

## Junior Research Associate Scheme 2022 - Student Application Form

JRA projects can take place on campus or online as long as you follow the government and University Covid guidance in place at the time. Due to the pandemic, it is possible that projects will have to be undertaken remotely if the situation changes before summer. Please ensure you include in your application how you would adapt to online research and supervision, should that be required.

Before completing this form, please ensure you have read and understood the Conditions of Award and Further Information for the Junior Research Associate Scheme 2022 (JRA), and have read [the applicant guidance on the website](#) carefully.

When completed, this form should be sent to [undergraduate-research@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:undergraduate-research@sussex.ac.uk) along with the following documents:

1. **Academic CV** - this should focus on your academic experience and be no more than two sides of A4. It must include all modules and grades.
2. **Academic Reference**
3. **Proposed Research Supervisor Statement**

Both the Academic Reference form and the Proposed Research Supervisor Statement form can be downloaded from the [JRA Application Pack webpage](#). If your referee or supervisor does not want to disclose their statement to you, they can be sent separately to [undergraduate-research@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:undergraduate-research@sussex.ac.uk).

The submission deadline is **12:00 noon on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2022**. Incomplete and/or late applications will not be accepted.

If you need further information or have any queries please email [undergraduate-research@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:undergraduate-research@sussex.ac.uk).

1. About you			
Are you a First Generation Scholar? (delete as appropriate) <i>NOTE: This is not a selection criterion</i>			No
Name:		Student registration number:	
Year of study:	2	School of study:	Media, Arts and Humanities
Department/Subject Area:	English Literature		
Email:		Telephone:	
Address:			
2. About your research			
Name of your proposed supervisor:		Name of your Mentor, if you have one: <i>Your mentor is usually a PhD student or Postdoc who offers additional support. If not known now, their details can be added later.</i>	N/A
School of your proposed supervisor:	Media, Arts and Humanities		
Full title of your research:	'I loved her, and destroyed her': the vampiric bite of Lord Byron in <i>Manfred</i> and <i>Sardanapalus</i> .		
Research Summary: <i>Must be short and non-technical; max 150 words</i>	The Romantic period has been regarded by scholars as a laboratory for gender experimentation. Within this scholarship, Lord Byron is frequently revered for transgressing gender categories in his work. It is my contention, however, that Romantic conceptions of gender were more nuanced and less liberatory than such criticism acknowledges. Therefore, my thesis aims to complicate understandings of gender and romanticism by analysing Byron's constructions of femininity in <i>Manfred</i> (1817) and <i>Sardanapalus</i> (1821). More specifically, this study will re-evaluate Byron as an anti-feminist – and frankly dangerous – writer. By contrasting Byron's brutal oppression of women in <i>Manfred</i> against the		

	<p>progressive models of femininity present in <i>Sardanapalus</i>, this research will raise an important question: why might Byron's construction of gender have shifted so notably between 1817 and 1821? One explanation, I will suggest, lies in the emergence of the Byronic vampire as a dangerous depiction of Byron's anti-feminist allure.</p>
<p><b>Online delivery:</b> Outline how the JRA research and supervision will be undertaken virtually, either as the expected mode or the fall-back if Covid rules change and online research and supervision is required. Max. 100 words</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to the University of Sussex's online library, from which most of my readings and research will be drawn.</li> <li>• £200 for additional texts, including but not limited to <i>Romanticism and Gender</i>, by Anne K. Mellor</li> <li>• Weekly Zoom meetings with my tutor to discuss my progress, work through any challenges that may arise, open additional lines of thought up for exploration, and share my excitement for literature and Romanticism!</li> <li>• Mutually agreed goals and deadlines with my tutor in order to enhance my time management and organisational skills.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Motivation:</b> What is your motivation for undertaking a JRA research project? How will it benefit you / your future plans? Max. 200 words</p>	<p>English Literature encourages innovation. I've had the freedom to refract literary texts through theoretical lenses of my own choosing. When refracted through a critical lens, a single text becomes kaleidoscopic. While this is exciting, both academically and personally, it makes observing tight wordcounts challenging. I'm left feeling that my essays, although convincing, are too short to adequately capture the ever-spinning carousel of literature, history, politics, and theory. 1,500 words allow for the construction of a slim (and often one-dimensional) argument. However, they leave little room for a pioneering thesis, especially one which argues against a well sketched out critical field. For example, in my essay, 'Constructions of Femininity in <i>Manfred</i>', I was forced to close down several interesting avenues of thought. I'd love to explore these avenues as a JRA, in order to test and thus strengthen my argument.</p> <p>I'm also hoping to undertake a PhD in English literature; working as a JRA would help me to develop the research skills necessary for this endeavour. I'm particularly excited by the idea of sharing one-to-one conversations with an academic expert, as this would enhance my verbal communication skills, challenge my ability to think on my feet, and bolster my academic confidence.</p>
<p><b>Full Research Proposal/Statement:</b> Max. 1,500 words</p>	<p>The Romantic period has been regarded by scholars as a laboratory for gender experimentation. Richard Sha, for example, celebrates Romantic writers for making eroticism a space 'for thinking about mutuality rather than hierarchy'<sup>1</sup> and posits that science transformed sexuality into 'a site for liberation'.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, Thomas Laqueur celebrates the Romantics for resisting hierarchical histories of gender and promoting instead a model of complementarity.<sup>3</sup> Within this scholarship, Lord Byron is often revered for transgressing gender categories with enlightened flamboyance. Indeed, Susan Wolfson persuasively argues that Byron put 'extraordinary public pressure on questions of gender'.<sup>4</sup> It is my contention,</p>

