s, if women were not backing Roe in the court case that shaped the decade, then they were grossly misinformed about some aspect of women's rights. Inactivity indicates ignorance while intelligence spawns movement.

The Third Wave has now utilized emancipatory education and, as Baumgardener notes, infiltrated almost all of society with their derisive agenda. In order to fight against the culturally constructed performative genders, as described by Butler, today's modern woman is undergoing a serious emancipatory education, whether she realizes it or not, and this education is affecting far more than just the exchange of terminology. Ultimately contributing to their goal of disposing of traditional gender roles, and even the gender binary as a whole, Second and Third Wave feminists have not only been able to redefine intelligence, but they have also been able to re-attribute it to women. Recently, society has neutered the idea of intelligence, a characteristic previously assigned only to men,³⁹ and this shift is the product of the feminists' fight against limiting, biased gender portrayals. Women have fought for the right to be educated and intelligent. Hermione Granger represents the Second Wave's ideal: an intelligent, independent woman.

However, intelligence is no longer enough. While the Byronic hero was intelligent, yes, he was many other things as well. Unfortunately, in their eagerness to blur the binary, Third Wave feminists emphasize also and encourage other Byronic, masculine characteristics as well,

³⁹ Ibid. 26.

certainly contributing to the breakdown of the gender binary, yes, but also leading down a path to self-destruction for those same Byronic heroines.

The feminist agenda, while seemingly profitable, demands an emancipatory education that produces this kind of active intelligence, an intelligence that leads to detrimental ends. What begins as an appreciation of intelligence, an inoffensive and even beneficial trait, now results in embracing rebelliousness, arrogance, and isolation, as these traits grow out of this kind of intelligence. Since the First Wave, women have been encouraged to embrace their intelligence, to be free thinkers, and now this encouragement has heightened to a deafening roar. However, this outcry, unbeknownst to the criers, is a cacophony of instructions. No longer is intelligence enough—but rather the underlying implication is that intelligence inadvertently leads to action, to overthrowing the oppressors, to finding the holes in the government, and to seeing the flaws in the system. What began as an appreciation for something so good is now a crusade for something so barbaric, so destructive, so Byronic.

Byronism: A Self-Defeating End

After the publication of Butler's works, the Third Wave began to rally behind the idea of disassembling the gender binary, as they viewed this as nothing more than tools used to institute a patriarchal, misogynistic social construct that subjugates and limits the choices of women. The undoing of the gender binary and the new insistence of men and women to retain the right to choose their own gender leads to a growing movement where women can choose to be manly. Women are freely encouraged by Butler and other Third Wave feminists to choose nontraditional options. As a result, women are fighting for the right to be sexually and socially dominant, and they are seeking to become as business savvy and technologically advanced as their biologically-male counterparts. Women no longer have to hide behind their "feminine façades," pretending to like nail polish and bob haircuts. Instead, they can buy comic books, watch porn, and spit out

sunflower seeds in public. While this shift may feel like liberation, in reality the blurring of the binary is nothing more than libation meant to appease insatiable feminists. However, society has accepted this change; the norm has shifted. Therefore, if gender is performative, as Butler explains, and American society is now discarding staples like traditional gender roles, then they must create a new kind of female.

The rise of the Byronic heroine, the embodiment of the female who defies traditional gender roles and creates a new, accepted “norm,” is the product of our shifting culture, and as such, she is the model for most feminists. The Byronic hero, a staple of the Romantic era, was originally crafted by (and many argue after) Lord Byron. This character makes his first appearance in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* (1812), a fictional narrative that critics consider Byron's most autobiographical piece. Byron's own description of a Byronic hero can be found in his musings surrounding Conrad, the pirate protagonist in *The Corsair* (1814): “That man of loneliness and mystery,/. . . In words too wise—in conduct there a fool—/ Too firm to yield—and far too proud to stoop—/ Doom'd by his very virtues for a dupe, / He curs'd those virtues as the cause of ill, / . . . He hated man too much to feel remorse—/ . . . Lone, wild, and strange, he stood alike exempt / From all affection and from all contempt.”⁴⁰ Ultimately, Childe Harold and Conrad, as well as several of Byron's other characters, share a list of qualities. Atara Stein, professor at California State University and one of the leading researchers and publishers of scholarship surrounding the Byronic hero, offers a general consensus on the character of such an iconic figure: “[The Byronic hero] creates his own rules and his own moral code, and while he may break the law in pursuit of his goals, he takes responsibility for his actions. The Byronic hero. . . provides his audience with a satisfying vicarious experience of power *and*

⁴⁰ Byron, George. *The Corsair*. I.VIII.36, I. XII. 256-58, 273-74.

empowerment, autonomy, mastery, and defiance of oppressive authority.”⁴¹ The Byronic hero is a rebel, an instigator, a rabble-rouser, and traditionally, a man.

In her very nature, the Byronic heroine endears herself to feminists by bucking traditional gender roles. As Byron modeled Childe Harold, and later with the creation of characters such as Edmond Dantes from Alexandre Dumas’ *The Count of Monte Cristo* (1844), the Byronic hero undeniably takes on masculine characteristics. He, Stein notes, “doesn’t know how to relate to other people, he is self-absorbed egotist, and he makes annoying, gratuitous displays of his powers [He is] terse, brusque, guarded, and uncommunicative.”⁴² Most of the best and worst traditionally masculine traits—such as being powerful, isolated, withdrawn, rude, and socially dominant—now define a Byronic hero. To assign these traits to a female would be comical, verging on blasphemous, especially during the Romantic period when traditional gender roles were prevalent. However, after the progress made in the wake of de Beauvoir and Friedan, the Byronic hero is less likely to be shunned and more likely to be admired by masses of women.

Though she is admirable to some, the Byronic heroine, the female counterpart to Byron’s original creation,⁴³ has sparsely existed for many years. Despite the popularity of Byron’s male hero, influencing several other characters of the Romantic era and even creating an offshoot in the form of the solipsist hero of Russian literature,⁴⁴ the Byronic heroine very rarely makes it to the pages of great works of fiction. However, the instances where she does make an appearance follow very similar, destructive patterns. In the past, for a female to exhibit such masculine

⁴¹ Stein, Atara. *The Byronic Hero in Film, Fiction, and Television*. 1-2.

⁴² Stein. 2.

⁴³ Stein further defines Byronic heroines as “female heroes who take on Byronic traits to liberate themselves from the constraints of gender as well as oppressive institutional authority” (6). Though this feminist-friendly agenda may be accurate, for the sake of this argument I will not take on to prove such a lofty goal; rather, I will be simply identifying a Byronic heroine as the female protagonist (or, more often, antagonist) who possesses Byronic characteristics.

⁴⁴ Christiansen, Rupert. *Romantic Affinities: Portraits From an Age, 1780–1830*. 218-220.

characteristics, such as those found in the Byronic hero, is to reject traditional gender roles almost entirely. This kind of rebellion, in literature or in daily life, does not exist without consequences. As Judith Butler describes when discussing her theories surrounding performative gender, “Discrete genders are part of what ‘humanizes’ individuals within contemporary culture; indeed, those who fail to do their gender right are regularly punished.”⁴⁵ Though Butler is noting the results of not performing habitual, appropriate actions in one’s daily life, these same principles apply to literature. The deviation from traditional gender roles, as seen in the Byronic heroine’s character and actions, does not exist without punishment in culture.

Therefore, through the First and Second Waves, whenever a Byronic heroine would appear, one of two endings inevitably befell the character: refeminization⁴⁶ or death. These fates, though they are ominous, are the products of what many feminists claim are gender roles that restrict and constrict women to the point of death, even on the written page. Defying gender roles could not be encouraged, even in fiction. *Little Women*, published in 1868—only fifty-four years after the infamous Childe Harold—houses one of the most undeniably Byronic females in literature: Jo March. The novel opens with Jo as a quintessential tomboy, one who loves to tumble in the grass with Laurie, stay up all night working on her book, and completely disregard traditional decorum when attending dances or dealing with men. Though Laurie spends the entire first half of the novel pining after Jo, she rejects his marriage proposal, insisting that she must dedicate herself to her craft. At this point, her character is still rebellious, impulsive, easily angered, and incredibly isolated, as she is a rare breed of woman in a town and house that conforms to the nineteenth-century expectations of the time. However, by the time the book closes, Jo falls in love with Professor Bhaer and forsakes her writing entirely. All of the fight

⁴⁵ Butler. “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution.” 522.

⁴⁶ The redevelopment of female characteristics, as defined by the cultural expectations of that time

evaporates out of Jo as she settles into the role of wife and keeper of a home. Her conformity to this social expectation—marriage and a dedication to one's house—is mandated by cultural standards. The *Anne of Green Gables* series (1908) repeats this pattern; ambitious Anne rebuffs a love-struck Gilbert, only to venture out on her own and pursue her own desires. Eventually, she sees how important her love for Gilbert is in comparison to her work, she leaves the college at which she is teaching and travels back home to be married and make a life with her husband. To have a heroine who rejects the accepted norms of the time, to live independently and successfully, would be counterproductive and fanciful; a society embraces and encourages those norms which they believe are most useful, and to have a character not only survive, but also flourish, operating outside of these norms, is impossible, or at least highly unlikely.

While refeminization may seem like a harsh punishment for these Byronic heroines, many of them also were put to death when refeminization proved futile or impossible, an eventuality that reinstates the rigidity of the gender roles that ruled culture. The beloved Byronic heroine of *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Catherine, is a prime example of this destructive, ultimately perilous, cycle. Though her life is short, Catherine is inherently Byronic. While she obviously displays a desire to comply and thrive in the constructs around her, Catherine's social ambition leads to her marrying Edgar, a move that promotes and submits her to the cultural expectations. However, Catherine does not play the good girl for long. In fact, her vivacious, passionate nature prompts her to rebel against the confines of marriage as she continually isolates herself, throws tantrums, and feeds her feelings for Heathcliff. In contrast, Catherine's foil, Isabella Linton, serves as the stereotypical, traditional woman who rises to the expectations set for her, highlighting the differences between the socially submissive and the socially resistant. Ultimately, Catherine dies halfway through the book, finding herself buried in the kirkyard,

nestled between both the Lintons and the Earnshaws, between the society she loved and the society in which she could not survive. Stein offers a commentary on Catherine's death: "I believe that Brontë is ultimately pessimistic about the possibilities for happiness of an independent, rebellious woman at her time. The author, in spite of her own sympathy for (and temperamental similarities to) her heroine, renders her unlikable because she sees no other options in portraying the condition of an energetic, nonconforming woman."⁴⁷ Similarly, Eponine in *Les Misérables* (1862) experienced a similar fate to Catherine. As a child she conforms to social expectations, and as she grows older, her family grows poorer as her spirit grows wilder. Eventually, her love for Marius results in her own death, a grave sacrifice that is still unable to redeem her from the price of her own unconformity. Catherine and Eponine's tales are not unique; the Byronic heroine has always, up until the Third Wave of feminism, met a similar fate in varying degrees—death or domestication.

The Detrimental Effects of the Third Wave on the Fate of the Byronic Heroine

While emancipatory education has served different purposes in the past while still allowing traditional gender roles to dictate cultural expectations, the Third Wave has used emancipatory education to prompt the rise and acceptance of the Byronic heroine in popular fiction,⁴⁸ embracing this archetype as she acts as a constant attack against the gender binary. With Butler's Theory of Performative Gender and the widespread acceptance of existential philosophy, what once were traditional gender roles are now seen as nothing more than patriarchal constructs put in place to limit the growth and potential of the female. In fact, even these terms are called into question as labels such as "female" and "male" must now be

⁴⁷ Ibid. 175.

⁴⁸ Defined by *The Cambridge Companion to Popular Fiction* as: "those books that everyone reads, . . . whose aggregate figures dramatically illustrate an impressive ability to reach across wide social and cultural divisions with remarkable commercial success" (1)

independently defined by 1.) biology and 2.) performativity, or choice. While these theories may seem too extreme to have significantly influenced the pop culture temperature, the rise of the Byronic heroine in contemporary fiction suggests otherwise. As they are outspoken, rebellious, headstrong, and even arrogant, Katniss, from *The Hunger Games*, and Lisbeth, in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, do not have to die, nor do they have face inevitable domestication. Their fates have changed, and their stories end differently. At the great cost of stability and identity, there is a growing acceptance that gender is now a choice, and a woman who is biologically female can choose to embrace male characteristics without collapsing the newly renovated social constructs around her. Despite this view of the binary being unfounded, because of the Third Wave's agenda seeping into bestselling novels and unconscious emancipatory education, women now see female characters who live, and live well, while flaunting the same traits that previously damned them.

Not only does society now allow for these Byronic heroines to exist, giving them a free pass from domestication or destruction, but American society, so diluted by the extreme feminist propaganda flaunting their existential program, now parades and promotes these heroines, idolizing them for their Byronism. There are countless lunchboxes, Halloween costumes, and fan-sites dedicated to these women for their unconventional lives, their nonconformist attitudes, and their indomitable spirits. Katniss is a symbol of hope, and Lisbeth is the leader of a cult following. These women are now free to exist as they are, Byronic qualities and all. Just as Katniss and Lisbeth must undergo extensive emancipatory educations in their process to Byronism in order to fully understand the oppressive structures around them, whether that be a dictatorship ruled by President Snow or even the authorities sworn to protect citizens, the Third Wave encourages women to experience an emancipatory education of one's own, an education

that brings awareness to the oppressive nature of traditional gender roles.

