The Dark Side of Imagination: Horror Literature as a Sacred Space

by

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Abstract:

This work analyzes the history, themes, and tropes of various monsters within horror literature. From these themes, the figure of the monster can be deconstructed, revealing the hidden meanings behind their development and perpetuation in our society. Various psychoanalytic theories are used to understand the ontological construction of the monster, arguing that monsters are imperative in communicating the ways in which we construct and align the concept of the self. Also, several sociological theories are employed to understand the perpetuation of the monster, arguing that monsters are indicative of the social ills of a particular society or culture. Specifically, zombies are a reflection of our fear of death and our increasing tendency towards nihilism. Furthermore, werewolves reflect a basal fear of our own emotions, reveal our tendency to separate reason from emotion, and expose our fear of the "other." Finally, these stories have the potential impact our society, as analyzed in the development, perpetuation, and abuse of folklore and fairytales in modern German culture. This work can be used to further analyze the complex relationship between language, literature, and culture.

"Everything you can imagine is real." – Pablo Picasso

I remember the first time that I had my breath taken away by a sacred space. It was during a study abroad trip that I took in my undergraduate studies after my freshman year. When we walked up to the Basilica de Santa Maria Sopra Minerva, I was completely underwhelmed by its plain exterior. A simple white wall, three circular windows, and a large wooden door were the only demarcations indicating that this building was somehow different than the other shops that followed the street. An impressive sculpture by Bernini stood outside of the white walls. The ornate elephant obelisk was adorned with hieroglyphics and acted as a sentry, signifying that something special was waiting beyond the aged oak door.

Walking through the threshold, I completely lost my breath. The vaulted ceiling reached towards the heavens as the star-studded roof seemed to gaze back at me. Swirls of blue and gold captivated my gaze. The intricate sculptures feigned life and reverberated with beauty. The paintings were exceptionally detailed and complex. This Gothic cathedral showed me firsthand what it was like to be rendered speechless in the presence of a sacred space.

Since then, I have been into countless cathedrals, churches, and synagogues. I have travelled to ancient pagan ruins and temples dedicated to various gods and goddesses. They all are buildings built for the explicit purpose of communicating the divine through its architecture.

They are an attempt to bring heaven to earth. The sacraments are an outwardly expression of grace in which the individual uses his or her whole body in worship. Icons are helpful tools to help connect one to the divine. This was drastically different than anything I had ever experienced before.

 Growing up in low-church Protestantism, the physical space of the service was never of great concern to the pastorate. The central focus of the service was on the sacred words being preached from Scripture. In fact, many people expressed disdain for the iconography of the various saints that adorned the Catholic cathedrals. Authority in the Protestant tradition, as I was taught, is invested in the word of God alone (hence, *Sola Scriptura*). As I was coming to grips with the dichotomy between these two ways of thinking, a new thought emerged: one of the key differences between these two ways of thinking was the way the tradition viewed sacred spaces.

In my mind, I began to ask one simple question: what is a sacred space? A sacred space is not just a building. It is the story about the building. It is the difference between a house and a home: one is four walls and a roof, while the other is made of stories. Phantom memories reside and permeate the wooden beams of these places, and from thus they take their transcendent quality. It is from the stories that we tell that these edifices are imbued with the divine. Stories use familiarity with the mundane to communicate ideology. Also, we've been enamored with stories from an early age.

One of the fondest memories of childhood was being told stories before bedtime. Growing up, we are exposed to stories of various kinds. We are told that Santa Claus will come to bring us presents if we are good little children, but we will be brought coal if we did not behave. We were told that we shouldn't talk to strangers, because they could be dangerous. We were told that a man named Jesus came down from heaven, was brutally tortured and killed for our sins, and then resurrected and went to back to heaven, promising to inevitably return. These narratives

have different purposes and they all have various degrees of validity to them. They are told to us from an early age, partially in an attempt to modify our behavior. Other stories bind us to a particular place. For example, when one is told a ghost story about a random bar in the middle of downtown, he or she gains a sense of solidarity through history and intrigue. When the community is told that a miracle occurred in a particular spot, entire pilgrimages are orchestrated and undertaken in order to gain a deeper sense of meaning and to connect to the divine. When we are told that, as a result of our prayers, a person was miraculously healed or otherwise affected, we create a further bind to that community. Stories drive our actions.

As such, we are creatures driven by narrative. Every single one of us tells stories, whether to ourselves or to others. And we've been doing this for a long time. Despite his incredibly Victorian attitude towards non-Western cultures, Edwin Sidney Hartland has something profound to say about the art and evolution of story telling. In his work, *The Science of Fairy Tales*, he writes, "The art of storytelling has been cultivated in all ages and among all nations of which we have any record; it is the outcome of an instinct implanted universally in the human mind."[1]Every society throughout all of recorded history has made sense of the world around them by telling stories. Some narratives were born out of the necessity of education. The earliest humans had to communicate their experiences through language in order to survive. Personal, oral histories were given to instruct, educate, and perhaps even entertain. Stories were used in the earliest of religious rituals, as a way of mediating the divine. Stories developed to explain the world around us. These narratives were infused with a sense of orderliness and creation. Whether it's the account of יהוה (YHWH) creating and ordering the universe by speaking and breathing, or the violent account of Marduk organizing the universes from Tiamat's torn body in

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[1] Edwin Sidney Hartland. *The Science of Fairytales: An Inquiry into Fairy Mythology*, Walter Scott: London. 1891. Print.

Enuma Elis, we see that the earliest accounts of explaining the order of the universe appealed to a higher, transcendent source. These stories then become internalized, and thus we identify ourselves and our role in the world by them. And this is true even for us today.

If media-driven services such as Netflix, Hulu, and podcasts tell us anything, it is that we are avid consumers of stories. All around us, we are surrounded by the constant flow of narratives. These narratives can tell us things about this world. They can reveal deep injustices, horrific circumstances, or small vestiges of romance. The narratives can also transport us to faraway lands, galaxies, or even universes. They tell us grand adventures of love, loss, hope, despair, and perseverance through adversities. They reveal our deepest fears, desires, and wishes for society and ourselves. But if these stories are a reflection of who we are as human beings, then what exactly do these stories reveal about us?

First of all, as we begin to answer this question, we must acknowledge the symbiotic relationship between stories and their authors. Humans make culture. We paint beautiful pieces of artwork. We write books, poems, blogs, and screenplays. We act, we sing, and we thrive all the more because of these things. Humans create culture, but in the process, culture also begins to shape and form us as well. We become influenced by the very thing that we are creating. Subtly, we are reshaping our own identities through the art we create around us. Narratives are no exception to this. We write intricate, beautiful, and even melancholic stories about the world. We write of our own experiences, allowing them to shape the trajectory of the words on the page and the subtle nuances that our hands allow. Over generations, we allow those words to dwell with us, to invade the sacred spaces within our minds. As we respond to the text, we permit those simple strokes of ink to then evoke strong emotional responses. Even if we are aware that the work is fiction, that doesn't stop us from investing ourselves into the narrative and then responding to the text according to our own instinct and experiences (as evidenced by

the enormous amount of fan fiction that exists). All stories are a reflection of their author, and conversely, all authors are a reflection of their stories. Likewise, all cultures are a reflection of their populations, and all people are reflections of their culture. To illustrate this, we must now look at how exactly a work in culture begins to shape us. The sculptor of our behavior seems to come down to ideology.

Ideology has been an integral driving force behind the events of history. But what exactly is ideology, and how does it shape who we are? According to Louis Althusser, ideology "represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence."[2] Simply stated, the Real, according to Jacque Lacan, is the state of being which exists outside of the realm of the Symbolic, or language. The closest that we come to inhabiting this realm is when we are infants. There is nothing but need, and infants seek to satisfy this need. To the infant, there is no sense of separation between itself and the external world. It is only with the entrance into language that we are now gifted with a double-edged sword. Now equipped with language, we are now able to communicate with one another.

However, we are now forever severed from the Real, as the realm of the Symbolic (language) cannot truly express the Real. The Real now is mediated and filtered through language, to which we are now confined. We are now discontent with our separation from the Real, yet we cannot return from it, despite our best language. As Slavoj Žižek wrote, the Real is "the irreducible kernel of jouissance [physical or intellectual pleasure] that resists all symbolization."[3] Thus, we now use the realms of the Symbolic and the Imaginary to attempt to return to the Real. The Imaginary is concerned with demands rather than desire. This means that the realm of the

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[2] Louis Althusser. *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays.* Trans. Ben Brewster. New York: Monthly Review P, 2001. p. 109

[3] Slavoj Žižek. *The Undergrowth of Enjoyment: How Popular Culture can Serve as an Introduction to Lacan*, in E. Wright and E. Wright (eds.) The Žižek Reader, Oxford: Blackwell. 1999. p. 14

Imaginary is already marked by its impossibility. We can no longer return to a state unmediated by language, in which there is no distinction between subjects and objects. Since we can no longer return to the Real, we thus create fantasies to fill this sense of lack. Thus, if Althusser's second thesis of ideology is correct, and ideology has a material existence,[4] then literature becomes the perfect playground for the imaginary to grasp towards the Real.

Let me explain by using the example of memory. Once a person leaves our sight, all that remains in our psyche is an imprinted image of that person, who is then made into the object of critical and subjective analysis (an example of which is our emotional response to memories). The memory is then encoded into our minds, where it is stored to be later used. Similarly, it is only when we stop reading and speaking that we retain an imprint of ideology, no matter how faded and distorted it may be. This is when one ideology has the potential to branch into an endless web of ideas and philosophies, due to the subjective nature of interpretation. However, the continuous imprinting of new information, while not complete and whole within the imprint itself, still manifests itself slightly through our psyche. These symbols that we use have already been mediated through language as we read, and then once again through the imaginary order of our interpretation. These subtle imaginary imprintings, when paired with more boisterous and appealing imprints, help to form a particular set of beliefs, or worldview. It is with our conscious experience with the material world, through our perceptions acquired through our senses, that the imprints, whether we accept or reject them, become the basis for self-identification. Thus, through the interpretation and communication of ideas, we are stifled and consigned to reside in a realm of symbols.