<sup>1</sup> Richard Sha, *Perverse Romanticism: Aesthetics and Sexuality in Britain, 1750-1832* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2009), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

<sup>4</sup> Susan Wolfson, "'A Problem Few Dare Imitate': Sardanapalus and 'Effeminate Character'", *ELH*, 58.4 (1991), p. 867.

however, that Romantic conceptions of gender were more nuanced and less liberatory than current criticism acknowledges. Therefore, my thesis aims to complicate understandings of gender and romanticism, leading scholars away from their critical covenant. More specifically, I will rethink Romantic ideas of gender by looking at two of Byron's popular works. First, I will examine the females in *Manfred* (1817),<sup>5</sup> revealing them to be brutally oppressed. Second, I will analyse Byron's progressive constructions of femininity in *Sardanapalus* (1821).<sup>6</sup> Naturally, when one writer produces two antithetical texts, questions arise. Why, for example, might Byron's construction of gender have transformed so entirely between 1817 and 1821? One explanation, I will suggest, lies in the emergence of the Byronic vampire as a dangerous depiction of Byron's anti-feminist allure.

My research will begin by examining Manfred's dead lover Astarte, using Shelley's 'Essay on Love' (1818)<sup>7</sup> as a critical lens. For Shelley, romantic love is essentially narcissistic. I will argue that Byron's presentation of love in *Manfred* conforms to this pattern, with Astarte serving as an idealised reflection of her lover. Additionally, I will suggest that Astarte embodies the conceptualisation of the beautiful that Burke presents in *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757),<sup>8</sup> thereby epitomising nineteenth-century beauty ideals. Alas, the ideal and the real are incongruous; only in death can Astarte embody Manfred's desires. Thus, Manfred brings about her destruction, declaring: 'I loved her, and destroyed her!' (II, ii, 117). For what Byron most fears, I will conclude, is domination by women.

I will then turn to examine the Witch of the Alps, drawing on Jan Machielsen's article "On the Confessional Uses and History of Witchcraft",<sup>9</sup> to illuminate the ways in which *Manfred* plays into the historical scapegoating of convention-defying women as witches. Moreover, I will suggest that by presenting the authoritative female as a witch, Byron constructs feminine power as a subversion of nature. Here, I will highlight the temporal proximity of *Manfred*'s first publication and the final legal witch burning, arguing that for a contemporary readership the danger of being found guilty of witchcraft lingered. I will subsequently suggest that by conflating feminine power and witchcraft, Byron warns women against asserting dominance over men. Strengthening this argument, I will read Byron's resurrection of witchcraft in *Manfred* as an instance of *The Uncanny*,<sup>10</sup> using Nicholas Royle's text to inform my analysis.

Section three will focus on Byron's presentation of nature, which he genders female. In a close reading of the following passage (taken from Manfred's discussion with the Witch) I will argue that 'mother Earth' (II, i, 107) serves as yet another woman for the male subject to possess:

The face of the Earth hath madden'd me, and I  
Take refuge in her mysteries, and pierce

<sup>5</sup> Lord Byron, *Manfred* (London: John Murray, 1817).

<sup>6</sup> Lord Byron, *Sardanapalus: A Tragedy* (London: John Murray, 1824).

<sup>7</sup> Percy Shelley, *On Love*, in *Shelley's Prose*, ed. David Clark (London: HarperCollins, 1988).

<sup>8</sup> Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, Fifth Edition (London: J. Dodsley, 1767).