By examining the character of these two women, thereby establishing their Byronic leanings,⁴⁹ I plan to discuss the overwhelming influx of Byronic heroines as a result of this diluted gender binary. While Hermione represents the epitome of the Second Wave's agenda, a stretching of traditional gender roles, Katniss and Lisbeth are indicative of the more aggressive, more destructive aim of the Third Wave, the breakdown of the gender binary. Though few readers would equate the levels of rebellion in Katniss and Lisbeth, there remains an undeniable undercurrent of Byronism that links the two. Also, by closely analyzing the plot, I will investigate the life-saving shift that has occurred in the fates of Byronic heroines. However, these movements in pop fiction—both the rise of the Byronic heroine and the change of her fate—though interesting, are not enough to link the rise of the Byronic heroine to the Third Wave; therefore, I will also discuss the widespread cultural acceptance of these women, which stands in stark contrast to the cultures of the previously discussed Byronic heroines, cultures that called for the head or the apron of such nonconforming “monsters.” While these characters undergo emancipatory educations that make them aware of the oppressions around them, so too have the women of our generation undergone emancipatory educations that make them aware of the restrictive nature of traditional gender roles, and, accordingly, an appreciation for the Other, for the Byronic, for the masculine female has arisen. American culture's obsession with these women reveals a much deeper condition than symptoms of fandoms and million-dollar industries tend to suggest; this change in acceptance is indicative of a change in values; in fact, it indicates a particular devaluing of the identity and purpose that come with embracing one's biological gender, and this change is intrinsically linked with the Third Wave of the feminism. While the

⁴⁹ In order to limit the scope of this thesis, and for the sake of consistency, in my chapters I will study the intelligent, independent, rebellious, and isolated nature of these characters in order to establish their Byronism.

First and Second Waves see their literary ripples in characters like Hermione Granger, waxing in ferocious female spirit, the Third Wave can credit both the swell of Byronic heroines and the change of her fate to its licentious legacy.

Chapter 2: Hermione Granger, the Segue Way of the Second Wave

*“I went looking for the troll because I—I thought I could deal with it on my own – you know, because I’ve read all about them.”*⁵⁰

While the First Wave battled their lack of legal equality, the Second Wave’s battle against traditional gender roles permeated every aspect of life, including literature. Due to the influential works of de Beauvoir and Friedan, Second Wave feminists began to reject traditional gender roles, and this shift is reflected years later in the lives of literary heroines.⁵¹ By the time *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* (1998) was published, the common writer and reader seem to have finally embraced the concerns of the most progressive feminists of the Second Wave two decades earlier. Hermione Granger, the leading female character in the *Potter* series, relishes a reputation as a strong, independent woman, one who denies the restrictions of traditional gender roles, revealing the healthy balance of change and conformity that many Third Wave feminists refuse to acknowledge.

Hermione offers a picture of the aims and successes of the Second Wave. Throughout the *Potter* series, Hermione consistently performs better than her male counterparts perform, allowing her intelligence to set her apart from other more traditional female characters like Parvati or Lavender. Especially in *Sorcerer’s Stone*, Hermione seems to have all of the answers. When Malfoy challenges Harry to a wizard’s duel, Hermione immediately scolds the boys because she is able to see the inevitable conclusion of the night: “I couldn’t help overhearing what you and Malfoy were saying. . . and you *mustn’t* go wandering around the school at night, think of the points you’ll lose Gryffindor if you’re caught, and you’re bound to be. It’s really

⁵⁰ Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*. 177.

⁵¹ Nancy Drew offers another picture of the cultural shift in gender roles as reflected in literature. Refer to Appendix 2.

very selfish of you.”⁵² But as headstrong, eleven-year-old boys, Harry and Ron—rejecting the young girl’s advice and disapproval—are not to be detoured by Hermione’s wisdom. However, later that night when it becomes clear that Hermione was all too right and the boys have been duped, Harry refuses to tell Hermione that she had been correct,⁵³ despite her quick thinking and charm work that allows them to escape Filch. Though she was correct in judging Malfoy’s intentions, Hermione is still not accepted. As the Second Wave discovered, bending traditional gender roles often comes at a price, one that demands that the female conform or be ostracized. After this incident, the language around Hermione remains tinted with disapproval. As she returns to the dormitory that night, Hermione is “snarl[ing],” as “[she] had got both her breath and her bad temper back again.”⁵⁴ As she still clings her understanding of the oppressive structures at play, seeing Draco Malfoy’s ploy for what it was, Hermione leaves the boys with a memorable warning: “I hope you’re pleased with yourselves. We could have all been killed—or worse, expelled.”⁵⁵ No matter how often Hermione is correct in those first few weeks at Hogwarts, nothing can sway the boys toward wanting to be her friend because Hermione’s deviation from traditional gender roles must be seen as profitable.

Soon after this incident, the changes in Hermione’s personality, her bending of the accepted roles, redeem her entirely. Halfway through *Sorcerer’s Stone*, Hermione has an unfortunate run-in with Ron during Charms class. She corrects his pronunciation of a spell, thereby embarrassing him and leading him to toss out nasty insults after class: “It’s no wonder no one can stand her. . . . She’s a nightmare, honestly. . . . She must’ve noticed she’s got no

⁵² Ibid. 154

⁵³ Ibid. 159

⁵⁴ Ibid.. 161.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 162.

friends.”⁵⁶ Clearly, Hermione’s ability to reason does little to help her win favor with people. Only a few hours later, after tearfully locking herself in the bathroom following Ron’s remarks, she finds herself face-to-knee with a twelve-foot troll. After managing to fight the troll with the help of Harry and Ron, Hermione is the one to get the trio out of trouble by lying to Professor McGonagall and taking all of the blame upon herself. This moment of action on Hermione’s part shocks the boys: “Ron dropped his wand. Hermione Granger, telling a downright lie to a teacher? . . . Harry was speechless. Hermione was the last person to do anything against the rules, and here she was, pretending she had, to get them out of trouble.”⁵⁷ This act seems to be a defining moment for the group of friends. From then on, “Hermione Granger became their friend. There are some things you can’t share without ending up liking each other, and knocking out a twelve-foot mountain troll is one of them.”⁵⁸ Hermione’s quick thinking is able to get the group out of trouble, thereby marking her as a much-needed entity. Also, by becoming close friends with these boys, Hermione establishes herself as their equal, as a valuable and intricate part of the group, one of the Three Amigos. While men typically rule these groups,⁵⁹ Hermione’s presence in the friendship and her contribution to it reveals the development of ideas regarding society’s view of equality between the sexes, development that is clearly due to the strides of the Second Wave.

Occasionally, Hermione does fall into the trappings of traditional gender roles that the Second Wave feminists valiantly sought to overthrow, and in those moments, the boys ostracize her. Close to the end of the school year, Hermione becomes obsessed with performing well on her exams. In these scenes, Hermione’s focusses on the acquisition of knowledge without the

⁵⁶ Ibid. 172.

⁵⁷ Ibid. 178.

⁵⁸ Ibid. 179.

⁵⁹ As reflected in the genders of the original Three Amigos, the Three Musketeers, or even the Hardy Boys.

accompaniment of practical action, the boys lose interest, and the language describing Hermione shifts negatively. As the exams finally roll, Hermione begins to draw up guides to help her and the boys stay on task. Though this gesture may be helpful, the book reveals that she kept “nagging them.”⁶⁰ Suddenly, instead of “speaking” to them, Hermione “snap[s]”⁶¹ at the boys when encouraging them to study. Even her drawing up study schedules “was driving them nuts.”⁶² It is only with “moaning and yawning”⁶³ that the begrudging boys finally take to the library to study with Hermione. The nagging wife in the kitchen of the 1950s home is suddenly the nagging female shouting in the middle of the Gryffindor dormitory at Hogwarts. And just as the husbands of those wives acquiesced, so too do Harry and Ron eventually succumb to Hermione’s scheduling, but this is by no means a success for Hermione. In this instance, her conforming to traditional gender roles is detrimental to her success. Her continual search for knowledge is of little interest to the boys until it meets with some great adventure or noble action. Outside of that realm, Hermione is just *smart*, and smart is good, but nagging and pushy are easily exchanged for a less impassioned male presence, like Seamus or Dean. Hermione is wanted as much as she continues to bend traditional gender roles and refuses to succumb to them.

However, once again Hermione saves the day, and saves the boys from a serious altercation, when her intelligence is useful once more. While she does vacillate between fulfilling traditional gender roles and bending them, Hermione even takes a stance against Neville, a fellow Gryffindor, in order to help Harry and Ron. When this pudgy boy, a friend of Harry, Ron, and Hermione, attempts to block the way out of the common room the night that the

⁶⁰ Ibid. 228.

⁶¹ Ibid. 229.

⁶² Ibid. 334.

⁶³ Ibid.

trio leaves to find the Stone, a fight erupts. “You don’t understand. . . . This is important,”⁶⁴ Harry says. Ron attempts to get through to him, “Get away from that hole and don’t be an idiot. . . . Neville, you don’t know what you’re doing.”⁶⁵ Finally, Ron looks to Hermione and pleads with her to do something. Even in those heated moments, Harry and Ron understand that Hermione is the most capable. And though it goes against a woman’s traditional role as nurturing and motherly to intentionally inflict pain or harm on someone she loves, Hermione puts a full Body-Bind on Neville, his eyes stare on in shock as they leave, and Ron mutters, “You’ll understand later.”⁶⁶ As a product of the Second Wave’s progress, Hermione no longer has to helplessly stand by and watch as the boys sort out of the scuffle. Instead, she is the trump card, the winning ticket, the way out of the common room, and with this role she is the inflictor of pain, a sharp contrast to the traditional role women were expected to play.

Hermione is incredibly intelligent, more intelligent than the boys, and this characteristic marks her as unique and progressive, fulfilling the Second Wave’s manifesto. As Mimi Gladstein writes, “Hermione is not a lesser member of the group; she is not just a sidekick to Ron and Harry, but. . . [she is] confident in her own intellect and ability.”⁶⁷ As she is such an essential member, the resolution at the close of *Sorcerer’s Stone* is due in part to Hermione’s contributions. After searching for days and weeks in the library looking for Nicolas Flamel, the trio almost gives up. In one quick moment, Hermione remembers “an enormous old book” that she “got out of the library weeks ago for a bit of light reading.”⁶⁸ And though this statement would usually induce a sigh or eye-roll from the boys, this time Hermione’s knowledge is useful.

⁶⁴ Rowling. 272.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 273.

⁶⁷ Gladstein, Mimi. “Feminism and Equal Opportunity.” 50.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 219.

“Nicolas Flamel. . . is the *only known maker of the Sorcerer’s Stone*. . . . The dog must be guarding Flamel’s Stone!”⁶⁹ Hermione now realizes the uses of the stone—wealth and immortality—and she can clearly see the oppressive structures around her taking shape. Hermione is good for more than just a name, though, and the boys soon learn that it is her knowledge that will save their lives. Before they leave the common room that night, Hermione begins to gather her books because “there might be something useful”⁷⁰ in them: “Hermione was skimming through all of her notes, hoping to come across one of the enchantments they were about to try and break.”⁷¹ Hermione’s constant quest for knowledge, even in these final moments, protects them several times. Because Hermione recognizes the plant that is slowly suffocating the boys down in the basement as Devil’s Snare, she knows to light a fire in order to rescue them.⁷² Later, after Ron is knocked out in the chess room, it is Hermione who is able to use her own logic and wits to solve the puzzle that will lead Harry to the Stone and Hermione back to safety.⁷³ Essentially, Hermione is partially to credit for the destruction of the Sorcerer’s Stone, the delayed return of Lord Voldemort, and the death of Professor Quirrell, the notorious villain in the novel who dupes even Dumbledore. This character hardly sounds like the meek and mild women of the past because those catatonic housewives of the Second Wave have unknowingly produced a strong, independent model to follow, even if an eleven-year-old girl must be the ideal.

Moving Against the Gender Roles

Hermione’s shift towards independence, a change that marks her as both a little Byronic and more masculine, sharply contrasts the dependency of her character before her growth takes

⁶⁹ Ibid. 219-20.

⁷⁰ Ibid. 271.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid. 278.

⁷³ Ibid. 286.

place. In the beginning of the book, Hermione strongly supports Hogwarts's rules. She may even be reliant on them for instruction and daily survival. Hermione thrives in the Hogwarts environment of clear expectations, rewards for good behavior and correct answers, and punishment for breaking the rules, and these staples of her life bring stability and comfort to her. During their first flying lesson, after Madam Hooch heads to the hospital wing with Neville, Malfoy steals Neville's forgotten Remembrall, and Harry hops on a broom to chase after him. Hermione, still bound by to the rules she embraces, shouts, "No! . . . Madam Hooch told us not to move—you'll get us all into trouble."⁷⁴ Her heated requests for obedience to the rules is once again repeated in discussing the wizarding duel, and she goes as far as to use guilt to get Harry and Ron back into the Gryffindor common room: "Don't you *care* about Gryffindor, do you really *only* care about yourselves, I don't want Slytherin to win the house cup, and you'll lose all the points I got from Professor McGonagall for knowing about the Switching Spells."⁷⁵ To Hermione, in her naïve and ignorant state, only rules and rewards, systems and structures, make sense. One can thrive only in these environments.

In the beginning of the book, Hermione also depends on her knowledge acquired through books. Upon first meeting Harry, Hermione lists several books in which she read about him, and when his actions imply he has no idea he is in these works, she immediately responds, "Goodness, didn't you know, I'd have found out everything I could if it was me."⁷⁶ In the beginning of *Sorcerer's Stone*, Hermione so greatly values the wealth of knowledge found in books that she only feels prepared when she has already read up on any given subject. Even before their first flying lesson, Hermione struggles with her doubt: "Hermione Granger was

⁷⁴ Ibid. 148.

⁷⁵ Ibid. 155.

⁷⁶ Ibid. 106.

almost as nervous about flying as Neville was. This was something you couldn't learn by heart out of a book—not that she hadn't tried. At breakfast on Thursday she bored them all stupid with flying tips she'd gotten out of a library book."⁷⁷ For Hermione, books hold the answer to every question, and rules prevented every problem.