So then, what hope do we have in understanding anything if it is all mediated through language? French philosopher Jacques Derrida believed that writing was not a secondary way of

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[4] Ibid. 112

communicating language; in fact, written symbols are powerful ways of communicating, not to be considered secondary or inferior to oral language. In fact, Derrida asserts that it is unavoidable to consider language without context.[5] All language, whether verbal, non-verbal, or written, is mediated through some contextual means. Context is always a presupposition of language; the context of our condition of existence is a perpetual dependence on definite language. We expect the words that we say to communicate the reality that we experience, but, paradoxically, the reality that we experience can only be understood through language. Therefore, if Derrida is correct in asserting that "there is no outside text" [*Il n'y a pas de hors-texte*],[6] then what sense is there in trying to communicate any meaning of the Real? For example, I can bite into the flesh of a grape. I can note its taste, texture, and the overall sensation that it brings to me. Even before I've spoken, however, I use language to describe such an experience. So, how can we ever hope to communicate the essence of what it means to simply eat a grape? Rather than simply attempting to create a univocal system of language in an attempt to assuage confusion[7], the answer lies in the nature of the Symbolic.

In his psychoanalytic theory, Lacan believed that language is "the pact which links…subjects together in one action. The human action *par excellence* is originally founded on the existence of the world of the symbol, namely on laws and contracts."[8] In using the symbolic language available to us, we attempt to reach towards the Real. By examining the narratives that we tell, we can perhaps get a glance at what is Real. Or, perhaps more interestingly, we could get a peek

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[5] Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc., Afterword: Toward an Ethic of Discussion.* Trans. Samuel Weber (Northwestern University Press: 1988.) p. 136.

[6] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. G. Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 158

[7] For a critique of such an effort, I recommend *Aquinas: Selected Philosophical Writings* (Oxford University Press: 1993) p. 224

[8] Lacan, Jacques. *Freud's Papers on Technique 1953-1954.* The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book 1. Trans. John Forrester. Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. (New York: Norton). 1991.

as to what *we believe* is Real. We can begin to see how our ideologies regulate and mediate the relationship between the visible and invisible. [9] In this way, the text itself becomes sacred, as it sets apart invisible ideas and transcribes them into the visible.

Literature, in all of its forms, acts as a sacred space. While the sacred is typically restricted to rituals performed in certain physical spaces, literature subverts and compacts the sacred space through the use of written language. Thus, the written word becomes a sacred arena through which we interact. Literature is inherently sacred, as it transposes the intangible transcendent, mediated through the immaterial psychical realm, into the physical world of ink and paper. Then, it is mediated once again through the psychical as interpretation and imagination reckon with what we encounter. The transcendent then becomes larger and realer than before. Our imagination works itself "by games of mirroring, of duplication, of reversed identification and projection, always in the mode of the double."[10] What we write is indicative of what we perceive to be true about the Real. Fiction, even if espousing secular and profane language, is still inundated with the sacred. Fiction cannot escape notions of the divine, as Eliade wrote, "even the most desacralized existence still preserves traces of a religious valorization of the world."[11] If the fiction we write tells us what we believe about the reality of the world, then what does the construction of the monster tell us about ourselves, the world around us, and the transcendent other?

Monsters have been a staple of fiction literature. From childhood, we are given stories about princes who slay fearsome dragons and grotesque monsters. We are told fantastical tales of lofty

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[9] Žižek, Slavoj. *Mapping Ideology: The Spectre of Ideology.* London, New York: Verso. 2003

[10] Gilles Deleuze. *Desert Islands And Other Texts 1953-1974: How Do We Recognize Structuralism.* 172. Trans: On the concept of a pure, unextended spatium, see Deleuze, Difference et repetition (Paris: PUF, 1968), pp. 296-297, Difference and Repetition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 229-231.

[11] Mircea Eliade. *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion.* Trans. Willard R. Trask. New York: Harcourt. 1959. P. 22

castles, beautiful princesses, and kindly kings. In those same worlds, however, dwell more sinister creatures. Trolls, witches, vampires, goblins, ghouls, ogres, orcs, nymphs, mermaids, krakens, and yetis are just a handful of the nefarious creatures that roam about our literary worlds. Their threats are always taken seriously, and often, their eradication or containment is crucial for peace and prosperity to rule the land once again. Monsters are simultaneously fascinating and frightening. The monster is the one who devours. Zombies feast upon the brains of the living, instinctually grasping for the object of their desire. Vampires devour blood of their victims, often exuding hypersexual overtones. Werewolves devour commodities, such as sheep and other livestock, and they pose an enormous threat against human beings as well. Monsters seek to devour and destroy, while we seek to destroy them. The construction of the monster operates upon the assumption that peace is the ideal norm of society, and their existence is an interruption of harmony and goodwill.

Aside from destroying, however, monsters also reveal. The word for monster comes from the Latin root *monstrum,* which is derived from the Proto-Italic word *moneō,* which means "warning" or, more interestingly, "reminder." Monsters remind us of the darkness that we have forgotten. As a literary device, the monster plays a crucial role as the agitator of conflict, which the hero must strive to overcome. Through the journey of the hero, repressed conflicts are revealed both within and around the hero. In a comedy, these issues are typically resolved and the hero experiences growth. In a tradegy, however, these repressed conflicts are ultimitely the hero's demise. Without the monster, these conflicts would have never come to the light. These repressed conflicts would continue to remain unaddressed. The field of psychoanalysis provides a vital lens through which we can view the monster. Philosopher and self-proclaimed pyro-theologian Peter Rollins wrote, "It was Freud who pointed out how we can never really escape

these anxieties, that what we repress by day will haunt us by night."[12] Monsters reveal the desires and anxieties within our own psyches, even if we are often consciously unaware of them. Furthermore, Dr. David D. Gilmore, Professor of Anthropology at the State University of New York, wrote, "I think the immortal monster is irrefutable proof, if such were needed, for the existence of Freud's aggressive instinct, the reality of an impulse towards violence. …Since these nightmares are universal, they must reveal something about the human mind."[13] While monsters carry various connotations across cultures, their continued existence across these cultures reveal something hidden within our minds. My goal is to investigate just what this *something* could be.

Monsters are utlimately agents of light, illuminating and exposing the darkness within our own hearts, minds, and actions. This may sound religious in nature, and it very well should. This is the crux of my argument: literature, even in its most horrific and monstrous form, acts as a sacred space. Ghost stories, fairytales, and other forms of fiction invite us to receive a taste what cannot otherwise be experienced. Now, I am not saying that these stories are true, at least in the common understanding of the word. My goal is not to verify or falsify claims of the supernatural, but to simply examine the claims and what they tell about us as humanity and society. In this study, I will be using various psychological theories to understand the ontological construction of the monster, arguing that monsters are imperative in communicating the ways in which we construct and align the concept of the self. Also, I will be using several sociological theories to understand the perpetuation of the monster, arguing that monsters are indicative of the social ills of a particular society or culture.

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[12] Peter Rollins. *Insurrection: To Believe is Human, To Doubt, Divine.* (New York: Howard). 2011. P. 85. Print.
[13] David D. Gilmore. *Monsters: Evil Beings, Mythical Beasts and All Manner of Imaginary Terrors*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003

As such, in the first two sections of this thesis, I will analyze two monsters that are wildly popular in our culture: the zombie and the werewolf. I argue that zombies are a reflection of our fear of death and our increasing tendency towards nihilism. Furthermore, I argue that werewolves reflect a basal fear of our own emotions, reveal our tendency to separate reason from emotion, and expose our fear of the "other." Werewolves reveal our belief that emotions turn us into things that we previously did not know we were. They are not only projections of our fears and anxieties about the world, but also the willfully unknown within ourselves, within the deepest reaches of our psyche. Finally, in the last section, I argue that these stories have the potential impact our society, as I analyze the development, perpetuation, and abuse of folklore and fairytales in modern German culture. The stories that we tell matter, and monsters are a central part of our shared stories.

One final question arises, however: should we even try to explain monsters? Is it dangerous for us to deconstruct these characters of horror and intrigue? Should we let zombies and werewolves continue to run amok, personifying the very nature of evil? As a practical example, should we see Hitler as a manifestation of evil or as merely a product of cultural and social instigations, which shaped him into who he was? Because if we do that, if we see these monsters as products of our own culture rather than being born out of pure hatred and evil, then our anger and blame shifts, if only a little bit. Are we at risk of becoming monsters by analyzing them? I suppose not, but then again, could we be nothing more than tamed monsters? So, if you are bold and courageous enough, then let us now begin to dive into the realm of the monstrous. Let us begin at the end; let us face death incarnate.

Chapter I: Zombies

Let's face it: we are obsessed with zombies. It seems that almost anywhere one looks, zombies are insistent upon showing their unpleasant visages on our television screens and comic books. In recent years, shows such as *The Walking Dead* have leapt from the pages of comic books into the forefront of television media. Films such as *Dawn of the Dead*, *World War Z,* and (even to my chagrin) *Warm Bodies* have shown that we are in love with the undead. The recent flood of zombie-based video games such as *Left 4 Dead*, *The Last of Us*, and the ever-popular *Call of Duty* game mode of "Nazi Zombies" have given us plenty of reasons to feel no sympathy for the undead. There is even a market for zombie-satire, which boasts great works such as *Shawn of the Dead*, *Zombieland*, and *Dead Rising*. Finally, there are even zombie games for children, such as the ever-popular (and immensely enjoyable, I might add) *Plants vs. Zombies*. No matter what media one looks to, you will surely see zombies in one form or another. So, it seems fairly obvious here that we are dealing with something more than mere entertainment. It would seem that we are fixated upon these bumbling creatures and our vain efforts to fight against them. But why do we care so much about zombies?