<sup>9</sup> Jan Machielsen, "On the Confessional Uses and History of Witchcraft: Thomas Stapleton's 1594 Witchcraft Oration", *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft*, 13.3 (2018).

<sup>10</sup> Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

To the abodes of those who govern her –

(II, ii, 39–41).

Here, I will note that it is Manfred's penetration of Mother Earth what allows him to access his own 'unfathom'd thought' (II, ii, 144).<sup>11</sup> Thus, I will assert, the female becomes a site of male colonisation. Moreover, I will explore Frederick Garber's claim that wherever Manfred looks 'he finds himself mirrored, either in the heavens with the star, or in the Alps with its "blasted pines"',<sup>12</sup> drawing the conclusion that by supplanting feminine nature with the imaginings of the male psyche, Byron skilfully regenders the earth male, expunging yet another female from discourse.

Having explored the females in *Manfred*, I will look now at Byron's presentation of gender in *Sardanapalus*. This section will scrutinise the effeminate king Sardanapalus, using Byron's first stage direction - 'Enter SARDANAPALUS effeminately dressed [...]' (I, i, 2) - as a launchpad for discussion. I will argue that Byron's presentation of Sardanapalus as womanish challenged the rigid gender categories of Romantic convention. In fact, drawing on George Mosse's account *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* for context,<sup>13</sup> I will suggest that Byron's Sardanapalus constituted a new model for the ideal man. This section will conclude that in his creation of a feminine hero, Byron idealises effeminacy as a progressive humanitarianism.

Section five will focus on the character Myrrha, a slave-girl of the harem. Using the symbol of the harem as a starting point, I will expose Myrrha as the embodiment of female devotion to a male master, arguing that that this polarisation of 'tyrant' and 'slave' directly links *Sardanapalus* to *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.<sup>14</sup> My exploration will then move to consider Byron's representation of Myrrha as a substitute for the male warrior. Invested with huge symbolic power, Myrrha emerges as a Hellenic heroine: a leader of men and a signifier of liberation.<sup>15</sup> Crying through the voice of the king that the 'slave deserves to share a throne' (V, iv, 197), Byron raises men and women to sit together in equality; such progressive conceptions of gender in *Sardanapalus*, I will conclude, contrast starkly with those presented in *Manfred*.

Section six will investigate the emergence of the Byronic vampire as an explanation for Byron's reconfiguration of gender in *Sardanapalus*. I will begin by outlining this new breed of vampire (once bloodsucking revenant, now Byronic hero), attributing its metamorphosis to John Polidori's novel *The Vampyre* (1819),<sup>16</sup> in which Lord Ruthven is based on Byron's persona. By analysing the similarities between Ruthven and Byron, focusing particularly upon their 'irresistible powers of seduction' (20), I will invite the reader to regard them as dangerous doubles. But why, I will ask, would Polidori seek to deface Byron? The

<sup>11</sup> Erin Sheley, "Demolished Worlds: Manfred and Sublime (Un)burial", *The Byron Journal*, 40.1 (2012), p. 55.

<sup>12</sup> Frederick Garber, 'Continuing *Manfred*', in Robert Gleckner (ed.), *Critical Essays on Lord Byron* (New York: G. K. Hall, 1991), p. 243.

<sup>13</sup> George Mosse, *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>14</sup> Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (Harlow: Penguin Books, 2004).

<sup>15</sup> Stacey Schmiesing, "Sardanapalus and Gender: Examining Gender in the Works of Byron and Delacroix", *Theses and Dissertations* (2015), p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> John Polidori, "The Vampyre" in *The Modern Oedipus: Collected Fiction of John William Polidori* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994).

answer: Byron had publicly attacked Polidori, whose revenge novel *The Vampyre* subsequently sought to expose Byron as a vampiric predator.<sup>17</sup>

Section seven will explore the warnings issued by the Byronic vampire, supporting Simon Bainbridge's claim that Polidori uses 'vampirism to figure the perceived threat of the Byronic text to its readers'.<sup>18</sup> I will explore Bainbridge's argument by highlighting the Byronic features with which Ruthven is imbued, paying special attention to his 'winning tongue' (29) and exploitation of women. I will note that Polidori's women are complicit in their own destruction, as is exemplified by Miss Aubrey when she 'glut[s] the thirst of a VAMPYRE' (p. x). By analysing the verb 'glut' as a lustful term, I will highlight the eagerness with which Miss Aubrey is seduced. Furthermore, I will argue that her sexual eagerness mirrors female responses to Byron's poetry,<sup>19</sup> thereby revealing Byromania to be a vampiric phenomenon that feeds off the sexually-repressed female reader.