As her character develops throughout the series, particularly in the first book, Hermione becomes more and more a threat to traditional gender roles by being increasingly successful in every way that she is nontraditional. Once she begins to embrace her intelligence, Hermione's independence grows as she begins to loosen her strict adherence to the rules, further separating her from the ideal female façade that existed before the Second Wave. From the jar of flames that she conjures⁷⁸ to the homework on which she helps the boys cheat,⁷⁹ Hermione begins to wean her addiction to the rules that she once stubbornly upheld. Even in Harry's final scheme to protect the Sorcerer's Stone, she willingly stands outside of the teacher's lounge, a lie ready on her lips, in order to stalk Snape's movements.⁸⁰ Interestingly, before the climax of the book where the trio of friends race through the school after curfew, proceed into a prohibited area, lull to sleep a large, hulking dog, and break tens of school rules, Hermione's old dependency slips through as Harry reveals what is about to occur: "You'll be expelled!" she exclaims.⁸¹ But, as is the case with intelligent people, in order to provoke action, understanding or education must take place, and Harry explains the importance of finding the Stone: "Don't you understand? If Snape gets hold of the Stone, Voldemort's coming back! Haven't you hear what it's like when he was trying to take over? There won't be any Hogwarts to be expelled from!"⁸² Here, Harry is

⁷⁷ Ibid. 144.

⁷⁸ Ibid. 181.

⁷⁹ Ibid. 182.

⁸⁰ Ibid. 269.

⁸¹ Ibid. 270.

⁸² Ibid.

contributing to Hermione's emancipatory education, but ultimately, emancipatory education is an individualized experience as people come "to understand existing inequities and injustices within society through emancipatory learning, and, as a result, [engage] in social action to make changes."⁸³ After Harry's contribution to Hermione's emancipation, which allows her to fully see the oppression around her and the imminent threat posed by Voldemort, Hermione is willing to spring into action: "You're right, Harry. . . . But will [the invisibility cloak] cover all three of us? . . . How do you think you'd get the Stone without us?"⁸⁴ Hermione's take-action attitude, a product of her successful education as influenced by the Second Wave's agenda, has now produced a disregard for the rules, liberation from the power structure that once dictated her every move, and she now has a greater sense of independence. All three of these changes indicate a distinct shift away from traditional gender roles.

Perhaps Hermione's last words to Harry before he faces Voldemort, Quirrell, and the Sorcerer's Stone best reveal her change of heart, her successful emancipatory education, and her loosening grip on gender roles. After her own intelligence leads Harry and Hermione through the dangerous poison set out by Snape to protect the Stone, Hermione tells Harry that he is a "great wizard," to which Harry responds, "I'm not as good as you."⁸⁵ And finally Hermione shows her growth outside of the classroom education she earlier championed: "Books! And cleverness! There are more important things—friends and bravery."⁸⁶ What she previously championed she now censures. As Hermione embraces her own growth, learning how not only to process information well but also to act in order to overthrow the oppressive structures in place, how to be the proactive woman that the Second Wave desperately sought to create, she grows in her

⁸³ Imel. 2.

⁸⁴ Rowling. 271.

⁸⁵ Ibid. 287.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

intelligence and independence.

As a direct run-off of the Second Wave, Hermione's growing intelligence and independence act as catalysts to empower her to resist conforming to the traditional gender roles. In essence, her character fights against a captive princess mentality, mirroring the Second Wave's resistance against this stereotype. Hermione's character directly contradicts the myth that a "woman must be saved by men or that a woman must be taken care of by a man."⁸⁷ Hermione is able to stick up for herself, punch Malfoy in the face, and always come up with the right answer even in clutch situations. Through the efforts of the Second Wave, women are no longer stuck up in ivory towers helplessly waiting on men, but rather Hermione has leapt from her tower and is bloody and panting while fighting amongst the boys. Seconding this idea, Gladstein notes that "Hermione can take care of herself. She does not wait for her male friends to defend her."⁸⁸ In reinforcing yet another effort of the Second Wave, Hermione no longer embodies the emotionally distraught woman. While women are typically assumed to be emotional and men rational, Hermione is able to deny this characterization as she "often acts to rescue Harry and Ron at critical junctures in the plot."⁸⁹ The helpless heroine now becomes the hero of the story. Not only does Hermione save the boys, but she is not nearly as emotional as brooding Harry or as erratic Ron, and it is exactly her stability that allows her to be such a strong character, much less a strong woman, throughout the series. Essentially, Hermione embodies most of the efforts of the Second Wave due to a denial of the traditional gender roles surrounding and suffocating women.

Just as Hermione's success grows throughout the series, so too does her lack of

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Gladstein. 51.

⁸⁹ Ibid. 51.

conformity to accepted gender roles, and she repeats this cycle, yielding positive results, in *Prisoner of Azkaban*. Hermione not only correctly deduces that Professor Lupin is indeed a werewolf, but she also is able to save his, Sirius', and Buckbeak's life by (mis)using her Time-Turner to go back in time several hours with Harry and change the fate of these characters. Though this action is in blatant violation of the school rules, as well as the laws that govern Time-Turners, Hermione's newfound independence from these structures allows her to weigh the importance of innocent lives against the inherent value in obeying rules.

Perhaps the fourth book in the series, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, best reveals Hermione's association with the Second Wave. In this book, Hermione continues to grow as an invaluable asset as her feminist tendencies only increase with her success. In *Goblet of Fire*, Hermione's vigilante spirit is perhaps most evident as she founds S.P.E.W. (or the Society for the Promotion of Elfish Welfare), a group that stands against the order of hierarchy in the wizarding world. Ironically, Hermione's S.P.E.W. shares its initials with the Society for the Promotion of the Employment of Women, a group founded in 1859 to become of the catalysts for the First Wave. Other characters often ridicule Hermione's ideas regarding the elves, but, as Berndt points out, those who are most successful "are often perceived as obnoxious trouble-makers before they succeed in introducing a new order."⁹⁰ Hermione's invested interest in this group reveals her ability to clearly analyze the established order around her, weigh its validity, and then rally for reform. She is the embodiment of the feminist agenda—being smart enough to see the oppressive power structures and then intelligent enough to make a change. Hermione, at her heart, is an activist, a woman who refuses to submit to the status quo and will sacrifice her time, her health, even her reputation for the sake of the cause. Hermione is what every Second

⁹⁰ Berndt. 165.

Wave feminist imagined herself to be.

Cultural Acceptance of Hermione as a Second Wave Heroine

The warm reception of Hermione reveals the shifting tide of acceptance for a woman who shirks traditional gender roles. Though she believes Rowling's efforts to break the stereotype of the traditional female protagonist may have failed in some areas, Eliza Dresang offers praise in Hermione's character: "Hermione, . . . is a prime example that information brings power, and she sees this at work repeatedly in her life at Hogwarts."⁹¹ Hermione is smart, Hermione's presence makes a difference, and Hermione is powerful through her agency in the books. The Second Wave has not only produced a character like Hermione, but feminism has also created to a whole group of women and little girls who relate to her: "[R]eaders see Hermione as strong and able to take care of herself"⁹² and this picture resonates with their own desires. One review openly praises Hermione for her lack of conformity to traditional stereotypes: "[T]he supporting female is often a limpet: a clingy impediment. . . . Hermione, on the other hand, solves puzzles, gets into fights and in one adventure saves Harry from a werewolf. While bright and charmingly diffident, Hermione doesn't fall into the fictional female stereotype of being all books and no looks."⁹³ Overall, spurred by the success of the Second Wave and the incoming crash of the Third Wave, public reception of Hermione has been quite welcoming.

However, this open-armed acceptance does not come without some critical thought. Some reviewers see Hermione for what she is, a breakdown of traditional gender roles, and they applaud Rowling's presentation of such a successful, accomplished female character. While a few critics argue that Hermione does retain many of the traditional attributes of a woman,⁹⁴

⁹¹ "Hermione Granger and the Heritage of Gender." 223

⁹² Ibid. 223

⁹³ "Leading Article: In Praise of... Hermione Granger." 36.

⁹⁴ See Tison Pugh and David Wallace's "Heteronormative Heroism and Queering the School Story in J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter Series" for more on this.

Katrin Bernt, author of “Hermione Granger, or A Vindication of the Rights of Girl,” defends the progressive, rebellious nature of Hermione’s character in regards to gender roles. She notes, “[T]he novels do exploit gender stereotypes but mainly in order to challenge them in sometimes subtle, but always subversive ways.”⁹⁵ Her fierce independence and undeniable intelligence characterize her as masculine, at least in part. In fact, “the character of Hermione is constructed to disable the dichotomies that have effectively informed gender concepts since the Enlightenment, such as masculine vs. feminine.”⁹⁶ While Hermione grows into herself in this first book, she develops an “independent spirit that makes her rebel against injustice and slavish obedience,”⁹⁷ and this independence, so rarely attributed in such high quantities to a female protagonist, combined with her staggering intelligence, yield a character that “manages to avoid the traps of paralyzing concepts of femininity.”⁹⁸ Hermione’s independence and emotion, femininity and masculinity, knowledge and action, reveal her lack of accordance to traditional gender roles while simultaneously representing the plight and progress of the Second Wave of feminism.

⁹⁵ Bernt. 159.

⁹⁶ Ibid. 161.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 164.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

Chapter 3: Katniss as the Byronic Precedent

“Trust me,” I whisper. He holds my gaze for a long moment then lets me go. I loosen the top of the pouch and pour a few spoonfuls of berries into his palm. Then I fill my own.

“On the count of three?”

While Hermione offers a small picture of the effects of a female character bending traditional gender roles, indicative of the Second Wave feminists’ influence on literature, Katniss Everdeen, the protagonist in Suzanne Collin’s *Hunger Games* trilogy, epitomizes a Byronic character in contemporary literature, a product of the recent shift in the feminist agenda. She is brazen and daring, assertive, independent, and highly intuitive. As the result of a successful emancipatory education, she lives by her own rules, and she constantly fights against the injustices and oppression suffocating her daily life. As Hermione is an intelligent activist, the perfect model of the Second Wave, Katniss is a character deeply rooted in both intelligence and in Byronism, a personality that ultimately contributes to the breakdown of the gender binary, an end desired by the Third Wave.

Though she blossoms into the Byronic heroine that we find iconized in tattoos and bumper stickers, before her emancipatory education takes place, Katniss, the eventual figure-head of a well-organized group of rebels that attempts to overthrow the Capitol, does not begin her life as an insurgent. Alone in the woods, only seeking to find enough food to feed her family and enough money to clothe them, Katniss is hardly plotting the inevitable destruction of the Capitol. She is not a contentious girl in school, seeking to dismantle the overbearing classroom structures, nor does she openly rebel against her mother in fits of teenage rage. Instead, the rebellion that we see in Katniss grows out of something much deeper than the temporary discontentment that fuels many guerrillas: she is, by nature, a provider, an instinct directly deriving from the pain she has experienced in her own life, and this desire fuels her

emancipatory education and eventually her Byronic transformation.

Katniss's tragic life experiences soften her to the pain of others, heightening her ability to see the oppression and her desire to overthrow it—a combination that makes her the perfect candidate for emancipatory education. When the *Hunger Games* opens, Katniss, only sixteen, has already lost her father to a mining accident, her mother to crippling depression following her father's death, and her own health and security. She has been abandoned and starved for both attention and food. She is left with no one to lean on, no one on which to depend, and yet her entire family is dependent on her. So, accordingly, she takes on the role of leadership within her own family following her father's death; at this time, she is only eleven years old. "With Prim [her younger sister] just seven, I took over as head of the family. There was no choice."⁹⁹ Katniss's life experiences, life's losses, prepare her for the education to come as she develops a keen understanding of defeat and subjugation.

Hermione's natural need to acquire book knowledge contrasts Katniss's natural desire to act. Katniss's pain bleeds into a penetrating, desperate need to survive, and she understands that in order to survive she must take action. Every single day she scavenges for food, trades on the market, feeds her entire family, and tries to keep herself and Prim looking presentable so no one will find out how depressed her mother is. Even at this young age, Katniss understands that to act is to live, but to remain still is to die, and in this knowledge she acts as a foil to her comatose mother. While Hermione's intelligence allows her to embrace knowledge well before she understands the importance of action, Katniss acts on instinct when she does not, or perhaps cannot, understand. Before she even sees the inner-workings of the Capitol or the corruption of President Snow, she realizes the necessity of action. For Hermione, action becomes a natural

⁹⁹ Collins, Suzanne. *The Hunger Games*. 27.

product of understanding, but Katniss's action leads her to understanding, and in that progression of action to understanding, intelligence is born.

This action-oriented nature manifests itself primarily through Katniss's protective instinct, a predisposition that reveals the depth of her Byronic tendencies, the masculine nature of her personality, and the extent of her emancipatory education yet to take place. Naturally, Prim most often provokes this protective response from her older sister. Katniss admits, "I protect Prim in every way I can."¹⁰⁰ At the reaping, when Prim's name is drawn for the Games, Katniss immediately volunteers. In order to protect Prim, Katniss immediately dismisses all thoughts of self-preservation, despite the fact that entering the Games is almost synonymous with death.¹⁰¹ Even after she volunteers, when she is reflecting back on her fleeting thoughts of leaving District 12 and venturing out on her own with Gale, she grows thankful that she never left, because "who else would have volunteered for Prim?"¹⁰² And ultimately, it is her love for Prim that inspires Katniss to even dare to fight in the Hunger Games because she understands how much the younger girl needs her for food, comfort, and stability as Prim has lost so much already. So Katniss enters the Games, knowing that she is not fighting for her own survival, but for Prim's. This protective instinct drives Katniss to action, it fuels her, much like Hermione's natural acuity fuels her actions in the beginning of *Sorcerer's Stone*, but neither girl is wholly successful acting on instinct alone.