There are many reasons as to why we are so enamored with the living dead. Zombies strike a chord within a fundamental part of who we are as human beings, and they resonate within us because we see ourselves in them. Zombies present us with the reality of death, presuppose a view of the world that counters materialism, and show us what we could easily become. Furthermore, they present a universe in which resurrection, morality, and the value (or farce) of redemption is portrayed most poignantly. However, one must first ask: where did zombies come from in the first place?

First of all, it would be beneficial to analyze the history of zombies. The first known use of the word "zumbi" (or "nzambi") was in 1871, and it has its origins in West African religions. It was a Haitian or Louisiana creole word that had many meanings, such as "phantom," "spirit of a dead person," "fetish," or even "snake god"[14]. In Haitian folklore, a bokor sorcerer (one who practices the darker side of magic in Haitian Vodou) could reanimate a person from the dead. The person is then directly under to bokor's control and has no independent will of his or her own. The zombie figure is also heavily used as a metaphor for slavery, since the zombie was essentially a slave to its master (bokor). In fact, there is artwork of Haitian zombies that bear a striking resemblance to slaves working in chains. Furthermore, this imagery has been preserved in the form of Michonne's character in *The Walking Dead*, who affixed chains onto zombies and used them for her protection. But where did the modern conception of the zombie come from, and how was it popularized? I would argue that the first major popularization of zombies came from the work of film director, writer, and satirist George A. Romero: namely his 1968 hit, *Night of the Living Dead*. Since then, zombies (true to their nature) have refused to die. These slow, lumbering, and insatiable creatures have many traits that bear resemblance to the zombies of Haitian Vodou. However, they borrow more heavily from the themes and characterizations that are found in the writings of H.P. Lovecraft and Mary Shelley.

Throughout zombie literature, we can find many similar themes relating to the nature of zombies: a lack of full consciousness, a sharp decrease in gross motor skills, and an insatiable hunger for human flesh. These characteristics have an intrinsic communicative value in them. We write stories about worlds that are inseparable from their attachment to a habitus. Writers, filmmakers, and dramatists all make manifest their socially constructed habitus through their

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[14] Douglas Harper. "Zombie." *Online Etymology Dictionary*, 2014. Web. April 26, 2014

stories, and in doing so, reveals all of the work that is socially imposed upon his or her body.[15]

The zombie, therefore, reveals how we view our own bodies, and the social construction that are

used to constrain them. In this process of communication, the means and medium through

which a piece is communicated is essential to accomplish the communicative goal. John

Vervaeke, a notable lecturer at the University of Toronto, says,

> We seem to be heading into something of a meaning-crisis in our society…This culture
> is zeroing in on a mythology, a mythic representation that is trying to give expression,
> trying to articulate something that is going profoundly wrong. We're trying to create an
> image, we're trying to create a narrative, we're trying to give speech and picture to
> something that is very pervasive, very profound, but very hard to articulate…The
> zombie represents a loss of meaning.[16]

He goes on to explain how zombies communicate our fears of losing meaning through

homelessness, an inability to communicate meaning (such as writing or speaking), and broken

community. Obviously, we can see that zombies are more than just figures of entertainment in

our culture. The undead are trying to tell us something more about ourselves. So, what do these

characteristics reveal about us as human beings (on a psychological level) and society as a whole

(on the sociological level)? What do zombies offer us?

First of all, one of the functions of zombies is to force the viewer to come face to face

with death itself. We typically shy away from the idea of death, but this has not always been the

case. Modern notions of death are far from what they were throughout history. Throughout the

Medieval Period, people had been adept at handling the death that surrounded them.[17] Due to a

high Catholic theology, their relation to the dead is was much more intimate than their

Protestant posterity. Historically, death had simply been another part of life itself. Since death

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[15] William O. Daniel, Jr."A Brief Theology of Zombies." *The Living Church*. The Living Church Foundation, July 26, 2013. Web. April 16, 2014.

[16] John Vervaeke. "Why Are Zombies So Big Right Now?" *Youtube*. Youtube, February 19, 2013. Web. April 22, 2014.

[17] Philippe Aries; *Western Attitudes Toward Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present*, translated by Patricia M. Ranum; 1974; The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London. Web. May 1, 2014 pp. 24-25

had a kind of ritual to it and the ancients were much more acquainted with death, it did not

strike the same kind of fear into their hearts as it does with us. This shift began to occur between

the twelfth and fifteenth centuries. Death began to be viewed as something to be feared, partly

due to the eschatological push towards Judgment Day and the immediate judgment of the

individual after death. "Death became the occasion when man was most able to reach an

awareness of himself."[18] Then, at the end of the fifteenth century, death began to be associated

with a kind of *eros*. Death was no longer desirable, but it was admirable in its grandeur and

beauty.[19] However, the most relevant and intriguing development occurred at the beginning of

the nineteenth century. A new sentiment regarding death arose: death must be avoided, not for

the sake of the person who is experiencing it, but rather for those around him or her.[20] The

disturbance caused by the grotesque nature of death interrupted an expectation of freedom and

happiness.

Therefore, death began to be something forbidden and taboo. Great expense is made to

mask any notion of death. One of these ways is to make light of it through overexposure. We are

constantly confronted with images and scenes of death through media, and our gut reaction is to

say that we are more hardened against it. We see death as something that is almost trivial when

viewed from such a lens. It is far too easy to see death as something that only happens to other

people, but not to ourselves. However, it is only when we look at our own deaths that we begin

to realize the grip that it has over us. It is only when we view our own deaths from a personal,

first person perspective that we can truly grasp this reality. Everything we do will eventually be

blown away by the winds of time. We can pass on things to our posterity after we pass away, but

this only forestalls the problem and delays the inevitable.

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[18] Ibid. 46
[19] Ibid. 58
[20] Ibid 87

While we must face this on a grand and distant scale, the characters in zombie literature face a more immediate and pressing form of existentialism. The characters in the story (and by extension, the audience) must confront the reality and finality of death. Our fascination with the undead has to do with the awareness that we are infected with a "social disease."[21] Death now surrounds us, and we cannot escape it. All we can do is delay its inevitability. The tension in zombie literature arises because the characters know that inevitably, they will die and become one of the dead. Zombies are typically slow and lumbering creatures for a very important reason: they do not need to be fast because they will eventually kill you. There is no escape. Essentially, the zombie figure is a physical manifestation of a particular form of nihilistic existentialism. This is especially prevalent in our Western culture, as we prefer to transform and sublimate death, rather than making it disappear completely.[22] Instead, zombie literature attempts to take our fear of death, isolate it, and then turn it into something that we can fight against. But, as most zombie stories end, it turns out to be a farce. So what do we do in response to such an overwhelming sense of futility? Should we just get it over with and end it all before the world gets even worse?

> Indeed, in the face of the absurdity of life, philosopher Albert Camus wrote,
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> There is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide. Judging whether life is or is not worth living amounts to answering the fundamental question of philosophy. All the rest—whether or not the world has three dimensions, whether the mind has nine or twelve categories—comes afterwards.[23]

Now, I feel like I must make a distinction between the types of suicide in zombie literature. On one hand, there is a common theme of "redemptive suicide," where one character fends off the

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[21] William O. Daniel, Jr. "A Brief Theology of Zombies." *The Living Church*. The Living Church Foundation, July 26, 2013. Web. April 16, 2014.

[22] Philippe Aries. *Western Attitudes Toward Death: From the Middle Ages to the Present*, translated by Patricia M. Ranum; 1974; The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London. Web. May 1, 2014 p. 100

[23] Albert Camus. *The Myth Of Sisyphus*. Translated by Justin O'Brien. 1955. Web. May 1, 2014. p. 1

horde of zombies so that the rest of the group can escape. On the other hand, there is a type of "hopeless suicide," in which the character struggles internally and decides that surviving in the apocalypse is not worth it. While these two types of suicide can often overlap, I am primarily focusing on the latter type. In zombie literature, suicide is seen as an "easy way out." There are many characters in the series who commit suicide, but it is mostly because they have given up hope or cannot handle the brutality of post-apocalyptic life. For example, at the end of *Dawn of the Dead* (warning: spoilers ahead), Peter decides to barricade himself in a room with his gun and wait for the zombies to break through. As he is waiting, he has the gun against his head, ready to kill himself. However, when the zombies finally break through, he quickly raises his weapon and decides to fight back, ultimately fighting his way back to the roof and escaping with Francine. However, according to the original screenplay, both characters were supposed to commit suicide at the end of the film.[24] Also in *The Walking Dead*, Andrea struggles to come to grips with the reality of living amongst the dead. While she desires to commit suicide, her mentor Dale forces her to choose life. As a result, she hates him because of it. She wanted to be done with it all, and she protests to Dale that he had no right to stop her. Dale, in a state of confusion and heartbreak, can only respond with, "I saved your life."[25]

This beleaguered tension in taking one's own life saturates the fabric of zombie-apocalypse literature. When faced with such absurdity (such as inevitable death in a zombie apocalypse), life seems trivial or pointless. Indeed, Camus wrote, "In a sense, and as in melodrama, killing yourself amounts to confessing. It is confessing that life is too much for you or that you do not understand it. Let's not go too far in such analogies, however, but rather

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[24] George A. Romero. *Dawn of the Dead*. 1977. Working Draft. The Internet Movie Script Database IMSDb. Web. April 16, 2014 pp.748-750