My thesis will conclude that having been accused of sexual predation in *The Vampyre*, Byron wrote *Sardanapalus* as a counterclaim, in which he attempted to reshape the Byronic model of gender. Perhaps this reconfiguration indicated a genuine change in Byron's perception of women, or maybe it was just a defensive parry. In any case, it is the purpose of this research to undermine critical conceptions of Byron's earlier works (like *Manfred*) as gender transgressive. Rather, this study re-evaluates Byron as an anti-feminist – and frankly dangerous – writer, who poses a real threat to his female readers. It is my hope that this essay will help us to re-understand Romantic conceptions of gender, while simultaneously teaching women to resist the deceptive allure of the Byronic hero-villain, lest they continue to flaunt his glittering manacles of misogyny like trophies.

#### **Bibliography:**

Bainbridge, Simon, 'Lord Ruthven's Power: Polidori's 'The Vampyre', Doubles and the Byronic Imagination', *The Byron Journal*, 34.1 (2006), 21-34 < [http://l-adam-mekler.com/bainbridge\\_polidori.pdf](http://l-adam-mekler.com/bainbridge_polidori.pdf) > [accessed 13 March 2022]

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<sup>17</sup> Sam George and Bill Hughes, editors. *Open Graves, Open Minds: Representations of Vampires and the Undead from the Enlightenment to the Present Day* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), p. 30.

<sup>18</sup> Simon Bainbridge, 'Lord Ruthven's Power: Polidori's 'The Vampyre', Doubles and the Byronic Imagination', *The Byron Journal*, 34.1 (2006), pp. 23-24.

<sup>19</sup> Monika Coghen, 'Lord Byron and the Metamorphoses of Polidori's Vampyre', *Studia Litteraria Universitatis Jagellonicae Cracoviensis*, 6.1 (2011), p. 34.

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### **Project timeline:**

#### **Before JRA:**

Re-read:

- *Romanticism and Feminism.*
- *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman.*

**Week 1:**

- Re-read *Manfred*, 4 hours.
- Read texts cited in *Manfred* sections of proposal, 2.5 days
- Read further essays on *Manfred*, 2 days.
- Plan *Manfred* section, 4 hours.

**Week 2:**

- Write and reference *Manfred* sections, 3 days.
- Catch-up, 1 day.
- Tutor meeting to discuss progress.
- Read *Sardanapalus*, 1 day.

**Week 3:**

- Read texts cited in *Sardanapalus* sections of proposal, 2 days.
- Read further essays on *Sardanapalus*, 1.5 days.
- Research Nike and Helen, 1 day.
- Plan *Sardanapalus* sections, 4 hours.

**Week 4:**

- Catch-up, 1 day.
- Write and reference *Sardanapalus* sections, 2 days.
- Tutor meeting to develop ideas.
- Read *The Vampyre*, 2 days.

**Week 5:**

- Read essays on *The Vampyre*, 2.5 days.
- Plan vampire sections, 4 hours.
- Write and reference vampire sections, 2 days.

**Week 6:**

- Catch-up, 1 day.
- Tutor meeting.
- Edit project, 2 days.
- Write and reference introduction and conclusion, 1 day.

**Week 7:**

- Submit draft to tutor.
- Pick out important findings, 1 day.
- Write abstract to guide poster, 4 hours.
- Create and polish poster, 3 days.

**Week 8:**

- Tutor feedback meeting.
- Further edits, 3 days.
- Complete bibliography, 1 day.
- Final polish, 1 day.

[1499 words, excluding references]

<p><b>Widening Participation Statement (Optional):</b>  Max. 250 words  See the <a href="#">JRA website</a> for guidance on writing a WP statement.</p>	
<p><b>Ethical Approval</b>  Does this research require ethical approval? If you are unsure, please refer to Sussex's <a href="#">self-assessment checklist</a>. If your project does require ethical approval, it will be your responsibility to ensure such approval is attained before the JRA project commences.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p><b>Fieldwork</b>  Does your research involve fieldwork away from the university campus? Any students wishing to undertake off-campus fieldwork must ensure that they attain ethical approval for the proposed fieldwork and must subsequently complete the necessary risk and insurance applications. If your fieldwork takes you outside of the UK, you will need to apply for insurance</p>	<p>N/A</p>



<p>cover. For more information on the University's insurance policy, please consult the University's <a href="#">Travel Risk Assessment webpages</a>. (Note: this does not involve trips to museums and archives).</p>	
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If you have any questions regarding this form please email [undergraduate-research@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:undergraduate-research@sussex.ac.uk)