Once she is in the arena, Katniss's desire to protect is still intact, a trait that the Gamemakers attempt to root out of her in order to squelch her emancipatory education; however, this trait, a Byronic precursor of sorts, remains unbroken in Katniss. As the Gamemakers seek to

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 15.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 22.

¹⁰² Ibid. 25.

divide and conquer the tributes, the most devastating way to attack the Capitol, the source of oppression, is to have two people form a relationship in the very environment where they should be attempting to kill each other. By her nature, Katniss is unable to shirk her protective instincts, and they find a needy charge in Rue. Upon first seeing Rue, a twelve-year-old tribute from District 11, Katniss immediately sees the resemblance to Prim. “Rue is a small yellow flower that grows in the Meadow. Rue. Primrose. Neither of them could tip the scale at seventy pounds soaking wet.”¹⁰³ After Rue saves her life in the woods, Katniss knows that she must protect the girl as well, and she offers Rue food, warmth, and companionship during the Games, a bond that rebels against the entire purpose for the Games. Just as in defending Rue, Katniss’s natural tendency to protect is slowly beginning to morph into a desire to not only shield the innocent but also to dismantle the structures that require this act in the first place. As the two girls split up in order to see out their plan of attack, the Career tributes capture Rue, and she screams out for Katniss: “It’s a child’s scream, a young girl’s scream, there is no one in the arena capable of making that sound except Rue. And now I’m running, knowing this may be a trap, knowing the three Careers may be poised to attack me, but I can’t help myself.”¹⁰⁴ Katniss’s innate need to act, to protect, precedes any reasonable thought at this point. Acting is what helps one survive, and Katniss has learned this much, so she acts on instinct. While she is not quite quick enough, the boy from District 1 pays for Rue’s death with an arrow in his throat. Even in the death of her partner, Katniss attempts to protect the little girl. In a touching scene, she sings a song for Rue, and then covers her in flowers before the hovercraft takes away her body. This picture of protection and love offers a stark contrast to the arena and Games in which Katniss is playing, a contrast that acts as the curriculum for her own emancipatory education as Katniss begins to

¹⁰³ Ibid. 99.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. 232.

understand the oppressive structures around her.

As Katniss begins to build the relationship that will ultimately lead to the destruction of the Capitol's agenda after her education is completed, her protective instincts find their neediest charge in Peeta. After fighting Cato to protect Katniss, Peeta takes a nasty cut to the leg, leaving him essentially disabled and camouflaged in a mud bank waiting to die. However, the Gamemakers announce that both tributes from a District can win. Immediately, Katniss decides to sacrifice the security of her role in the Games, her own safety and health, and time she could spend hunting other tributes in order to find Peeta and nurse him back to health. Despite Katniss realizing that she has "made [herself] far more vulnerable than when [she] was alone. Tethered to the ground, on guard, with a very sick person to take care of,"¹⁰⁵ Katniss believes that her instincts to protect, her actions, come from somewhere reliable: "But I knew he was injured. And I still came after him. I'm just going to have to trust that whatever instinct sent me to find him was a good one."¹⁰⁶ Katniss continues to protect Peeta throughout the rest of the book, from bandaging his wounds, to knocking him out with sleeping syrup while she goes to retrieve medicine that can heal him. While she simultaneously fights for own survival, and in accordance for her family's, Katniss also longs to protect those whom she cares for in the Games, a desire that smacks of both rebellion and Byronism.

Before her emancipatory education takes place, Katniss's predisposition to act (or protect) first and calculate later reveals her lack of a desire for real change; her only wish is for survival. When she and Gale are in the woods, Gale rants against the Capitol, but Katniss gleans little from his hostile contemplations: "His rage seems pointless to me, although I never say so. It's not that I don't agree with him. I do. But what good is yelling about the Capitol in the middle

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. 263.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

of the woods? It doesn't change anything. It doesn't make things fair. It doesn't fill our stomachs."¹⁰⁷ Later, while Katniss is on the tribute train headed towards the Capitol, she sees the scope of the districts, and she realizes that "there must be more than they're telling us, an actual account of what happened during the rebellion."¹⁰⁸ But this thought is quickly followed by another: "Whatever the truth is, I don't see how it will help me get food on the table."¹⁰⁹ This attitude starkly contrasts to that of Hermione, who values truth above all else and acknowledges the power that truth carries. But at this time, Katniss can only acknowledge the power of action because that is what has saved her and her sister's life time and time again. Act now, protect now, and therefore survive now. Do not waste time on thinking or ranting, plotting, or even learning. The people of District 12, when asked to applaud Katniss's volunteering for Prim, "take part in the boldest form of dissent they can manage. Silence. Which says we do not agree. We do not condone. All of this is wrong."¹¹⁰ Perhaps this is Katniss's boldest form of dissent as well—she does not agree, but to fight it, to indulge it, or to learn the truth requires a costly amount of action. Ultimately, Katniss is only fighting for one thing: "when there's a hiss, I act or die."¹¹¹ In the arena, she must act or die, and this mentality almost parallels her life before the Games. Before her education takes place, Katniss does not long for change—she only acts for the sake of survival.

Katniss's Emancipatory Education

The depth of Katniss's Byronic nature, while firmly rooted in her personality, cannot be fully seen until her emancipatory education takes place, transforming the proactive, protective girl into a heroine who takes action for a purpose. Just as the contingents of the Third Wave

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. 14.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. 42.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. 24.

¹¹¹ Ibid. 175.

desire for women to be experience emancipatory education and be radically changed, Katniss's coming-of-age educational journey, taking place just before she enters the arena and then within the Games themselves, is one that dramatically alters both the course of her life and the plot of the books. She finally begins to understand the oppressive structures surrounding her (and her family, friends, and fellow citizens), and as a result she acts yet again, but this time in response to seeing these structures at play, fighting against these structures in a way that Third Wave feminists would applaud. With the goal of this education being to "expose the workings of power because explaining how the world really operates leads to emancipation,"¹¹² Katniss's learning comes from her trial-riddled existence in District 12 and then from within the confines of the arena, ultimately leading her to a better understanding of the corrupt, vulnerable nature of the Capitol. This dawning understanding, referred to as the "conscientization (consciousness-raising or critical awareness)" aspect of her education, plays an integral role in the process of her emancipation. She must cultivate "the ability to critically perceive the causes of reality."¹¹³ This heightened awareness is essential, acting as a catalyst for Katniss's realization of her oppressive structures and resulting attempts to free herself from them. Though Katniss spends her entire life purposefully avoiding this conscientization for the sake of her own survival, her education is ironically necessary in order to pursue that one goal—survival.

Primarily, Katniss's emancipatory education and journey towards Byronism takes place in her relationships. Through building relationships with both citizens of the Capitol and Peeta and Haymitch, Katniss begins to finally learn about the oppressive forces at work around her. Unfortunately, Katniss's fierce independence and previous isolation have only encouraged her continued naiveté, despite her exposure to the dark side of the Capitol (such as the starvation of

¹¹² Galloway, Sarah. "Reconsidering Emancipatory Education." N.pag.

¹¹³ Schugurensky, Daniel. "The Legacy of Paulo Freire: A Critical Review of His Contributions." N.pag.

her family, the death of her father, and the known-destruction of District 13). However, “emancipatory education cannot be systematized or implemented by government policy, but instead requires that people trust one other. . . . [It is] a risky undertaking that people try to avoid, encouraging a tendency for people to replicate oppression themselves.”¹¹⁴ Once Katniss begins to develop relationships, she is forced to see her oppressors differently, a shift that is quickly followed by the heightening of her Byronic characteristics.

One of the most difficult aspects of her emancipatory education is Katniss’s relationship with Haymitch, the foundation of which is built upon a begrudging trust that later develops her conscientization and advances her education. While Haymitch is little more than a functioning alcoholic who barely survives on his winnings from his own Games, he is Katniss and Peeta’s lifeline in the arena. He is in charge of their sponsors, their gifts, and ultimately their survival. This dependency, previously foreign to Katniss, requires a certain level of trust, a trust which reflects progress of her own emancipatory education. After nearly stabbing him with a knife and knocking a bottle of alcohol out of his hand, Katniss and Peeta demand more from Haymitch than he ever gave before: they demand for him to become someone upon whom they can rely. In accordance to the requirements of emancipatory education, all parties not only trust each other, but in this respect they are trustworthy as well. Haymitch does sober up long enough to help Katniss and Peeta, all the way through when the victory trumpets blow and beyond. Ultimately, Haymitch not only helps Katniss survive, but he helps her become aware, he helps her rebel, and he helps her become the Byronic heroine that leads Panem to a full-scale rebellion.

Unexpectedly, Katniss’s relationship with Cinna, a favorite character in the series, also prompts her growing awareness and emancipatory education. Katniss must entrust her life to

¹¹⁴ Galloway. N.pag.

Cinna, a simple, inexperienced man who is debuting on the Games for the first time. The stylists make or break a tribute; they reveal either the most memorable or the most forgettable side of each volunteer. After agreeing to obey Haymitch's every instruction, Katniss's must willingly give herself over to whatever Cinna desires. Luckily for Katniss, her faith is not ill-placed. She and Peeta are the most striking at Opening Ceremony, and they continue to be unforgettable throughout the training and interview process. Upon the first evening of meeting Cinna, and only days after being introduced to Haymitch, Katniss finally begins to understand how to defy the Capitol, and her emancipatory education launches forward. After learning that it was Cinna's idea for Katniss and Peeta to hold hands while they took their first tour as District 12 tributes, Haymitch remarks that it was "Just the perfect touch of rebellion."¹¹⁵ But this puzzles Katniss, a girl who previously viewed the Capitol as untouchable, impenetrable: "Rebellion? I have to think about that one a moment. But when I remember the other couples, standing stiffly apart, never touching or acknowledging each other, as if their fellow tribute did not exist, as if the Games had already begin, I know what Haymitch means. Presenting ourselves not as adversaries but as friends has distinguished us as much as the fiery costumes."¹¹⁶ Never before did Katniss feel like the Capitol could be opposed, could be threatened, but here, through the simple holding of hands, she and Peeta have marked themselves as potential rebels, as insurgents, as revolutionaries. In these small moments, Katniss is becoming the iconic Byronic heroine—a heroine that is made and not born.

Though she tolerates Haymitch and endears herself to Cinna, Katniss genuinely cares for Peeta, and this care makes her vulnerable enough to see the manipulation of the Capitol in every aspect of their relationship, furthering her education and propelling the development of her

¹¹⁵ Ibid. 79.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. 79

Byronic character. Halfway through the Games, Katniss reflects back to a conversation that she and Peeta had the night before they entered the Games. Originally, she understood very little of Peeta's intention, but from her weeks spent surrounded by malicious violence and innocent deaths, Katniss begins to absorb Peeta's words and claim them as her own: "I want to die as myself. . . . I don't want them to change me in [the arena]. Turn me into some kind of monster that I'm not. . . . I keep wishing I could think of way to . . . to show the Capitol they don't own me. That I'm more than just a piece in their Games."¹¹⁷ After watching Rue die with a spear in her side, Katniss begins not only to see the nature of the oppressive structure, of the beast that demands for the death of innocent children, but also that she has a choice in the matter, that she is no longer just a pawn as she thought before: "I want to do something, right here, right now, to shame them, to make them accountable, to show the Capitol that whatever they do or force us to do there is a part of every tribute they can't own. That Rue was more than a piece in their Games. And so am I."¹¹⁸ In response to this impulse, Katniss covers Rue with flowers before she is lifted by the hovercraft. She takes a moment to honor a death that was only supposed to be a willing, worthless sacrifice of the districts. In this moment, Katniss begins to not only embrace her emancipatory education, but also to act in accordance with what she has learned regarding the weaknesses and obligations of the Capitol, a deadly combination that yields her as a Byronic, intelligent, and intimidating threat to President Snow.

In the cultivation of Katniss's emancipatory education, her ultimate act of intelligence that both momentarily saves her life and damns her to a future as a rebel comes in the emptying of a small leather pouch. Just as Hermione is finally able to combine her knowledge with action and a desire to overthrow Voldemort's looming oppression and save the boys, so too is Katniss

¹¹⁷ Ibid. 141-42.

¹¹⁸ Ibid. 236-37.

able to finally combine her natural desire to protect, her innate reflex of action, with her recently-gained knowledge surrounding the corruption of the Capitol. While she has spent the entire time before and during the Games building relationships, choosing to trust for the first time in her life, and now gaining a new view of the tyrannical forces surrounding her, Katniss learns just enough to save her own life while also saving Peeta's, a boy she longs to protect. In a last minute decision to revert a previous rule change, Peeta and Katniss star in the showdown of a century, as one of the star-crossed lovers must kill the other in a Battle Royale of Love. However, Katniss now better understands the Capitol, understands that even this façade of strength and stability has holes and weaknesses, chinks in its armor. Throughout the Games, Katniss has acknowledged the necessity of keeping the Capitol crowd happy, that this key is how the Games thrive off the lucrative enjoyment of the Capitol's citizens. The government itself cannot continue to exist without at least the support of the Capitol citizens, despite the subjugation of the districts. It is for the Capitol's citizens that Katniss even plays into the lover's drama with Peeta; it is for these citizens that the tributes must fight between themselves, without too much external interference by the Gamemakers, and it is for these citizens that the Games "have to have a victor."¹¹⁹ Katniss understands this last piece of the puzzle while Peeta begs her to kill him, to save herself: "Yes, they have to have a victor. Without a victor, the whole thing would blow up in the Gamemakers' faces. They'd have failed the Capitol."¹²⁰ So she and Peeta, in an act of trust not only towards each other but also towards her acquired knowledge of the Capitol and her instincts, bluff with mouthfuls of poisonous berries. And their gamble pays off as "the trumpets begin to blare"¹²¹ and both Peeta and Katniss are announced as victors. Thanks to her emancipatory education,

¹¹⁹ Ibid. 344.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid. 345.