[25] Clay Morgan. "What Hath Zombies To Do With Theology? An Interview With Clay Morgan." Interview by Randall Rauser. 2013. Web. April 16, 2014

return to everyday words. It is merely confessing that that 'is not worth the trouble.'"[26] But is

such a confession noble, honorable, or even desirable? Zombie literature would suggest

otherwise, and Camus would most likely agree. Those who commit suicide in these stories often

are portrayed as weak unfit to live in such an altered society. Indeed, Camus even says that

suicide is, in a way, an easy way out. He sees that being fully conscious of one's condition while

refusing to run to false solutions such as religion is the way that life has meaning. According to

Camus, living life in spite of its absurdity and carrying on with passion in the face of

meaninglessness is the way in which life is lived most beautifully. Camus writes,

> The lucidity that was to constitute his [Sisyphus's] torture at the same time crowns his
> victory. There is no fate that cannot be surmounted by scorn…I leave Sisyphus at the
> foot of the mountain! One always finds one's burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the
> higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He too concludes that all is well.
> This universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile. Each
> atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night-filled mountain, in itself forms a
> world. The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must
> imagine Sisyphus happy.[27]

Thus, paradoxically, suicide limits one's extent in understanding and reveling in the

insignificance of his or her own life. This is not necessarily satisfying in the face of the

overwhelming nature of the absurd, I must admit. But perhaps in the Christian worldview, one

who makes the Messiah the object and example of faith must commit a kind of suicide in order

to overcome the absurd. This corroborates nicely with what German theologian and pastor

Dietrich Bonheoffer famously said, "When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die."[28] A

continual suicide of one's self, so that Christ may take that place, is seen as inherent within this

view of the Christian life. Perhaps, in this view, the absurd is overcome through suicide after all,

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[26] Albert Camus.. *The Myth Of Sisyphus*. Translated by Justin O'Brien. 1955. Web. May 1, 2014
p. 2
[27] Ibid. 77, 78
[28] Dietrich Bonhoeffer. *The Cost of Discipleship*. Translated from the German *Nachfolge*, first
published in 1937 by Chr. Kaiser Verlag München. SCM Press, 1959. Print.

but that is an argument for another day. The point of all of this, however, is that zombie literature supports this notion that physical suicide is not a legitimate (or at least noble) option in the face of absurdity. But why is this necessarily so?

The reason as to why humanity carries on in the face of such great adversity and absurdity is due to the presence of an immaterial consciousness, or soul. The concept of the zombie itself is an argument for the presence of such an entity. However, this immaterial quality that pervades zombie literature differs across the history of zombie stories, as it has through the history of theology. The majority of Christian theology in the Western world is dualistic, which, while owing much to Hellenistic and Gnostic philosophies, took root in the modern mind due to the work of Descartes. Since then, there has been a notion that the mind and the body are two separate entities that have the capacity to act independently. The concept of the zombie brings this view into critique. Is there really a difference between the body and soul?

In the Jewish conception of a person, the body and mind were interconnected. The word that is commonly translated as soul (נֶפֶשׁ, or "nephesh") refers to a living being, with flesh (בָּשָׂר, "basar") and spirit/breath (רוּח, "ruach"). As such, there has been a small rejection of dualism within the Christian view of humanity, which is reflected in the stories we tell, such as zombie literature. As such, a comparison can be made between older zombie films (such as *Night of the Living Dead*) and newer zombie literature (such as *The Walking Dead*). In *Night of the Living Dead*, the characters have no problem killing zombies. This is because in Romero's vision, there was a clear distinction between humans and zombies. It was easy for the characters to believe that the zombies were not the same person that they were before. For example, in another one of Romero's zombie flicks, *Dawn of the Dead*, Dr. Millard Rausch gives his analysis on the nature of zombies by saying;

These creatures [zombies] cannot be considered human. They prey on humans. They do not prey on each other; that's the difference. They attack and they feed only on warm human flesh. Intelligence? Seemingly little or no reasoning ability, but basic skills remain a more... remembered behaviours of ah, normal life. There are reports of these creatures using tools. But even these actions are the most primitive; the use of tools as bludgeons and so forth. I might point out that even animals will adopt the use of tools in this manner. These creatures are nothing but pure, motorized instinct. We must not be lulled by the concept that these are our family members or our friends. They are not. They will not respond to such emotions.[29]

This is further exemplified when Peter, who is the main protagonist, kills Roger and Stephen (who were two close friends) without mercy. So we see that there is still a strong sense of duality between the mind and the body in these films. In this type of zombie literature, the body can exist without the mind. This is a modern notion, as the ancient Greeks had no conception of a body living without an ἀνάστασις (anastasis; "to stand again"). The body and animating force, or spirit, were always entwined. This we can see in more recent zombie literature.

In *The Walking Dead*, however, the characters have a much more difficult time in killing the zombies. There is always some sort of remorse that occurs after the slaughter of the undead. For example, in the first episode, one of the characters has a difficult time in killing his zombie wife. Also, both Herschel and the Governor, who are on opposite sides of the spectrum, morally speaking, choose to keep their respective zombie family members alive. Finally, there are also multiple letters and messages throughout the series telling survivors who stumble across houses to not kill their zombified relatives. While this theme becomes more and more masked throughout the series due to the necessity of killing for survival, there is still this unresolved question: do zombies still retain at least a shred of humanity? While zombie literature advocates a brain-based consciousness (the only way to kill a zombie is to severely injure the brain), it still suggests that we are more than just meat. A person is more than the sum of his or her parts.

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[29] George A. Romero. *Dawn of the Dead*. 1977. Working Draft. The Internet Movie Script Database IMSDb. Web. April 16, 2014

Zombies give us a glimpse into who we would be if we did not possess such a consciousness, or soul. Inherent within zombie literature is the question of consciousness: where did it come from, and how does it differentiate us from the living dead? These are all questions that are beyond the realm of most zombie literature. But what does zombie literature tell us about the nature of humanity and its effect on society?

Regarding the nature of man and his place in society, zombie literature often paints a rather bleak picture. In his work *The Leviathan*, philosopher Thomas Hobbes wrote, "Hereby it is manifest that during the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war; and such a war as is of every man against every man."[30] Since men are constantly in a state of war, then he cannot focus on anything remotely close to the "common good." In fact, Hobbes writes,

> In such condition there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short[31]

However, in order to further our own interests, we enlist the help of a sovereign, who we trust to govern us. According to Hobbes, people are afraid of each other, and since we still have desires and passions, we form reasonable social contracts with each other. We put power within the state because we are afraid, but we still desire comfort. Thus, the state (whether it be a constitution, parliament, dictator, or monarch) has sovereignty over the people and absolute power. We can see this theme clearly resonated within zombie literature. By my analysis, there seems to be many common story themes regarding the standard zombie-based apocalyptic plot.

First, the outbreak occurs, which causes widespread panic. The spread of the outbreak

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[30] Hobbes, Thomas. *The Leviathan.* 1651. University of Oregon. 1999. Web. May 1, 2014
[31] Ibid.

grows too rapidly for the state to contain, and so the society collapses. The majority of the plot in these kinds of stories takes place when small groups of people come together to form alliances in order to survive. The survivors are constantly afraid of each other, especially when they are complete strangers to one another. In order to survive more effectively, however, they form social contracts among each other. There is often an initial appeal to authority (in *The Walking Dead*, the protagonist, Rick, is a sheriff), which eventually withers away. For example, in the first comic book edition of *The Walking Dead*, Rick wants to move the group away from Atlanta due to the overwhelming amount of Walkers (zombies) that are in the city. However, his former partner in the police force, Shane, objects, saying that the government will find them easier if they are closer to the city. Shane still has this hope that the authorities will come to save the day and set society back on the right path. But such a rescue never comes. The sovereign is not present to maintain order, and thus chaos ensues. This reveals that higher hierarchical structures of authority are inefficient to control and deal with an underestimated viral threat. It also shows that society is inherently fragile and prone to collapse with the introduction of sudden and unexpected threats.

Furthermore, zombie literature often portrays people as inherently selfish, as they will not be liable to look after the greater good of the group if their own personal good is threatened. Zombie literature offers a glimpse of humanity's cruelty towards others, as well as the dissolution of the social contract when a sovereign is not present. In the apocalypse, the strong devour the weak ruthlessly as society descends into a type of individualistic anarchy. So we see how zombie literature corroborates with Hobbes' notion of the Leviathan, but what does it tell us about our own nature? And how does that nature relate to religion?

I would argue that zombie literature is inherently religious in its view of humanity, especially in regards to the nature of sin. The different ways in which a person can become

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infected reflects the ways in which humanity can be tainted by sin. Because of this, there are different ways in which this reflection is made manifest. In Reformed theology, the inherent tension within the doctrine of predestination and free will is troublesome to most. It is often said that if God predestines everything and chooses people for salvation, then this (coupled with the doctrine of Irresistible Grace) implies that we as humans have no free will. To combat these objections, Reformed theologians respond by defining free will as the ability to do what is within one's nature. Since, according to the doctrine of Total Depravity, our nature is skewed toward sin, we as humans are fallen and cannot earn favor apart from God. According to this definition of free will, we are only free in that we can choose sin, as long as we are apart from the sufficient grace of God. In the Reformed tradition, this is not a state of human nature that is inherent to humankind. Otherwise, they would be faced with the untenable assertion that God is responsible for creating humans this way, thus making him the creator of sin. Rather, sin, according to John Calvin, "is the inherited corruption which the church fathers termed 'original sin,' meaning by the word 'sin,' the deprivation of a nature previously good and pure."[32] So, just as turtle cannot will itself to fly (no matter how hard it tries), humans cannot will themselves to be righteous before a holy and perfect God (no matter how hard they try). Because of this, humans are all infected with the disease of sin, and it is this concept which zombie literature captures so grotesquely. In *The Walking Dead*, everyone is already infected with the disease, so no matter how you die you will become one of the "Walkers" (or zombies). On the other hand, in the film *World War Z*, along with many other zombie flicks, one can become infected by direct contact with the undead. However, the disease is not as pervasive in WWZ as it is in *The Walking Dead*. In the *Walking Dead,* all humans are already zombies-in-waiting. In other zombie horror

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[32] Calvin, John. *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1559), Library of Christian Classics 20-21; ed. John T. McNiell; trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1959). Print.

films, the human acts as the potential host of zombism, but not a zombie in *esse*. This reflects one understanding of original sin. In the Walking Dead, humans are inherently sinful (infected), while in other zombie literature, sin can infect an otherwise good creation.[33] Essentially, zombie movies such as *World War Z* portray a kind of human nature that is inherently good, but can be corrupted by the intrusion of sin. However, *The Walking Dead* takes a much more Reformed approach, insisting that everyone is already and totally infected with the disease (i.e. sin). This latter approach is particularly frightening because it further blurs the line between "us and them." Zombies reflect an utterly ravaged and destroyed humanity. They wear the same clothes as we do, and as long as we gaze upon them, we are conscious how close we are to becoming just like them.[34] Zombies and our relationship with them reflect how we as humans view corruption and sin. But what other religious themes pop up from underground?