Katniss has won the gamble of a lifetime.

While the move with the berries does expose certain cleverness on Katniss's part, it also reveals much deeper roots, roots sunk in rebellion and Byronism, which finish her emancipatory education. Through the Games, Katniss begins to understand the oppressive structures around her much better than before, and this knowledge inevitably leads to rebellion, to defiance, and momentarily to life as she manipulates these structures to her own advantage. According to Schugurensky, "[T]he unveiling of reality [caused by emancipatory education] would translate into transformative action."¹²² Inevitably, Katniss's knowledge directly translates into further action, into rebellion, into dismantling the oppressive nature of the Capitol, one mouthful of berries at a time. This combination of knowledge and action labels Katniss as someone who is no longer brash and impulsive, as she undoubtedly is in the beginning of the book, but rather as a calculating, intelligent woman who sees these structures in place and chooses to rebel against them. This acute intelligence is indicative of the depth of Katniss's Byronic personality— both of which also indicate the fluid nature of her gender as well.

[Katniss's Protection Producing Rebellion](#)

Until Katniss's moment with the berries, the Second Wave feminists would have supported her headstrong, independent nature, but with the mouthful of berries, Katniss became a threat, a threat to the Capitol, to herself, and to the sanctity of gender roles. Katniss's successful emancipatory education, a process that enables her to save both her and Peeta's lives by accurately judging the oppressive structures around her, results in a much more Byronic character than existed on the opening pages of *Hunger Games*. Ultimately, Katniss's protective instinct, originally her facilitator of both action and survival, morphs into rebelliousness against

¹²² Schugurensky. N.pag.

the Capitol, revealing the extent of her transformation and masculinity. Katniss's rebellion that occurs after the incident with the berries in the arena is a perversion of her preexisting protective instinct. As Katniss grows in intelligence, learning more and more of the Capitol's atrocities and weaknesses, her desire to survive and to protect Prim and her mother slowly becomes a desire to protect all of the citizens of Panem from the murderous, domineering rule of the Capitol and President Snow. This longing to defend all of her fellow citizens in District 12 and beyond inevitably leads to a need to overthrow the current structures in place in order to instate a far more suitable and far less severe government. Essentially, the emancipatory education that saves her life now demands her life as sacrifice to the rebel cause. She now knows too much to do nothing, knows too much to just survive. Accordingly, Katniss's resulting rebellion against the Capitol directly parallels the growing depth of her knowledge about the degeneracy of the Capitol's leadership. Once she learns the truth about the Capitol and Snow, she has no choice but to act. Her emancipatory education has yielded this transformative action; her rebellion is directly tied to her intelligence, her ability to perceive the reality of the situation and her desire to change it. Katniss's rebellion, her Byronism, and her straddling of the gender binary are credited to her adopted intelligence and completed emancipatory education.

Katniss's emancipatory education broadens the scope of her feelings to encompass far more people than just Peeta or Prim. Because Katniss now understands the depravity and depth of the oppressive rulers around her, it is her obligation to defend not only her family but her entire country. This protective instinct grows throughout *Catching Fire* and *Mockingjay* to now encompass the whole of Panem, gradually shifting from a desire to protect towards a desire to rebel. The number of these countless victims of oppressive rule only further encourages Katniss to rebel against the Capitol, to protect all of her fellow citizens. Katniss's transformation as pawn

in the Games to a major player in the insurgence against the Capitol also stems from her Byronic roots, for a Byronic heroine “may even initially appear as an agent of oppressive institutional author, who yet draws the admiration of [her] audience due to [her] awesome abilities. [She] then becomes transformed into an agent of revolt against the institution that created or employed [her].”¹²³ She is able to see the oppression, play a part in that oppression, and then overthrow it, innately driven by her desire to protect. Katniss plays her new part well as she adapts to the role of rebel-rouser and Byronic heroine.

Katniss’s Byronic Shift of Fate

According to the previous fates of Byronic heroines, Katniss should be killed for her actions in the arena. She should be forced to either forsake her rebellious cause and refeminize or die, as she deserves for being a traitor against the Capitol. But Katniss does not meet this end. Instead, she and Peeta are the victors of the Hunger Games. They no longer struggle to have enough food, money, or supplies. Gifts come once a month for the entire District as a reward for their winning. Katniss now spends her days in the woods hunting by choice, not out of necessity. And though she is on the receiving end of the Capitol’s hate, she is also a cultural icon, winning the admiration and respect of an entire country. At the end of the series, Katniss has an ambiguous future. She does end up with Peeta, though this is described in very little detail, and she is isolated in District 12.

Ultimately, Katniss’s uncertain ending¹²⁴ parallels that of a Byronic heroine as well. The Byronic heroine is a trailblazer, but not always a history-maker. In fact, the efforts of the Byronic heroine are often for naught, apart from the audience’s empathizing: “The Byronic heroine does not define any constructive solution to male oppression. . . ; she does, however, allow the

¹²³ Stein. 2.

¹²⁴ Katniss lives in District 12, surrounded by only a handful of people, with no job mentioned, no driving passion, and no remaining family. She spends her days barely surviving, just as she does when the series opened.

vicarious experience of empowerment.”¹²⁵ Katniss does not completely overthrow the oppressive structures around her; in fact, she feels even more suffocated by the oppression as she realizes the depravity within herself. But through it all, the fight that she gives, the passion that she shows, is what the audience cheers for—not for her self-destruction or isolation.

But Katniss is isolated; in fact, Katniss’s seclusion at the end of the series, further marking her as a Byronic heroine, provides an ambivalent, anticlimactic end to her life, reinforcing the negative effects of the breakdown of the gender binary. While Hermione experiences a great deal of success as a result of her intelligence and independence, the tame nature of Hermione’s adopted masculinity allows for flourishing. However, the concentration of Katniss’s Byronism runs far deeper, and as such, a completely successful future, unhampered by her own self-destructive tendencies, would be even too fanciful for fiction. Katniss’s isolation directly results from her acquisition of knowledge and open rebellion. Only after being removed from the Capitol can Katniss begin to digest the horrors she has seen: “I no longer feel allegiance to these monsters called human beings, despise being one myself. I think that Peeta was onto something about us destroying one another and letting some decent species take over. Because something is significantly wrong with a creature that sacrifices its children’s lives to settle its differences.”¹²⁶ She hates her own race for the atrocities they are able to commit, and she loathes herself for the role she has played in this scheme as she realizes that “the evil thing is inside, not out.”¹²⁷ Now she is exiled back to District 12, an ashen, graveyard of a home with little more than painful memories waiting for her. Katniss’s life seems to follow a pattern of acquired intelligence, action, rebellion, and resulting self-destruction and isolation, and this masculine

¹²⁵ Ibid. 180.

¹²⁶ Collins. 377.

¹²⁷ Ibid. 383.

cycle follows the trajectory of the typical Byronic heroine. Unfortunately, the aspects of Katniss's personality that save her also damn her to a life of solitude: "[The Byronic heroine] cannot be reintegrated into society, even if [she] has benefited that society with [her] heroic actions; [she] must be. . . exiled or destroyed."¹²⁸ However, the Third Wave feminists claim that even this isolation is a reprieve from death and refeminization, and as such, it marks progress for the Byronic heroine.

Katniss Everdeen, a Cultural Icon

While the citizens of Panem force Katniss to return home in exile, the American readers are much more gracious to this unlikely heroine, and this shift of cultural acceptance surrounding a Byronic heroine is both refreshing and alarming as it reflects the depth of the Third Wave's influence. Katniss could be read as a case-study on the results of rebellion, the negative effects of narcissism, or the harmful, lifelong repercussions of arrogance and isolation, but instead America has found in Katniss a heroine worth praising. As she blurs the gender lines, offering a picture of a heroine whose practical "tomboy" nature seems to win over femininity, Katniss simultaneously attracts both those who are seeking to break the mold and those too scared to do so. Almost immediately after the first book was published in 2008, a "cult fandom has sprung up"¹²⁹ around America. Somehow, Katniss appeals to a huge audience, attracting all four quadrants: men, women, boys, and girls. She is fierce and funny, loyal and even occasionally agreeable. One reviewer notes, "I loved the character. Katniss—especially in the first book—is everything we want our heroes to be: capable, generous, and able to make the hard decisions."¹³⁰ Katniss's humanity, though at times off-putting, is very intriguing for readers: "There's believable discord between her resolute approach to survival and her flashes of guilt, resulting in a complex

¹²⁸ Stein. 2.

¹²⁹ Dodes, Rachel, and John Jurgensen. "Gender Games." N.pag.

¹³⁰ De Lint, Charles. "The Hunger Games." 35.

protagonist whom readers may not ultimately like (though her loyalty to a seemingly fated love might draw in romantic readers) but will inevitably admire and find intriguing.”¹³¹ Katniss has a strength that draws in readers and an indomitable will that requires their admiration. “She is the one propelling the story. . . . She is a wonderful mix of vulnerability and strength,. . . and I think that’s what people have been relating to. She’s not a gung-ho heroine who storms in and takes no prisoners but at the same time she is not overly intimidated by the people around her.”¹³² Though they occasionally disagree on what they like in the heroine, viewers come together in their admiration and love of Katniss as a whole. Her desire to rebel, to assassinate President Coin in *Mockingjay*, and to break the law are all excused when one considers the bravery and heroism necessary to lead such an uprising. Katniss’s Byronism only wins her esteem with the audience.

While the public’s widespread acceptance of Katniss affirms the Third Wave’s growth, the varied interpretation of Katniss’s Byronism reveals a growing rift in the Third Wave’s agenda. Reviewers disagree on how to interpret Katniss’s more masculine personality, an understandable concern as this struggle to interpret masculinity in women has elicited many different stances from the leading voices of the Third Wave. Some readers view Katniss’s strong personality as a triumph for feminism—finally, a portrayal of a *real* woman who can take charge and kick butt. Along these lines, one reviewer suggests, “Katniss becomes a warriorress. An Aphrodite. It’s a natural empowerment of women.”¹³³ Another writer echoes these ideas, praising Collin’s portrayal of Katniss as a “feisty huntress-turned-warrior who stands up for social justice and eschews all female action hero stereotypes by spending most of her screen time

¹³¹ Spisak, April. “Hunger Games.” 112.

¹³² Sydney, Vicky Roach. “Katniss Everdeen has more in common with Jane Eyre and Elizabeth Bennet.” N.pag.

¹³³ Green, Jane. “A New Kind of Hero.” N.pag.

in a cagoule¹³⁴.”¹³⁵ A final review suggests that it was this portrayal that propelled the success of the series: “[C]onsumers want to see powerful portrayals of female characters. Exposing young women to these stories and nontraditional female characters is positive, and hopefully will influence other genres of media to offer more complex characterizations of women characters. She adapted to survive and provide for her family, but not so much that her femininity is compromised.”¹³⁶ Regardless, Katniss seems to be loved for not only being strong and smart and powerful but also for being female.

However, while some critics view Katniss as a champion for the feminist movement, others see her gender as being obsolete, which would also be a feat for the feminist movement, but one that reflects the blurring gender binary rather than the establishment of strong, independent women in literature. A few critics suggest that her gender matters very little to the story: “Katniss is, to a large degree, free of characterization based solely on her gender (or what would normally constitute a ‘strong’ female lead character).”¹³⁷ Another writer goes so far as to claim that her gender is extraneous, of no importance: “What’s great about Katniss is that her gender is essentially irrelevant.”¹³⁸ Seconding this idea, one critic writes, “It’s remarkable how the books and now the movie are crossing gender lines. . . . Katniss’s tale is an opportunity for boys and girls to look beyond what they are to the strengths they have.”¹³⁹ And some admire that Katniss’s gender exists, but is not made a spectacle of: “[Katniss’s] gender, while not irrelevant, is almost incidental. . . . Katniss’s gender, while important, does not define her, and in its own way, that is somewhat radical.”¹⁴⁰ So Katniss should either be praised for being a capable,

¹³⁴ A lightweight raincoat

¹³⁵ Wyllie, Alice. “What’s Great about Katniss.” N.pag.

¹³⁶ “Audiences ‘Hungry’ for Strong Heroines: Sci-Fi Tales Deliver.” N.pag.

¹³⁷ Skinner, Margaret, and Kailyn McCord. “The Hunger Games: A Conversation.” 111.

¹³⁸ Wyllie. N.pag.

¹³⁹ Green. N.pag.

¹⁴⁰ Sydney. N.pag.

tenacious, unyielding *female*, or, as these reviews suggest, she should be praised for being capable, tenacious, and unyielding, barely recognizable as a female. This debate, however, will hardly conclude with the movie reviews of *Catching Fire* coming in November, as this is a war that has been waging since the inception of the Third Wave. Women cannot decide if they want to be known as sensational¹⁴¹ women, or if they desire to be sensational, nondependent on their sex.

¹⁴¹ Or whatever other adjective is being debated

Chapter 4: Lisbeth Salander, the Height of Byronism

Lisbeth Salander's character in *Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* provides a unique study when discussing Byronism in heroines. Hermione's bending of gender roles is slow and subtle, only offering a slight shift from traditional expectations. Katniss naturally has a much greater tendency towards Byronism, perhaps due to the elevated levels of oppression instituted by the Capitol that she experiences at a young age, and this tendency is only heightened during her emancipatory education when her protective instinct is now perverted into a more rebellious and hostile attitude. While *Harry Potter* and *The Hunger Games* reveal the shift in these characters towards more masculine qualities, *Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* opens with Lisbeth's Byronic personality fully realized.

At the beginning of the novel, Lisbeth's emancipation has already taken place as she is the product of a successful educational process, and as such she reflects a wholly Byronic personality, a beacon of hope for Third Wavers. As Freire notes, the purpose of emancipatory education is to "examine the individual and/or collective forms of oppression as the starting points, of which we can then move forward to combat and free oneself from this oppression."¹⁴² This aim is seen to fruition in Lisbeth's character as she is clearly able to identify her oppressors, and she fearlessly fights against them, all while revealing the predominantly Byronic nature of her personality. Though Katniss does experience a shift of perspective and priority after her education commences, she still pales in comparison to the full-fledged Byronic personality that Lisbeth Salander portrays.

Lisbeth's dynamic Byronism results in a fluid conception of her gender. While Hermione does attempt to loosen gender roles through her strong and independent character, she retains a

¹⁴² Freire. 184.

great deal of femininity throughout the series, from wearing perfume to caring a bit too much about the size of her front teeth. Even Katniss admires Cinna's beautiful gowns, enjoys the community offered to her by the other rebels, and is highly communicative.¹⁴³ However, though there is no before and after comparison offered of Lisbeth, the resulting character maintains very few feminine indulgences in her personality.

Lisbeth's prolonged and heightened Byronic tendencies result in an almost androgynous gender. As Stein writes, this shift is consistent for a Byronic heroine, as she may "seem to be neither hampered by her gender nor rejecting it."¹⁴⁴ This attitude, one of resigned complacency towards gender (as a matter of biological sex alone), penetrates Lisbeth's story and underscores the feminist theories surrounding performative gender. While many women may act or dress a certain way in accordance to social expectations and traditional gender roles, Lisbeth openly rejects these unspoken expectations, and as a result of this attitude,¹⁴⁵ she begins to blur the lines between male and female. Even her internet handle, "Wasp," allows her to create her own, sexless, identity online as a famous hacker. One author notes, "Lisbeth often defies societal constraints and breaks down gender stereotypes as she demonstrates strength, sexual confidence, and mathematic genius while driving a motorcycle, kick-boxing, and seeking revenge on her rapist."¹⁴⁶ Lisbeth is manly. She drinks, she lives like a slob, and she experiences intense anger and introverted moodiness. She breaks the mold. However, these actions are an outgrowth of a very specific source. While she does not seem to be defying gender stereotypes as a matter of principle, as seen with some of the more radical Third Wave leaders, Lisbeth's Byronic qualities

¹⁴³ A traditionally female attribute.

¹⁴⁴ Stein. 212.

¹⁴⁵ Which in and of itself is inherently Byronic, as it reveals her animosity towards social structures and established protocol

¹⁴⁶ Riedlinger, Elise. "Somebody'd get a fat lip if they ever called me Pippi Longstocking." 1.

so saturate her character that the naturally resulting masculinity produces a protagonist who is practically neutered and is only defined as “female” due to reproductive organs.

In addition to Lisbeth’s Byronic attitude, her actions are masculine as well, clearly linking the manifestation of her masculinity to a root of Byronism. Lisbeth is seemingly unhampered by the traditional ideas surrounding gender, but she does not “reject femininity altogether, rather [she] moves between both a masculine and feminine space without restricting [herself] to one side entirely.”¹⁴⁷ Lisbeth simply does as she pleases, and some of these impulses conform to traditional gender roles, while more often than not her natural desires prompt her to act in a manner that openly defies these roles. Discussing these masculine actions, Karen Prior notes, “She has the smarts and independence men increasingly expect in a post-feminist world, makes a great work partner, . . . rides a motorcycle, initiates sex (and does girls, too), makes breakfast the morning after, brings herself to orgasm while her partner lies back and thinks about work—all the while staying (largely) emotionally unattached. She’s essentially a breasted boy.”¹⁴⁸ Ultimately, Lisbeth is not acting as a rabble-rouser, nor is she desperately attempting to make a statement regarding natural biases; rather, she is genuine in all that she does, thereby reiterating that her resulting masculinity and gender straddling must be the product of her personality, which seems steeped in Byronic tendencies—a coincidence far too large to ignore.

Larsson chooses to highlight the asexual nature of Lisbeth’s personality by giving her a body to match, further blurring the line between the genders. Lisbeth is built, in essence, like a young boy. As she stands less than five feet tall, she appears to have “been born too thin, with slender bones that made her look girlish and fine-limbed with small hands, narrow wrists, and

¹⁴⁷ Riedlinger. 23.

¹⁴⁸ Prior, Karen. “Why ‘Girl with the Dragon Tattoo’ is Hurting Women.”

childlike breasts.”¹⁴⁹ While Lisbeth’s small stature offers an interesting contrast to the ferocious personality it houses, her body doubles as yet another masculine attribute. At one point, Larsson even attacks one of the most womanly and sacred parts of the body in order to fully defeminize her character; the author describes Lisbeth as “flat-chested, as if she had never reached puberty.”¹⁵⁰ By removing her breasts, Larsson removes, in cultural understanding, her agency as a woman. Riedlinger seconds this idea by writing that Lisbeth’s “androgynous body positions Lisbeth in a more fluid gender identity.”¹⁵¹ While the depiction of both her body and character may seem a little heavy-handed, the implication is clear—Lisbeth straddles the gender binary, and Larsson ultimately enables this goal by giving her the body of a boy and heart of a Byronic hero.

The Heart of a Byronic Hero: the Far End of the Spectrum

While Katniss epitomizes a hostile, Byronic rebel, Lisbeth, due to being much farther away from her emancipatory education and by having a much greater predisposition towards Byronism,¹⁵² offers a well-rounded view of a thoroughly Byronic heroine. Instead of Lisbeth being a picture of only one or two notable traits, it seems that many interactions, descriptors, and relationships that surrounds Lisbeth in *Dragon Tattoo* identify her as Byronic, building an arsenal of attributes and characteristics that also help make Lisbeth successful and accomplished within the realm of the story.

Lisbeth is, as all Byronic heroines, intelligent, and even her intelligence contributes to the breakdown of the gender binary. As intelligence is a necessary catalyst for emancipatory

¹⁴⁹ Larsson, Stieg. *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*. 38

¹⁵⁰ Larson. *The Girl Who Played with Fire*. 16.

¹⁵¹ Riedlinger. 18.

¹⁵² Perhaps due to her abusive relationship with her father (examined in *Played with Fire*), her neglect as a child, or other undisclosed contributing factors that allow her to better identify the oppressive structures in her life and accordingly work to dismantle them.

education to occur, Lisbeth undeniably is well-endowed in this area. Though Hermione's intelligence begins with a foundation of knowledge that later joins with action, and Katniss's predisposition towards action finally finds a pair with knowledge, we only see Lisbeth as the final product because her emancipatory education occurs before the story begins; as a result, she is an intelligent female who is both knowledgeable and action-oriented. She is able to both see the oppressive structures around her and take steps to disassemble them. While Rowling initially paints Hermione's natural acuity in negative terms, portraying her more as a harping know-it-all, Larsson intentionally ensures that we view Lisbeth's intellect in a positive light, and on a few occasions she is overtly described as possessing "unusual intelligence."¹⁵³ Lisbeth is a world-class computer hacker, a sleuthy PI, a mathematic genius (in a predominantly male field), and she is coldly analytical, allowing her decisions to be made based on an evaluation of long-term consequences, rather than simply emotionally responding—as is traditionally expected of women. One critic even addresses Lisbeth's "intellectual power,"¹⁵⁴ stating that even her genius "can be seen as gender bending because it occurs outside the structured classroom where girls are often expected to perform well."¹⁵⁵ Overall, the descriptions of Lisbeth's intelligence and the ways in which this intelligence manifests itself, such as through mathematic prowess or chess expertise, begin to reveal her more masculine leanings.

Just as with Hermione and Katniss, Lisbeth's intelligence couples with action, allowing her to outwit even the most conniving and clever men in order to solve the crime in *Dragon Tattoo*. Despite Mikael Blomkvist, a reporter that Henrik Vanger hires in order to solve the mystery surrounding the murder of his granddaughter, being fully competent and reliable, up

¹⁵³ *Dragon Tattoo*. 37, 69.

¹⁵⁴ Riedlinger. 18.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

until his trial where he is unjustly convicted of libel, somehow it is the inquisitive eyes of Lisbeth Salander that link several of the local murders together in order to hypothesize the existence of a serial killer.¹⁵⁶ After seeing the names and biblical references that the investigation exposes, Lisbeth begins to use her expert PI skills to identify the various victims based on murders that occurred in the area fitting that description. While Blomkvist also has complete access to this same information and to the tools that Salander uses, often nothing more than Google and a few police reports, the young girl is able to apply her knowledge practically in order to fit together these murders. Lisbeth also establishes that there must have been both a member of the older and younger generation in the Vanger family involved in these serial murders, as the timing matches something similar to a generational gap.¹⁵⁷ And finally, Lisbeth's "photographic memory"¹⁵⁸ is able to piece together various expense reports, business meetings, and even a photograph from a company newsletter to confirm that Martin Vanger is responsible for all of these deaths and possibly more. Lisbeth is incredibly good at finding out information, at reading between the lines, at making connections and solving problems. However, this knowledge, this ability to identify oppressive structures, is only half of what makes her intelligent.

In addition to her ability to process information quickly, Lisbeth's tendency toward action labels her as both intelligent and Byronic, and it manifests itself initially in her desire to avoid victimization. Despite, or perhaps due to, the large amount of pain and suffering she has experienced at the hands of strangers and family members alike,¹⁵⁹ Lisbeth refuses to become a victim as being a victim is to be weak, to be vulnerable, to be feminine. This desire to keep the upper hand, even in the face of physical and sexual abuse, stems from an almost masculine sense

¹⁵⁶ *Dragon Tattoo*. 375.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 422.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 423.

¹⁵⁹ Including, but not limited to, sexual and physical abuse by her father and Nils Bjurman, to be discussed later.

of hubris. “Lisbeth never plays the role of a victim or expresses fear,”¹⁶⁰ despite both of those reactions being the reasonable or logical response to her situations. This mentality results in Lisbeth never accepting that she has been acted upon—as the victim or prey—but rather that she is the one in control, the one taking action—the predator.

As she maintains this predatory role, Lisbeth’s desire to act manifests itself in a violent sort of revenge as she seeks to literally—physically—and theoretically destroy the oppressive forces around her, further establishing even her intelligence as masculine. While Stein notes that “the contemporary Byronic heroine must define her own moral code, often resorting to violence to accomplish her aims,”¹⁶¹ this particular aspect of Lisbeth’s Byronic personality reveals itself early on in her life as she has a long history of violence. Even in elementary school in revenge for a boy bullying her, Lisbeth “decked him with a right jab fortified with a golf ball,”¹⁶² but she only retaliated when “there was someone who would not leave her in peace.”¹⁶³ From an early age, violence became the way that Lisbeth fights against her oppressors, against the injustice that she sees, and her “almost predatory nature”¹⁶⁴ does not change in her adult life.

Lisbeth’s interactions with Nils Bjurman, her new guardian, reveal how calculating and vengeful this streak is, further blurring traditional gender roles. After Bjurman rapes Salander upon one of his first meetings with her, Lisbeth sees him as a threat, and as she refuses to be a victim in the situation, she takes matters into her own hands: “Salander devoted a week to planning Nils Bjurman’s demise. She considered—and rejected—various methods until she had narrowed it down a few realistic scenarios from which to choose. *No acting on impulse.*”¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ Riedlinger. 17.

¹⁶¹ Stein. 180.

¹⁶² *Dragon Tattoo*. 228.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.* 229.

¹⁶⁴ Riedlinger. 17.

¹⁶⁵ *Dragon Tattoo*. 241.

Finally, she decides that poison is to be his end.¹⁶⁶ Directly after the attack, Lisbeth only briefly considers going to a crisis center, but immediately she rejects the idea, claiming that these institutions only exist for “*victims*, and she had never regarded herself as a victim. Consequently, her only remaining option was to do what she had always done—take matters into her own hands and solve her problems on her own.”¹⁶⁷ And she does solve her own problems. At great personal cost, Lisbeth procures a recording of Bjurman raping her yet again, and she uses this to blackmail him into a cordial, functioning relationship that enables her to control her own assets once more. Lisbeth’s revenge works, her actions pay off, her intelligence, as violent and disturbing as it is, accomplishes its intended goal of overthrowing those unjust structures around her.

Lisbeth’s Byronic Nature: Maintaining Control over Authority, Morality, and Sexuality

Lisbeth’s intelligence leads her to develop other strong Byronic characteristics, such as a distrust of authority figures, and the development of these traits only further establish her masculine identity. In her experience, authority figures are not helpful; rather, they are harmful, and at best they are useless. Perhaps this mentality springs from her sordid experience as a ward of the state. When she is twelve, Lisbeth is declared to be a danger to herself and to others after covering her father with gasoline and lighting him on fire. However, this event only occurs after a particularly nasty bout of physical abuse towards Lisbeth’s mother at the hands of her father, abuse that leaves her mother with severe brain damage. So in almost an instant, Lisbeth sees her father, a supreme source of authority, as terribly flawed and corrupt, and she views her mother as a helpless victim. Accordingly, Lisbeth retains a distinct distaste for both of these figures for the rest of her life.

¹⁶⁶ Before she throws out the idea of murder altogether, claiming that the uncertainty surrounding her new guardian is too great of a risk. Eventually Lisbeth exchanges poison for blackmail.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. 237.