The connection between zombies and religion (particularly Christianity) is clear in many different ways. In the second season of *The Walking Dead*, Hershel, whom many considered to be the moral compass of the series, says that he cannot understand God's plan. Hershel goes on to say that although Christ promised a resurrection of the dead, he imagined that the Messiah had something different in mind. Besides the obvious dark humor that is being conveyed, this communicates a deeper meaning of zombies. Zombies have an extremely religious root (there is even a "Zombie Bible" in which one can go into the ancient scriptures and insert stories of the undead into the sacred pages). However, I believe that this religious theme can be seen most explicitly in regards to the resurrection of the dead. I could spend much time analyzing and comparing these themes, but I will limit myself to one: the resurrection of the dead in

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[33] William O. Daniel, Jr. "A Brief Theology of Zombies." *The Living Church*. The Living Church Foundation, July 26, 2013. Web. April 16, 2014.

[34] Clay Morgan. "What Hath Zombies To Do With Theology? An Interview With Clay Morgan." Interview by Randall Rauser. 2013. Web. April 16, 2014

Christianity and other religions as compared to zombie literature.

We, as humans, seem to be attracted to this notion of life after death. Whether it is due to our fear of death, our inability to cope with death's finality, or something else, we still have an innate desire for a kind of transcendence. The resurrection of the dead into zombies reflects a broken system. Resurrection, at least in the Christian worldview, is not always about making things pretty, but rather it is about making things new. The fact that the resurrection of the dead in zombie literature results in chaos and death instead of life and newness reflects a broken hope that we have in making ourselves new. Furthermore, it reflects a world in which this concept of resurrection is only possible due to the absence (or silence) of a higher deity. The world in which most zombie literature takes place is an inherently atheistic one (or malevolent deism at the very least). This is necessary in order to carry across the notion of existential hopelessness, which I explored earlier. The hopelessness of the absurd only makes sense in a world where there is no God. Indeed, Camus wrote that there was

> nothing more profound, for example, than Kierkegaard's view according to which despair is not a fact but a state: the very state of sin. For sin is what alienates from God. The absurd, which is the metaphysical state of the conscious man, does not lead to God. Perhaps this notion will become clearer if I risk this shocking statement: the absurd is sin without God.[35]

Thus, the absurd is amplified and exemplified in a world such as a zombie apocalypse. Most zombie literature has a very humanist take on the apocalypse and human nature. If hope of continuing the human race still even exists, then it is up to humans to save humanity.

But what happens when there is no one, or no God, to save us? Does being a moral person even matter anymore? Does survival supersede moral values? Thus, does virtue and vice

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[35] Albert Camus. *The Myth Of Sisyphus.* Translated by Justin O'Brien. 1955. Web. May 1, 2014

completely depend on situational events and societal needs? These are just a few of the questions that are implicit within zombie literature, and the tension that arises in zombie narratives is partly due to the conflict inherent within this newly established world. Morality now seems to be a luxury of the past, now to be brushed aside by the necessity of survival. The established moral system that is presupposed in zombie literature, whatever it may be, is often transgressed in order to survive.

Finally, zombie literature can reveal to us our own dissatisfaction towards a God who is distant and refuses to redeem. Furthermore, it can reveal our reactions towards a rejected Messiah figure. For example, the ending of the critically acclaimed game, *The Last of Us*, was met with very polarized reactions. Some people loved it, while others hated it. Essentially, the story follows Joel (a tough and calloused older man who tragically lost his daughter at the beginning of the zombie outbreak) and Ellie (a young girl who Joel is forced to escort) as they make their way across the country in order to find those who can help them. As it turns out, Ellie is inexplicably immune from the disease (remember the connection to sin), and so she contains something within her that can potentially help humanity. Towards the end of the game, it is revealed that she can indeed save humanity, but the surgery that would isolate and extract the necessary genes will ultimately kill her. She lays down her life for the salvation of humanity. This seems to be how the game ends, until the twist ending is revealed. Joel storms into the hospital, brutally kills the doctors, and narrowly escapes with Ellie. So, in the process of saving the one he loves most, he has doomed the world to extinction, thus becoming the last of the humans alive. Regardless of whether one believes that Joel acted out of love or selfishness (perhaps both), this ending attacks both the utilitarian and the Messiah-complex equally. There was no shedding of innocent blood for the ultimate salvation of humanity, and it can stir mixed emotions within us. In

analyzing the plot of the game, we can see that most of the characters are like Joel; they are murderers, cannibals, and thieves. All of humanity seems to be selfish and cruel. What the game posits is this: maybe that world is not worth saving. There is not a hero in The Last of Us. All of humanity has been doomed because of themselves. These people will be the only humans left when the end comes.[36] It is a bleak tale, to be sure, but one that is portrayed as inherent in a world without a redeeming God.

Overall, I have shown how zombies act as a mirror, reflecting our own fears, insecurities, and realities. Zombies reveal our own anxieties in a tumultuous world. They give us a fictional lens through which we can view the world and be repulsed by it. We can be challenged by disease, famine, chaos, and breakdowns in society; as long as they are mediated through the fictional world of zombies, we mask our quiet insecurities about them.[37] Zombies further reveal a form of sexual repression and transgressions, as mindless bodies are forced upon the bodies of victims. Zombies also reveal economic insecurities, openly critiquing consumerism and the fragility of capitalistic systems. Zombies, as pervasive as they are in our culture, show us that we find it easier to manifest our darkest fears in order to isolate it and separate it from ourselves. But perhaps by seeing ourselves along with the undead, we can come closer to seeing who we truly are, and perhaps even find a remedy. But if zombies are reflections of death and our continual striving against it, werewolves represent our struggle against life and the evolutionary instincts that are inherent within the human psyche.

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[36] Phil Hornshaw. "More Games Need Endings Like The Last of Us." *GameFront*. GameFront, July 5, 2013. Web. April 24, 2014.

[37] Max Brooks.. "A Conversation with Max Brooks." *Max Brooks Zombie World*. N.d. Web. April 16, 2014.

Chapter II: Werewolves

"No amount of skillful invention can replace the essential element of imagination." – Edward Hopper

Growing up, I always had a natural revulsion towards werewolves. I am not entirely sure why, but I have a few theories. First of all, they just seemed to be brutish, savage, and mindless beasts that drooled everywhere. By contrast, I considered myself to be a refined, moral, and logical person. Not to mention that I was (and to a degree, still am) a huge germaphobe. Werewolves were nasty, with their disheveled, wiry hair and terrible breath. Besides, there was way too much hair for my taste. It always seemed rather bothersome, especially to a prepubescent boy who, deep down inside, secretly always wanted to grow a beard (which is a dream that has been happily realized). Why anyone would ever want to be a werewolf was beyond me. Recently, however, I have started to feel a draw towards these fantastical creatures. And I am not the only one. Throughout time and culture, the image of the werewolf has invaded our books and imaginations. They capture something unique, something universal about who we are as humans. Our fascination with werewolves is due to several intimate factors. These include our psychological identification with our untapped emotions, our sociological connection with the concept of alienation and exile, our theological connection with the saint/sinner complex and guilt, and the philosophical debate regarding human nature and duality. Furthermore, werewolves reveal a politically conservative fear of unlimited, unbridled freedom that is unrestrained by morality and law. Finally, as the werewolf myth has developed in the Western world, it has taken on many Enlightenment and scientific notions, including the naturalization of the cause of transformation and the dichotomy between reason and emotion.

First of all, the construction of a man-beast hybrid has been with us for quite a long time. It seems that we, as humans, tend to project our own likeness and image onto other, non-human creatures. This tendency to anthropomorphize our surroundings is evident in the

literature we create. For example, growing up, I was a pretty big fan of Disney movies (as were most children my age). Whether it was a simple leap, (such as Tarzan's talking gorillas), something even more outlandish (such as the talking china, candlesticks, and clocks in Beast's castle), or something bordering on the downright scary (Heffalumps and Woozles, anyone?), everything that the human characters interact with has an animated life of its own. As a result, when I was a child, I projected these anthropomorphisms to everyday objects, such as my two teddy bears (shout out to Wuzzy and Bigbear for being the truest of friends). All of this aside, our anthropomorphisms are an attempt to see life in the world around us. One could interpret this in many ways. For example, could this be due to a pantheistic tendency, to see the interconnectedness of all life? Is it merely a projection of our own identities and desires onto the inanimate, imbuing immateriality onto the material? Or is it an expression of the human consciousness breaking through and manifesting through the inanimate world around us? In his work, Lectures on the Philosophy of History, Hegel gives his theory behind the growth of the human spirit throughout time. For Hegel, true freedom is found through human self-consciousness, when we realize who we are as human beings. Accordingly, for Hegel, attributing human-like qualities to animals is a sign that one is a slave to nature. Thus, the Mesopotamians (along with other ancient cultures) did not posses the "Weltgeist," or world-spirit. Instead he sees the beginning of our own self-consciousness forming with the Egyptians. He writes, "The Sphinx may be regarded as a symbol of the Egyptian Spirit. The human head looking out from the brute body, exhibits Spirit as it begins to emerge from the merely Natural — to tear itself loose therefrom and already to look more freely around it; without, however, entirely freeing itself from the fetters Nature had imposed."[38] This "Oriental Spirit" is eventually realized in full

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[38] G.W.F. Hegel; *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, 218, Translated by J. Sibree, Batoche Books, 2001.

through the Greeks, whom he labels the "Occidental Spirit." It is the Greeks, with their art attributed to mere man ("man, know thyself" and Oedipus at Thebes), who come to conscious self-realization. Thus, at least to Hegel, this continued anthropomorphism is a regress away from human-self consciousness. Or, perhaps, it is a progression of human-self consciousness, to spread this consciousness back onto the inanimate, as a type of consciousness-imperialism. Regardless of the root or consequence of such actions, we can see that as humans, we have a natural tendency to take our own characteristics and thrust them upon other creatures. The creation of the werewolf is no exception to this.

Perhaps the earliest account of man being transformed into a wolf can be found in the Epic of Gilgamesh. In it, Gilgamesh refuses to marry Ishtar, the goddess, much to her dissatisfaction. He cites her other lovers of the past as to why he refuses her hand. He says, "You have loved the shepherd of the flock; he made meal-cake for you day after day, he killed kids for your sake. You struck and turned him into a wolf, now his own herd-boys chase him away, his own hounds worry his flanks."[39]

The ancient Greeks had a vast amount of literature dedicated to such a creature. In fact, one of the earliest accounts of a man-wolf can be found in Greek mythology. The story of Lycaon has several differing retellings, but since Ovid (who was a famous Roman poet) wrote the most famous account, I shall use that version here. In the myth, Lycaon is doubtful of whether Jupiter is truly a divine being. So, to test this, not only does Lycaon attempt to kill Jupiter in his sleep, but he also kills a prisoner and serves Jupiter his flesh, which was partially cooked and partially roasted. As punishment for these acts, Jupiter destroys Lycaon's house, killing his 50 sons. Furthermore, Jupiter transforms Lycaon into a terrible beast. Ovid writes, "He himself ran in terror, and reaching the silent fields howled aloud, frustrated of speech.

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[39] Epic of Gilgamesh, Tablet VI

Foaming at the mouth, and greedy as ever for killing, he turned against the sheep, still delighting in blood. His clothes became bristling hair; his arms became legs. He was a wolf, but kept some vestige of his former shape. There were the same grey hairs, the same violent face, the same glittering eyes, and the same savage image."[40] But this is not the only Greek depiction of a werewolf. In the Iliad, a young warrior named Dolon attempted to deceive the Greeks by donning the skin of a wolf and walking on all fours.[41] This deception was part of his job, as he was hired by Hector to be a spy for the Trojans. The wolf's clothing is a mirror of his deceitful intentions, even though the disguise ultimately failed and cost Dolon his life. This account is told many times, including Euripides' famous Athenian tragedy, Rhesus.[42] In one of the few surviving Roman novels, The Satyricon, Petronius writes about the transformation of a man into a wolf. The story follows the misadventures of Encolpius and his companion/lover, Giton. In the course of events, a tale is told regarding a man being turned into a werewolf. Petronius writes, "When I looked around for my companion, he had stripped himself and piled his clothes by the side of the road. My heart was in my mouth, and I sat there while he pissed a ring around them and was suddenly turned into a wolf...he commenced to howl after he was turned into a wolf, and ran away into the forest."[43] Then, the narrator finds out that some of the local sheep had been eaten, and, as a result, the wolf was hunted and severely wounded. He returns to his home and finds his companion lying in bed, being attended to by a doctor. He then says, "! I knew then that he was a werewolf, and after that, I could not have eaten a crumb of bread with him, no, not if you had killed me."[44] Now, we can see the start of a type of werewolf in which one can alternate between the two natures. The cursed one is no longer permanently stuck in this hairy

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[40] Ovid's Metamorphoses Book I: 119-243; translated by A.S. Kline; 2000.
[41] Homer's Iliad, Book 10:351-527
[42] Euripedes' *Rhesos* (208-211)
[43] Petronius Arbiter, The Satyricon, Chapter 62
[44] Ibid.

state of affairs; instead, one can go back and forth between these two states of nature. Finally, even the founders of Rome have a history with wolves. In the traditional telling of the city's founding, Romulus and Remus were abandoned to die in the River Tiber, where they were rescued and suckled by a she-wolf ("lupa", in Latin). While they were eventually found by shepherd and raised as such, they proved to be natural leaders (which has connections to Machiavelli's Prince, but I will get to that later). These examples only show a fraction of what is to be found in Greek and Roman literature regarding werewolves. But it was not just the Greeks and Romans who had tales of werewolves. The Jews also had some werewolf-like depictions in their literature as well.

First of all, in Genesis, there is the fate of Cain. After killing his brother, Cain is punished and exiled from the community for his sin. He is given a "mark" so that people would widely recognize whom he was.[45] This is similar to the concept of exile and alienation due to an "otherness" that is inherent within the werewolf tale, but we will save that for later. But there is another, more vivid, account of a werewolf in the Scriptures. One of the most famous accounts of this is in the book of Daniel. In this text, King Nebuchadnezzar had expanded the kingdom of Babylon and driven the Israelite people into exile. After bragging about the greatness of his kingdom, Nebuchadnezzar hears God call to him, who promptly sends condemnation for his arrogance. In Daniel 4:33, it is written, "He [Nebuchadnezzar] was driven from among men and ate grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven till his hair grew as long as eagles' feathers, and his nails were like birds' claws."[46] This description, whether it refers to his mental or physical state, fits the image of the werewolf. There are also accounts of a medieval rabbi by the name of Ephraim ben Shimshon who interpreted Benjamin, the son of Jacob, as

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[45] Genesis 4:12-15 (ESV)
[46] Daniel 4:33 (ESV)

being a werewolf. He does this by taking the Benjamin's description as "predatory wolf"[47] very literally. He also points out that if he were to leave his father Jacob, then he would surely die,[48] suggesting that without an understanding of the family, his wolf like appearance would have gotten him killed. While this may be a gross misinterpretation and reading of the text, it shows that even medieval Rabbis were willing to concede to the notion of werewolves. However, in more modern times, symptoms of werewolfery have been pathologically subsumed into a condition known as lycanthropy.

Throughout most of medieval history, the terms werewolf and lycanthrope were interchangeable. Reginald Scot coined the term lycanthropy in 1584. In his work, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft,* he went against the grain of contemporary belief regarding the nature of lycanthropy. Instead of relying on the power of the Devil (or even his existence), he regarded accounts of lycanthropic delusions as suffering from *Lupina melancholia* or *Lupina insania.*[49] Since this rebellion against the Roman Catholic Church's views of magic and demons, biological and psychological explanations were given for the causes of lycanthropy by Reformation authors such as Scot. Furthermore, with the advent of the Enlightenment and Scientific revolution, natural causation was a primary presupposition of the world's mechanical workings. We can see the inklings of these stories, as the ancient werewolf shape shifted into other forms. For example, in Robert Louis Stevenson's famous novella, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, Dr. Jekyll has a difficult time in controlling the good and evil within himself. The benevolent and wealthy Dr. Jekyll discovered that he could drink a serum and turn into the abominable Mr. Hyde. Under this persona, he could indulge in all of his unstated and repressed vices without fear of social reprobation. As time goes on, the transformations between the two personalities become more

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[47] Genesis 49:27
[48] Genesis 44:22
[49] Reginald Scot. *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*. London, 1584

and more pronounced and uncontrollable. Eventually, the transformations start to occur spontaneously, and in fear, Jekyll must drink the serum in order to maintain his benevolent persona (Jekyll as opposed to the violent Hyde). When he runs out of a key ingredient, however, he realizes that Mr. Hyde will one day permanently consume him. With this knowledge, he commits suicide, as a kind of final penitence for his sins. Finally, we can look to the Hulk as an example of modern lycanthropy. However, instead of the Hulk transforming because of magic, he was (like most superheroes) exposed to radiation (gamma radiation, to be exact). Furthermore, just like the werewolf, Bruce Banner struggles between these two natures within him. This is what I believe is at the core of the werewolf myth: the dualistic nature of the human mind/soul.

We can see how this dualism is made manifest within our construction of the werewolf. We can, however, also see how this construction came to be, well, constructed. Chantal Bourgault du Coudray writes,

> "In addition to its sources in romanticism and Gothic literature, the notion of the unconscious was also indebted to the related discourses of evolution and degenerationism which flowered in the late nineteenth century, because visions of humankind as having evolved from bestial origins suggested that traces of such a primal past might linger in hidden recesses of the modern psyche. Such visualizations of an interiorized bestiality also drew upon an older tradition of the 'beast within' – an image that derived from the philosophy of Plato and the Christian tradition, in which negative or evil impulses were dissociated from humanity through their attribution to a symbolic, internalized 'beast.'"[50]

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[50] Chantal Bourgault du Coudray. *The Curse of the Werewolf: Fantasy, Horror, and the Beast Within.* I.B. Tauris & Co. New York. 2006. p. 5.