Lisbeth's distrust towards institutionalized authorities only grows after state authorities take her into custody, a phase in her life that breeds both bitterness and Byronism from a young age. While she consistently refuses all forms of psychiatric evaluation,¹⁶⁸ choosing to remain silent while psychologists and police alike question her, they ascertain that her level of competency is far below that of the average, functioning citizen, and they assign her a guardian. For years however, Advokat Holger Palmgren, her assigned trustee, allows her almost full control of her life. Though well within his rights to monitor her spending or question her daily habits, Palmgren chooses to allow Lisbeth to operate almost autonomously apart from governmental interference. However, Nils Bjurman, the guardian that replaces Palmgren after he has a stroke, epitomizes the kind of figure that Lisbeth most detests. Even upon first meeting this new man in authority over her, she decides that she "did not like him."¹⁶⁹ These feelings of dislike only grow after Bjurman rapes her, but even after the rape, Lisbeth's distrust towards authority and her sordid past with the police limit her responses: "[H]er faith in the police was generally exiguous. For her, the police were a hostile force who over the years had put her under arrest or humiliated her. . . . Visiting the offices of those visor-clad brutes to file a report against Nils Bjurman for sexual assault did not even cross her mind. The police were not an option."¹⁷⁰ At this point, restricted by her distrust of the police and her hatred for her immediate authority, Lisbeth's intelligence produces a new course of action in order to fight against both of her oppressors—plotting revenge against Bjurman.

Lisbeth's anti-establishment mentality only serves to feed her desire for violence. While the police are incompetent, government officials are corrupt, and even parents are abusive,

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. 159.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. 163.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

Lisbeth understands that she can only rely on herself, an attitude that begets her few options when seeking revenge. “She had also learned that every time she tried to make someone aware of something in her life, the situation just got worse. Consequently it was up to her to solve her problems by herself, using whatever methods she deemed necessary.”¹⁷¹ As Lisbeth views every single person around her as inept, she realizes that her only option is to fight for herself. This natural sense of self-preservation, of survival, spurs Lisbeth to take drastic actions to protect herself. In her mind, murdering Bjurman is not malicious or even immoral, but rather she is simply solving the problem, handling the issue. Violence is a means to an end, an end that she can and will reach by herself. Lisbeth’s distrust of authority, already a masculine trait, spawns a need for violence, further defeminizing her as a character.

Lisbeth’s thirst for violence and disdain towards authority also seem to corrupt her moral conscience. After discovering that Martin Vanger has committed untold numbers of kidnapping, rapes, and murders, even after seeing Blomkvist strangled almost to the point of death while being held in Martin’s basement, Lisbeth has a visceral reaction when Blomkvist insists on calling the authorities: “If you call the police, I’m leaving.”¹⁷² Lisbeth wants so little to do with the police that she is willing to allow Martin Vanger’s memory,¹⁷³ the legacy of a man more despicable than her own father, to remain untarnished by police investigation despite his atrocious acts. More than simply refusing to aid the police, Lisbeth interferes with any case they might be able to build against Martin as she disposes of the scrapbook identifying all of his victims, complete with pictures and passports, and Martin’s computer, both of which would have

¹⁷¹ Ibid. 394.

¹⁷² Ibid. 462.

¹⁷³ Vanger dies in a car accident shortly after Lisbeth pummels him with a golf club and chases him down the highway. She does not even experience an emotional response to this death that she inadvertently causes.

been enough to implicate him and scar the entire family.¹⁷⁴ As the novel comes to a close, Lisbeth seems completely undisturbed by these actions. While the Vanger family chooses to keep Martin's torture chamber a secret, hidden forever from the eyes of their investors and their competition around the world, Lisbeth too is satisfied. All forms of oppression have been disposed of or disabled by playing a role in Martin's death and by crippling any future police investigation, and Lisbeth's moral compass seems to spin only based on this single criteria.

Lisbeth's intelligence and desire to assert and protect herself ultimately lead her to be sexually dominant in all of her relationships. While this role reversal further supports Lisbeth blurring the lines between the genders, she is also simultaneously accomplishing a huge goal of the Third Wave of feminism: "For third-wave feminists, therefore, 'sexual liberation,' a major goal of second-wave feminism, was expanded to mean a process of first becoming conscious of the ways one's gender identity and sexuality have been shaped by society and then intentionally constructing (and becoming free to express) one's authentic gender identity."¹⁷⁵ Surely, Lisbeth Salander, the girl who sleeps with both men and women and identifies only loosely with the female gender, is the spokeswoman for this sexual liberation so desperately sought by Third-Wave feminists. While her overt sexuality marks her as a champion for the feminist agenda in this regard, it also labels her as highly Byronic: "She [the Byronic heroine] often takes the traditionally masculine role of initiating a relationship, and she reserves the right to end such a relationship when it poses a potential threat to her autonomy. . . . Once he has served [his] function and is no longer useful, she discards him, avoiding intimacy and retaining her Byronic self-sufficiency."¹⁷⁶ Essentially, the Third Wave seeks to adopt the sexual dominance of the

¹⁷⁴ Ibid. 465.

¹⁷⁵ Walker, Rebecca. "Third Wave." N.pag.

¹⁷⁶ Stein. 193.

Byronic heroine—a woman who is sexually self-sufficient, emotionally detached, rejecting of traditional feminine roles and defining of the parameters of the relationship based on her own sexual appetite. This woman is the god(dess) of the Third Wave, she is the Byronic hero(ine), and she is barely female at all.¹⁷⁷

Lisbeth's sexual preference is, and has been, as fluid as her gender conception. Though she grows up in various foster homes, Lisbeth develops a sexual deviancy as a young teenager: "She had had over fifty partners since the age of fifteen. . . . But she had had most of these casual partners during a two-year period."¹⁷⁸ This level of experience does little to sway Lisbeth's sexual preference though, as she firmly refuses to sleep only with one sex. Rather, as Mimi describes Lisbeth: "You're not really a dyke. You're probably bisexual. But most of all you're sexual—you like sex and you don't care about what gender."¹⁷⁹ But Lisbeth refuses to even embrace this brand of "bisexual," though it is fitting for her actions: "Salander. . . had never thought of herself as a lesbian. She had never brooded over whether she was straight, gay, or even bisexual. She did not give a damn about labels, did not see that it was anyone else's business whom she spent her nights with."¹⁸⁰ At this point, the Third Wave gives Salander a standing ovation, not only for feeling free enough to experiment sexually, but also for refusing to adopt any label society has decided to create in order to segregate and oppress one of the groups. This mentality also supports Lisbeth's desire to buck authority by refusing to submit her own sexual preferences to the expected norms dictated by culture. Just as she refuses to conform to one specific gender, Lisbeth refuses to conform to a sexual preference.

¹⁷⁷ By this, I simply mean that almost all of a woman's natural tendencies in regards to a sexual relationship have been stripped away and replaced with the traditionally masculine predilections.

¹⁷⁸ *Dragon Tattoo*. 235.

¹⁷⁹ *Played with Fire*. 121.

¹⁸⁰ *Dragon Tattoo*. 327.

Perhaps Lisbeth's relationship with Blomkvist best reveals the extreme nature of her sexual dominance and thereby Byronism. Blomkvist, a well-known womanizer, and Lisbeth, a clearly promiscuous girl who has slept with much older men, seem to attract each other immediately. In fact, one critic credits this attraction back to Lisbeth's predatory nature: "It often appears as though Lisbeth purposefully chooses men over whom she can easily have control, and George [her 16-year-old mentee in the second installment of the series] and Blomkvist are prime examples of this."¹⁸¹ While Lisbeth's control over these men does not come from a physical advantage, she may choose them based on their weak conformities to gender. Whereas Lisbeth strongly tests the bounds of a "female" gender classification with her Byronic personality, Blomkvist is strikingly effeminate, particular in regards to his ability or desire to act: "He is so anti-masculinist that, in a narrative where people are brandishing chainsaws, he can take no forceful action. That goes for his sex life too."¹⁸² While Blomkvist is unwilling, or perhaps unable, to take action, Lisbeth is more than happy to accommodate. Within just a few weeks of working with Blomkvist, she strips off her clothes and wanders into his bedroom, even silencing his protests with kisses, and insists that they have sex: "I want to have sex with you. And I won't have any problem working with you, but I will have a hell of a problem with you if you kick me out."¹⁸³ This kind of sexual pursuit cycles through several more times in the course of the novel as Lisbeth distracts Blomkvist from work or evening meals with a seemingly insatiable desire for sex.¹⁸⁴ She is clearly unafraid to satisfy her own needs, whether that need is satiated with a male or female sex partner. Lisbeth's sexual dominance could possibly stem from a distrust of authority figures, such as her father or even other men, and a desire to assert herself to maintain

¹⁸¹ Riedlinger. 25.

¹⁸² Acocella, Joan. "Man of Mystery." 70.

¹⁸³ *Dragon Tattoo*. 396-97.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 359.

her coveted autonomy. While she rejects sexual labels, Lisbeth certainly labels herself as Byronic in the process.

Lisbeth's Life and Her Byronic Repercussion

Ultimately, Lisbeth's intelligence, her need for violent revenge, her anti-establishment mentality, and her sexual dominance all spawn a very unhealthy emotional isolation. While this isolation is a source of comfort for Lisbeth, it only feeds her Byronic nature, propelling her into a cycle of growing more and more masculine and isolated with every unhealthy relationship. Whereas many women crave community, Lisbeth breaks down the gender binary once again by taking great solace from isolation. As Stein notes, this tendency also marks her as Byronic: "[The Byronic hero] lacks social skills and an ability to relate to other people. The Byronic hero is a loner and an outcast; he can be arrogant, contemptuous of human beings, bad-tempered, overbearing, cold, ruthless, and emotionless."¹⁸⁵ While her need to take action and dismantle the oppressive structure around her lends Lisbeth as cold and calculating, perhaps even emotionless, she is also the Other that Stein describes. She is not a part of a group; she is detached, secluded, and withdrawn. From her first psychiatric exams, Lisbeth is recorded as being "introverted, socially inhibited, lacking in empathy, ego-fixated, psychopathic and asocial behavior, difficulty in cooperating, and incapable of assimilating learning."¹⁸⁶ These tendencies towards isolation do not improve with age. By the time the book opens with Lisbeth as an adult, even her boss, Dragan Armansky, notes that she displays an "astonishing lack of emotional involvement"¹⁸⁷ in the lives of those around her as she moves throughout the office completely disengaged with coworkers and even Dragan. Lisbeth possesses an incredible desire and ability to attain almost complete isolation as she refuses to reveal any vulnerability, nor does she demand any from

¹⁸⁵ Stein. 2.

¹⁸⁶ *Dragon Tattoo*. 160.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 38.

those around her.

While Lisbeth's tendency towards seclusion may be her preference, it does little to foster healthy relationships, further isolating her and rounding out her already Byronic predispositions. Despite working for Armansky for four years, he still has very little knowledge about the girl and is frustrated by the distance she maintains: "[H]er attitude encouraged neither trust nor friendship, and she quickly became an outsider [at work]. . . . Armansky felt so provoked by her lack of emotional response that sometimes he wanted to grab hold of her and shake her. To force his way into her shell and win her friendship, or at least her respect."¹⁸⁸ This detachment frustrates even those few individuals with whom Lisbeth begrudgingly spends prolonged amounts of time, such as her boss or Palmgren, her old guardian. While many think that Lisbeth has the strongest attachment to Palmgren, who granted her freedom and never abused his position of authority in her life, even to this man she only has the slightest sense of fidelity. Though she does share holidays with Palmgren, whose family lives too far away to travel to see him, Lisbeth confesses that it is only because "she considered herself in his debt [for helping her], and she always paid her debts."¹⁸⁹ Even later, when Palmgren's life is in danger after a serious stroke, one would expect Lisbeth to have an emotional reaction, but she is far too isolated and emotionally detached to be so vulnerable. Instead, after hearing the news of his critical condition, "[s]he neither wept nor changed her expression. She stood up, left the hospital, and did not return."¹⁹⁰ Even a life-threatening stroke in the man who she most esteems is not enough to invoke a sense of community or familial obligation for Lisbeth.

Just as Lisbeth's sexual dominance is highlighted in her interactions with Blomkvist, so

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. 39, 44.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. 164.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid. 162.

too is her desire for isolation, ultimately allowing her Byronic qualities to determine their relationship. During their first few days together, Blomkvist, a sociable reporter used to making small talk and carrying the conversation, is unable to engage Lisbeth. “When he tried to be sociable over dinner, she was taciturn to the point of rudeness,”¹⁹¹ always ignoring his questions or choosing to walk away from a conversation. While she not only shuts him out of her life, refusing to be vulnerable, she also invades his privacy on many occasions as she hacks into his computer, copies his files, checks on his banking account, and reads through all of his research without his knowledge. For Lisbeth, a hacker by trade, knowing more about people is not knowing them in a true and faithful sense; it is simply the acquisition of knowledge. In these kinds of “relationships,” no one demands vulnerability. Even in the one moment when Lisbeth should be most vulnerable, at her mother’s funeral, she retreats into isolation, rejecting Blomkvist’s company. When he asks if he should stay the night with her, her only response is an inflectionless, “Do you want me to stay here so you’ll have somebody to fuck tonight?”¹⁹² Even as Blomkvist, feeling affronted, is later discussing their friendship and the importance of trust and loyalty, Lisbeth is only able to respond with “I like having sex with you.”¹⁹³ Not even mourning can force Lisbeth to trade in sexual intimacy for the comfort, vulnerability, and fear that comes from relational intimacy.

Lisbeth’s Legacy: The Future of the Byronic Heroines

As a result of the Third Wave’s successful education of the masses, Lisbeth is an incredibly successful cultural icon. The complex nature of Lisbeth’s character can easily explain much of her appeal. “One website has compiled a lengthy list of the contradictory descriptions of Salander—ranging from hero to anti-heroine, from interesting to terrifying—proving her to be a

¹⁹¹ Ibid. 380.

¹⁹² Ibid. 500.