This dualism of the human essence is rooted in Enlightenment Christian theology and Greek philosophy, although it has its roots in Jewish theology. In the Jewish ontology, every person struggles between good and evil in the womb. Humanity has a יֵצֶר טוב (yetzer tov, good inclination) יֵצֶר הַרַע (yetzer hara, or evil inclination). This evil inclination is not necessarily a type of inherent evil, but rather the selfishness within the human heart. In this view, one can overcome this tendency if he or she truly wishes to do so. In Christianity, due to the Fall of Adam, sin entered the world and separated man from God. This chasm serves as the pretext for the rest of Scripture: the call of the prophets, the lamentations of the Psalms, and the expectation of a Messiah. All of these factors within the Judaic-Christian faith set up on the presupposition that humanity and God are incredibly (though not eternally) separated from יהוה (YHWH; the ineffable name). Because of the nature of sin, humans struggle internally between their created nature ("very good"[51]) and their sinful nature that was inherited from Adam.[52] This dualistic nature is constantly expounded upon in the Christian tradition, even in the letters of Saint Paul. In his letter to the Romans, Paul laments over the nature of his desires. He writes, "For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate."[53] Augustine and Aristotle related these desires to base passions. While Aristotle believed that we must train and harness these base passions, Augustine believed that these passions were lowly and needed to be subsumed by the love of God. Augustine wrote that his soul was, "through the fumes of that invisible wine of its self-will, turning aside and bowing down to the very basest things."[54] Furthermore, Descartes breaks with the traditional Stoic and Christian understanding of passions by writing, "even those who have the weakest souls could acquire

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[51] Genesis 1:31
[52] See the works of Irenaeus and Augustine
[53] Romans 7:15 (ESV)
[54] *Confessions of Saint Augustine*, Book II: iii; translated by Edward Bouverie Pusey

absolute mastery over all their passions if they worked hard enough at training and guiding them."[55] Therefore, emotions are a thing to be controlled and harnessed. Indeed, Spinoza, one of the most influential philosophers of the modern era, argued that passions could be destroyed by having a "clear and distinct idea" of them.[56] Thus, through thinking and reason, we can overcome and control our animalistic passions. Machiavelli was a forerunner of this idea, reasoning that the best way to be a "political animal" is to utilize both of these natures: the man and the beast. In *The Prince*, he writes,

> You must know there are two ways of contesting, the one by the law, the other by force; the first method is proper to men, the second to beasts; but because the first is frequently not sufficient, it is necessary to have recourse to the second. Therefore it is necessary for a prince to understand how to avail himself of the beast and the man… it is necessary for a prince to know how to make use of both natures, and that one without the other is not durable.[57]

This is reminiscent of Romulus and Remus, who were raised by the she-wolf. Since he could utilize both type of natures, Romulus made for a strong leader. Such ferocious, yet cunning leadership exemplifies this man-beast hybrid. But it is not just a duality, at least not according to more modern psychology.

Freud takes it a step further by suggesting a triplex of human nature. For Freud, the human psyche was divided into three parts: the id, ego, and superego. The id is the primal desire that human have, while the superego is the "conscience," telling us what is right. The ego is the realistic mediator between these two natures.[58] In this system, the human mind has a sort of

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[55] René Descartes, *Passions of the Soul*. Translated by Jonathan Bennett. October 2010.
[56] Benedict Spinoza; *Ethics*. 1677
[57] Nicolo Machiavelli. *The Prince*. Chapter 18. Translated by W.K. Marriott. 1515
[58] Sigmund Freud. *Das ich und das Es*. (W.W. Norton:Vienna). 1923.

check and balance between competing desires. So, the human must control these manifestations within himself/herself. But if werewolf literature shows us anything, it is that these emotions, in fact, cannot be controlled. And it is due to this uncontrollable unleashing of emotion that causes such violence and harm to society and ourselves. As a result of this, the beast is ostracized from the community, whether physically, emotionally, or spiritually.

This is one of the most terrifying notions regarding the werewolf: evil comes from within us, not only as an individual, but also as a society. Of course, we can recognize that the evil within is what the werewolf personifies, but this can be extrapolated further to society as a whole. Typically, monsters come from somewhere *out there*. They come from somewhere foreign. They are an outside entity that intrudes upon a group. However, werewolves are unique in that the monster comes from within the community. In comes from within our own walls. So, werewolves reflect a longstanding idea of exile as a form of punishment. Whenever a werewolf is discovered, they are usually driven out of whatever community they were once a part of. This reveals our fear of being known. We do not want others to know who we truly are; we fear our own dark side. Charlotte F. Otten writes, "The paradox in lycanthropy is that by projecting into animals what is unacceptable in human conduct, and by assigning human behavioral patterns to animals, human life's darkest moments are exposed."[59] Because we are so critically self aware of our own estrangement to those around us, we become consumed with the fear of "otherness," the fear of rejection as a result of vulnerability.

Finally, werewolves represent a fear of unrestrained freedom as a result of following our impulses. For example, when Cain kills his brother, Abel, God drives him out of the community. Likewise, the werewolf is exiled from the community (and perhaps rightly so, as it is killing

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[59] Charlotte F. Otten *A Lycanthropy Reader: Werewolves in Western Culture.* Syracuse University Press. Syracuse. 1986

people and eating all of the sheep!), as it is recognized that the creature is living in excess to its passions. This reveals a fear of the unrestrained man, who is unbound by laws or morality. It also reveals several sociological principles regarding our responses to delinquent and harmful individuals, not the least of which are death and expulsion. Are these a necessary component to any functional society, or can werewolves (and who they represent) be redeemed and rehabilitated into society? Most werewolf literature would suggest not.

So we have seen that werewolves reveal our fears and anxieties toward our own human nature, which we see as primal and animalistic. They also reveal our Enlightenment-founded predisposition to divide emotion and reason into animal and human, respectively. But how does the werewolf manifest itself within literature? How do we create these wolf-like monsters to serve as a manifestation of evil? Malcolm South writes, "In reality, the werewolf and other human-animal combinations are basic archetypes of the psyche."[60] According to Jung, there are cultural archetypes that we all have (whether consciously, subconsciously, or unconsciously). We all plug into a universal consciousness, and at various points, archetypes are brought to our conscious awareness. So we have a little bit of every archetype within us. We all have the anger of the Hulk, just in various degrees. We all have the cunning of Sherlock, just some posses it to a lesser extent. We all have the timidity of Piglet, at least in a certain capacity. It just depends on which one dominates your personality of the current moment. It is only when one of these archetypes takes over the whole of your personality that your psyche is off balance. The goal is to integrate each version of ourselves into a holistic understanding of who we really are, or at least who we could be. Archetypes bring these things into our consciousness; it is when we are not conscious of them when they dominate us. We can choose to repress or ignore these

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[60] Malcolm South. *Mythical and Fabulous Creatures: A Sourcebook and Research Guide.* Grenwood. 1987. p. 265.

tendencies, but when we lose the ability to confront the various modes of ourselves, we tend to become consumed by them anyway. The werewolf brings some of our darkest fears (being evil inside, alienation, vulnerability, lack of forgiveness) to light. Superstar communist and philosopher Slajov Žižek has said that the werewolf is a type of bridge between nature and culture. [61] Werewolves exceed the boundaries of both and represent slippages between them.[62] We are all a little bit Jekyll, and a little bit (or perhaps a whole lot) Hyde. We are a little bit Lupin, and a little bit Moony. By investing the monsters within, we can begin to understand our tendencies and nature, and how we may be more beastly than we would like to admit.

Despite all of our technological advances throughout our short time here on earth, the tales that we tell remain in our psyches. Whether it involves fighting against the undead in a post-apocalyptic world or living in the tension of the dual natures of the werewolf, we tell these stories because they have universal communicative value. These monsters reveal our fears and anxieties about ourselves and the world around us. But why does this matter? Do the stories we tell have any real value besides gaining a better perspective about the world? In order to answer this question, it is imperative to look at how common tales developed within a particular society. And what better place to look than the birth, development, and abuse of common stories within the modern German nation?

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[61] Chantal Bourgault du Coudray. *The Curse of the Werewolf: Fantasy, Horror, and the Beast Within.* I.B. Tauris & Co. New York. 2006. p. 3.
[62] Ibid.

Chapter III: Folklore and Fascism

"Sometimes folklore is merely fact that seems too implausible for belief."- Paul Barber

Growing up, I was always fascinated with fictional worlds. Anytime that I could get my hands on a book, my nose would be buried in it until I flipped the last page. Immersing myself in worlds of fantasy, mystery, and intrigue was a favorite pastime of mine. As I began to read more nonfiction, I was taught to read such literature in a drastically different way. I was supposed to read merely for facts and statistics, or so I was told. As I've grown older, however, I've learned that even nonfiction works immerse us in different worlds. We can delve into the minds of those who came before us, gleaning whatever they hoped to leave behind for us. As humans, we are inherently fascinated with stories, whether they are fictional or not.

We are creatures driven by narrative. Every single one of us tells stories, whether to ourselves or to others. We write stories as a reflection of ourselves. Often, however, stories can also shape us as well. We become influenced by the narratives that we consume. Depending on what we are exposed to, these narratives can begin to mold us in their own image, making us a reflection of them. Stories affect how we identify ourselves and our role in the world. Narratives allow us to construct various worlds in which we operate. They are tiny keyholes through which we can get a glimpse of the world. Fairytales "serve as portals to wonder worlds, to sites that combine danger and beauty in ways so alluring that they inspire the desire to wander into new imaginative domains."[63] Folklore gives us a glimpse into the ideas that were being perpetuated among the Volk, or people, of a nation. They can also be indicative of the values of a particular group of people. They can reveal the underpinnings of the ideologies of a nation, for "what

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[63] Maria Tatar. *Why Fairy Tales Matter: The Performative and the Transformative*. Western States Folklore Society. Western Folklore 69:1. 2010. P. 576

colonialism is to the history of anthropology, nationalism is to the study of folklore."[64] By

studying the folklore of a particular group, we can begin to see what they hold dear, and how

these beliefs can influence their actions.