¹⁹³ Ibid. 507.

kind of Rorschach test of cultural icons.”¹⁹⁴ Every critic has differing opinions surrounding Lisbeth, and there is no consensus except to say that she fascinates people. Many critics rally around Lisbeth as a kind of beacon of hope for the Third Wave: “Lisbeth has become an iconic image for a new generation of feminists who embrace her enigmatic and intriguing characteristics while recognizing her imperfections at the same time.”¹⁹⁵ This dualism, of being horribly flawed and gifted, seems to be capturing the hearts of the American public. While our culture loves a tragic hero, Lisbeth has satiated this desire, and the fact that she is a woman has only incurred additional support. “We are all a little in love with her. . . . She’s hot. She’s cool. She’s violent and gentle, a loner, cynical, sexual, and frigid.”¹⁹⁶ These impossible combinations of characteristics intrigue and entrance readers and reviewers alike. “Her appeal arises from a combination of vulnerability and ruthless competence. . . . Lisbeth Salander is one of the great Scandinavian avengers of our time, an angry bird catapulting into the fortresses of power and wiping smiles off the faces of smug, predatory pigs. . . . Lisbeth is an outlaw feminist fantasy-heroine, and also an avatar of digital antiauthoritarianism.”¹⁹⁷ While many recognize Lisbeth’s conflicting qualities, the overarching, cult-like support that the character has received is seemingly unprecedented. While Lisbeth is thoroughly Byronic, her acceptance by such a large group of readers only casts an ironic glare on her desperate desire for independence and isolation.

However, Lisbeth’s public acceptance does little to guarantee her a successful future. Though many feminists seek to diminish the truth, unfortunately, the progression of Byronism also yields a progression of self-destructive tendencies. Hermione, who is the least Byronic is

¹⁹⁴ Prior, Karen. “Why ‘Girl with the Dragon Tattoo’ is Hurting Women.” N.pag.

¹⁹⁵ Riedlinger. 33.

¹⁹⁶ Torregrosa, Luisita Lopez. “Lisbeth Salander, the Girl who Rocked the Mystery-Action Genre.” N.pag.

¹⁹⁷ Scott, A.O. “Tattooed Heroines Metes Out Slick, Punitive Violence.” N.pag.

accordingly the least self-destructive, harboring only a disregard for institutions and rules which only earn her a slap on the wrist, and accordingly her future is very bright as she still holds to the existence of gender roles. Katniss, more Byronic but still less so than Lisbeth, has a less promising future as she experiences extreme isolation and self-hate due to her education. Since *Dragon Tattoo* opens with Lisbeth as wholly Byronic, we are able to identify the destructive daily and life-long ramifications of continuing down a path towards Byronism after one's emancipatory education commences, including but not limited to an ambiguous gender and weak emotional attachments.

Third Wave feminists like to argue that, spurred on by all of her Byronic characteristics, Lisbeth has a bright and burgeoning future. In a matter of only a few pages of narration at the end of the *Dragon Tattoo*, Lisbeth, gussied up and guised as Irene Nesser, manages to steal over three billion kronor¹⁹⁸ from Wennerström, a corrupt capitalist at war with Blomkvist. While some may steal with guns and masks, Lisbeth manages to use her hacking ability, a few well-chosen costumes, and an ingenious alibi to make off with the money by transferring funds directly from the bank. Three billion kronor richer, Lisbeth is able to buy a large apartment, quit her PI job with Milton's, and live the life of utter isolation and independence, free from any crippling reliance on men or their money to meet her needs. On the surface, the very traits that make Lisbeth most Byronic are the ones that allow her to be the most successful. Through her independent nature, she is able to not only fulfill her sexual desires but also maintain a distance between herself and her partners so that she can emotionally disengage when she feels threatened, overly invested, or just bored. Her incredible intelligence allows her to enjoy her hobby of hacking while living free of any financial worries or obligations of any kind. Even her

¹⁹⁸ *Plays with Fire*. 71.

need for violent revenge frees her from the clutches of Bjurman and ensures her transition back into society as a regular citizen.¹⁹⁹ Ultimately, Lisbeth's success seems to directly parallel her Byronism.

While those facts may be true, Lisbeth's future, dictated by her overwhelmingly Byronic personality, carries little hope. Though she does offer an interesting picture of strength and fortitude, her lack of empathy, respect, loyalty, community, and morality indicate serious deficits in the heavily Byronic heroine. Butler's Theory of Performative Gender discusses "the instability and fragility of gender difference and suggests that although the individual is not entirely in control of the production of her/his gender identity, there is the possibility of some measure of agency, resistance, and hence change."²⁰⁰ Lisbeth's character, due to the depth and overwhelming number of her Byronic, masculine characteristics, seems to support Butler's theory, bending the normal bounds of gender, and thereby Lisbeth's character could in fact begin to change how gender is even defined. Riedlinger supports this assumption: "By challenging the notions of gender and femininity through popular fiction, [Larsson's] writing establishes a viable precedent for changing these cultural norms themselves."²⁰¹

In their haste to dismantle the gender binary, the feminists of the Third Wave may have destroyed necessary structures in society, reflected in the inevitable failure of Lisbeth's character. Unfortunately, passive readers view Lisbeth as wildly successful, and they fail to see the fatal consequences of her character: "With her independence, intelligence, resourcefulness, financial savvy, and vulnerability beneath it all, Salander might even be described as a pagan

¹⁹⁹ Part of her blackmail of Bjurman required that he, over the course of two years, begin to submit paperwork to release Lisbeth from the charge of the state and declaring her mentally competent.

²⁰⁰ Mills, Sara. "Language." 141.

²⁰¹ Riedlinger. 33.

Proverbs 31 woman. But this doesn't make her a heroine worth emulating.”²⁰² At her core, Lisbeth is struggling with what can be assumed to be a social disorder; she is a girl who contentedly watched while Martin Vanger died at the end of a car chase she initiated, a girl who stole three billion kronor, a girl whose sexual promiscuity is limitless while her loyalty is lacking, a girl who ends up nestled in a safety blanket of cash and isolation, all while missing the entire point of living. While we try to avoid the “twin traps of demonization or idolization”²⁰³ of Lisbeth, perhaps readers could learn much about gender by seeing the character as less of product of a binary, or the destruction of a binary, and more as an identity-less female whose single source of identity, her sex, is compromised for the sake of a blurred line. Lisbeth’s Byronic qualities, while granting her a great deal of comfort and temporary success, do little to ensure her own lasting happiness.

²⁰² Prior. N.pag.

²⁰³ Ibid.

Conclusion

Feminism produced much fruit: the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment, the Equal Pay Act, female bestsellers, and even the Spice Girls, but perhaps one of the greatest achievements of the three waves comes in the literary record of the feminist movement's influence. Hermione, Katniss, and Lisbeth flourish on the written page because of the strides that Susan B. Anthony, Alice Walker, Judith Butler, and Jennifer Baumgardener have made. And while the Byronic heroine can thank her brave foremothers for her existence, the natural projection of her life cannot simply be rewritten. Education is valuable, emancipation is valuable, intelligence is valuable, but Byronism is precarious, and while our fiction is inundated with the rise of this type of heroine, we must be vigilant to fight against accepting the Byronic heroine in our lives, allowing ourselves to be swept away in the Third Wave's tide.

The Byronic heroine, as we have noted, is unnatural. She is the product of performative gender, of stretching genders norms, of upsetting the gender binary. She is admirable in her strength, noteworthy in her vigor, but ultimately, she is endangered. While fiction presents Byronic heroines as prosperous and fruitful, these literary representations have yet to experience as much success off the page. Contemporary interpretations of the innate, understood division between genders may reject the tight vice of culturally constructed traditional gender roles, favoring the elimination of the binary and the classification of gender based on preferences instead. However, these options are not much of an improvement, and they hardly offer a foolproof future for those who embrace them.

While the Third Wave has made huge strides in shaping the derogatory language surrounding women, in asserting reproductive rights, and in bringing awareness to rape culture and sexual violence, the Third Wave's push for the breakdown of the gender binary cannot be seen as a success thus far. The acquisition of inherently male characteristics by a female is

dangerous, and ultimately it will, as is evident even in fiction, lead to damaging ends. While postmodernists and Third Wave feminists parade their right to redefine and recreate ourselves every day, there is freedom comes in a predetermined gender. Genders are biological, and while we will always struggle defining a true gender from the culturally conceived idea of gender, the two are not separate entities completely.

Appendix 1: Power Struggle in the Classroom.

Education has become such an invaluable part of the feminist manifesto due to the ineffective, oppressive history of education in the United States. Since the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, and well before that when the wheels of feminism were just beginning to turn, women involved in the movement understood the pressing need to educate other women due to a school system that was terribly flawed. June Purvis writes that “feminists throughout history have identified education as a critical arena for their emancipation and for social justice.”²⁰⁴ Education has, therefore, been both the means of oppression and of freedom for the feminist. While this avenue does allow feminists the ability to share their own cause, the education system has, and still does, worry a great deal of feminists. According to many, the power structures of the classroom disable any form of unbiased learning,²⁰⁵ and the Second Wave analyzed and emphasized the shortcomings of the school system: “Attention was placed on studying what teachers do in schools to discourage girls, such as not calling on them as often as boys or not giving them the opportunity to correct their mistakes before moving on to someone else (usually a boy).”²⁰⁶ The article concludes that ultimately, “Researchers. . . began to consider the possibility that what were taken to be gender neutral and unbiased methods of assessment might actually favor boys over girls.”²⁰⁷ This dissecting of the classroom has evolved in the Third Wave, and now feminists believe that “a classroom can never be a safe environment, as second wave feminists tried to make it, for there are too many power issues involved.”²⁰⁸ Therefore, feminists are eschewing the very place that should act as a sanctuary for little girls due to the innate, unavoidable power structures in place that subjugate and oppress females.

²⁰⁴ Purvis, June. “Feminist Theory in Education.” 137.

²⁰⁵ Baumgardener and Richards. 17.

²⁰⁶ “Feminist Theory in Education.” Ed. Eugene F. Provenzo. N.pag.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

Around the middle of the twentieth century, feminists finally began to understand the disservice done to their entire gender through the classroom setting,²⁰⁹ and they began to seek once again to transform education into a tool, not of oppression, but for their own empowerment and emancipation.

Appendix 2: The History of *Nancy Drew*.

Many assert that such a shift in fiction as the change of Byronic fate is impossible to credit to the feminist agenda, but to deny that the feminists' movements have had an influence on pop culture is to deny history. A brief look at the *Nancy Drew* series, which almost spans both the First and Second Wave, offers a quick glimpse of the profound impact of feminism. Nancy Drew first appears on page in 1930, only ten years after women were finally given the right to vote. Despite Edward Stratemeyer, the creator of both the *Nancy Drew* and the *Hardy Boys* series, believing that a woman's place was in the home, he realized that just as young boys loved the Hardy brothers, so too were young girls clamoring for a strong, independent role model.²¹⁰ Thus, Nancy is born feisty, precocious, and sassy. She has limitless resources, talents, and mysteries to solve. Though she is well versed in the domestic arts, such as sewing and cooking, and thereby sufficiently fulfills her expected gender role, Nancy Drew's appeal comes from her life outside of the home. Sally Parry notes that "despite her traditionally feminine attributes, such as good looks, a variety of clothes for all social occasions, and an awareness of good housekeeping," Nancy is often "praised for her seemingly masculine traits [S]he operates best independently, has the freedom and money to do as she pleases, and outside of a telephone call or two home, seems to live for solving mysteries rather than participating in family life."²¹¹

²⁰⁹ As seen in the Second Wave's push for classroom reform, with extreme theories suggesting that the position of the lecturer should never be a male in an attempt to fight against the male-centric classroom environment.

²¹⁰ Johnson, Deidre. *Edward Stratemeyer and the Stratemeyer Syndicate*. 12.

²¹¹ Parry, Sally. Sherrie, Inness, ed. *Nancy Drew and Company: Culture, Gender, and Girls' Series*. 148.

Nancy's world is two-fold: adventure and domesticity, and somehow, the combination worked to launch the *Nancy Drew* books to the top of the bestseller's list. Seemingly, the large strides made for women in the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment only fanned the feminist flames burning in a younger generation.

However, as culture shifted and the series continued to sell well, Nancy soon needed a makeover. The *Nancy Drew* series experienced a serious overhaul in the 1960s as the Second Wave just began to rumble beneath the surface. After World War II ended in 1945, America experienced a dramatic uprising in domesticity. Women, previously forced to work to maintain the country's output while men were fighting at war, now fled back to their homes, choosing the solace of motherhood and marriage. This trend, combined with the growing consciousness that contributed to several concerns of the Second Wave, resulted in the rewriting of several elements of the book, including Nancy's character. Racism, a large criticism of the early part of the series, was eradicated from the books by simply removing all non-white characters, such as replacing the previous housemaid, Beulah, who was initially described as an elderly, African-American woman, with Anna, a chipper, plump maid.²¹² In addition to addressing the racial complaints, Nancy's strong-willed character became a concern. Having not yet seen the efforts of many of the Second Wave leading feminists, many women contributed to the growing outcry against Nancy's fiercely independent nature, which shattered the illusions, or mystique, that defined their lives. Women still felt bound and defined by their traditional gender roles, and they thought that Nancy ought to adhere to them as well. Geoffrey Lapin addresses the resulting shift in Nancy's character: "The strong-willed teen was having her personality diluted, causing her to lose her characteristic independence, making Nancy Drew more docile, conventional, and

²¹² Rehak, Melanie. *Girl Sleuth: Nancy Drew and the Women Who Created Her*. 248.

demure.”²¹³ Luckily, this shift of character is only temporary for Nancy. By 1980 the series experienced one last rewrite, resulting in the spunk and ferocity being put back into the leading lady as she was now “more like. . . [the] original heroine than any since 1956,”²¹⁴ almost directly correlating with the efforts and emphases of the Second Wave. Clearly, feminism can have an influence on gender roles, popular fiction, and cultural climates.

²¹³ Lapin, Geoffrey. “The Ghost of Nancy Drew.” *Books at Iowa*. n.pag.

²¹⁴ Caprio, Betsy. *The Mystery of Nancy Drew: Girl Sleuth on the Couch*. 27.

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