Narratives are powerful tools for those who know how to manipulate language and use

the art of storytelling to their own advantage. No event in history exemplifies this more than the

use of propaganda in Nazi Germany. The Reich's skillful use of propaganda under the direction

of Joseph Goebbels proved to be one of the most effective tools for perpetuating Nazi ideology.

By examining the folklore that enraptured the German Volk in the late 19th and early twentieth

centuries, we can begin to look at what principles and ideals that they held, and how such ideals

could lead to the rise of the National Socialist Party. Then, we can look at how the subjugation

and manipulation of folklore can support and sustain ideology that is already in power. Thus, I

argue, the roots of Volkish ideology were already in place throughout much of German folklore,

but the tones of German folklore change throughout the Weimar period. The Nazis took

advantage of early German narratives, and weaved them together to create their unique ideology.

By thinking critically cultural phenomena such as folklore, we can begin to understand why the

Germans so readily accepted National Socialism.

First of all, we must examine the folklore of Early Germany. Germany's history is a long

and complex narrative in itself, so, for now, I will mostly be focusing on folklore collected

leading up the Unification of Germany in 1871. If we are going to be talking about folklore from

this period of time, one of the most obvious works to look at is the collection of folklore and

fairy tales from Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm. Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm took on the task of

collecting the German folklore from the past in an effort to preserve the German identity. The

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[64] Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett. *Mistaken Dichotomies*. Journal of American Folklore 101:140-155. 1988. P. 143

brothers, especially Wilhelm, saw folklore as the remnants of an ancient Germanic faith that was expressed in the form of poetry.[65] This may seem strange, but when we put it into the cultural context, it begins to make sense. The Romantic Movement in Germany saw the past as the ideal age. In his work, Louis L. Snyder describes the goals of the Romantics:

> Many of the German Romantics saw their organic genetic conception of culture as the expression of the Germanic national soul, which had its beginning in the heroic Middle Ages[66]… Like the Romantics the Grimms issued a plea for the claims of the imagination, of emotion and feeling, of individualism, and above all for a synthetic expression of the national genius in all its manifold aspects of literature, art, religion, and philosophy.[67]

The advent of modernity frightened many people, and one response was to look back upon the peasantry with rose-colored glasses. The Volk became a sort of national identity, and their customs and traditions were believed to be the source of truth and nationhood.[68] The Romantics were afraid that many folk traditions would soon disappear with the progression of the modern world, so they enticed the German people to preserve vestiges of the idealized past. This call to collect the signifiers of a pure cultural identity was first made by Johann Gottfried Herder.

In the dying days of the Holy Roman Empire (late 18th century), Germany was divided into hundreds of small territories, each governed by it's own princes and bishops. The Enlightenment had produced many great artists and thinkers from Germany, including Kant, Bach, Friedrich, Goethe, Jacobi, Schiller, and many others. These accomplishments earned Germany the title of "das Volk der Dichter und Denker" (the people of poets and thinkers). As the Empire waned away, however, French influences began to seep into the German

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[65] G. Ronald Murphy. *The Owl, The Raven, & The Dove: The Religious Meaning of the Grimms' Magic Fairy Tales.* New York: Oxford University Press. 2000. p. 3
[66] R. Erganc. *Herder and the Foundations of German Nationalism.* New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1931. Pp. 234.
[67] Wertham, F. *The Show of Violence.* New York: Doubleday, 1949. Pp. 279.
[68] James R. Dow and Hannjost Lixfeld. *German Volkskunde: A Decade of Theoretical Confrontation, Debate and Reorientation (1967-1977).* Bloomington: Indiana University Press. 1986. P. 5

providences. Finally, in 1806, Napoleon Bonaparte conquered and dissolved the Holy Roman

Empire and reorganized it into the Confederation of the Rhine, which was under heavy

influence by French culture. While Herder did not live to see the dissolution of the Holy Roman

Empire, he would have lamented at the French occupation of German lands. He emphasized

that people groups need to preserve their national identity. Germany needed to find a common

unifying language and culture in order to survive. However, he was not only talking about

Germany, as many assume. Herder believed that every group needed to preserve their identity,

because the homogenization of all people groups, as he saw, was impractical because of differing

value system. He always emphasized that there should be no *Favoritvolk*.[69] In fact, he praised the

folk poetry of the Jewish people in his 1782 work, *On the Spirit of Hebrew Poetry*.[70] However, he

did advocated for the perpetuation of the *Volkgeist*, or the spirit of the people, which united the

nation through common language, geography, and character. This idea was further perpetuated

and expanded by Johann Gottlieb Fitche.

Fitche, unlike Herder, did see the French occupation of German lands. Seeing the

devastation that Napoleon's army brought, he pledged to turn Germany into the nation that

would fulfill his cosmopolitan/patriotic philosophy. In his *Address to the German Nation,* Fitche

perpetuated this sense of nationalism. He writes,

> Only when each people, left to itself, develops and forms itself in accordance with its
> own peculiar quality, and only when in every people each individual develops himself in
> accordance with that common quality, as well as in accordance with his own peculiar
> quality-then, and then only, does the manifestation of divinity appear in its true mirror as
> it ought to be…[71]

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[69] Michael Forester. "Johann Gottfried von Herder", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*
(Summer 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL=
http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2015/entries/herder/>.
[70] Johann Gottfried von Herder. *On the Spirit of Hebrew Poetry: An Instruction for Lovers of the Same
and the Oldest history of the Human Spirit.* 1782
[71] Johann Gottlieb Fichte. Thirteenth Address, *Addresses to the German Nation*, ed. George A.
Kelly (New York: Harper Torch Books, 1968), pp. 19091,19394,19798

For Fitche, developing the Volkgeist was seen as a divine mandate. In his Sixth Address, he saw the German character or spirit as being the driving force behind many great achievements in Western society. He saw the German nation as the one to dominate and spread the *Weltgeist* ("world spirit") to the entire world. This worldview fell within the Volkish movement, as it feared the growth of modernism and rationalism. It is within this cultural context that we must analyze the themes of the Grimm Brothers' collection of fairytales.

One of the ways in which the Volk could protect their traditions was by collecting and preserving the national folklore, for folklore were "icons of national identity."[72] Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's fairytales contributed to the growing German consciousness, as they created a unified experience of the past for the Volk. The Grimm Brothers sought to, in a sense, recapture the childhood of Germany. They collected these stories and made them distinctly German, regardless of the French roots they possessed (such as in the works of Perrault, who originally wrote Cinderella[73]). The Grim Brothers included Perrault's work in their first edition, claiming that the stories came from a common ancestry and reflected the German people, even though many of the works were original pieces written by Perrault.[74] They included the stories because they believed that the stories reflected German culture and had been corrupted by other literary traditions and cultures, even if the stories varied from region to region in Germany as well.[75] There are several themes in the Grimm Brothers' fairy tales that have roots in nationalism and Volkish ideology. According to these stories, there are many central themes of German culture,

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[72] Regina Bendix. *In Search of Authenticity: The Formulation of Folklore Studies.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 1997. P. 48

[73] Charles Perrault, "Cendrillon, ou la petite pantoufle de verre," *Histoires ou contes du temps passé, avec de moralites: Contes de ma mere l'Oye* (Paris). 1697

[74] Lydia Jean. *Charles Perrault's Paradox: How Aristocratic Fairy Tales Became Synonymous with Folklore Conservation.* Trames, 11: 280-282. 2007

[75] Maria Tatar. *The Annotated Brothers Grimm.* W.W. Norton & Co. 2004. Pp. xxxiv-xxxviii

including a romanticized peasantry, rootedness in the land, the glorification of violence and nationalism, an antagonistic vision of women, and subtle Anti-Semitism.

First of all, the fairytales have a romanticized vision of the past. The tales reflected the milieu of Medieval Europe, and held a deep tie to the German landscape. The setting consisted of farmlands, villages, and the dark, mysterious forest, while the sea remained unexplored.[76] The mountains, valleys, and rivers take on a mystical quality, free from stifling rationality and the mechanistic progression of modernity. Forests contained dark spirits, providing a fascinating, yet frightening ethos.[77] Witches lived within the wood; princesses were locked in tall towers, far from the reach of heroic, if lusty, princes. Most of the stories involve people who are in the peasantry. Farmers, tradesmen, and artisans live near the king and his castle.[78] The nuclear family prevailed at the core of these tales. The father is typically seen as good; he was respected and obeyed. The conflict in the story comes from various sources, including poverty and stepmothers. The family was always being attacked by outside, foreign sources. Class distinctions were clear in these fairytales. Most intriguing, the royalty and the peasantry are depicted in the most positive light. The middle class, however, which consisted of merchants, innkeepers, and doctors, are condemned for their vices (especially greed).[79] Good always triumphs over evil, even if the means by which those triumphs are accomplished are less than virtuous.

Furthermore, the values espoused in Jacob and Wilhelm's collection were Volkish and nationalistic in other ways as well. Let us take the example of Cinderella. After her mother dies, Cinderella's father marries another woman. Then, when she and her two daughters take up residence in Cinderella's abode, life starts to take a downward spiral. Cinderella is stripped of her

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[76] Louis L. Snyder. *Nationalistic Aspects of the Grimm Brothers' Fairy Tales.* The Journal of Social Psychology, 1951, 33, 209-223.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid.
[79] Ibid.

garments and they give her dirty clothes and wooden shoes. She is given the task of preforming menial chores while the sisters mock her and live in luxury. Eventually, Cinderella marries a prince, is swept off of her feet (while her stepsisters' heels are cut off), and her stepsisters are brutally punished by having their eyes gouged out.[80] There are several interpretations of the symbolism in the tale. If you look at it through a nationalistic lens, however, one can see deep political roots. As stated before, during the Grimm Brothers' life, the land we today consider to be Germany was under French occupation, which proved to be a source for intense antagonism against foreigners. In this light, we can see that this tale could potentially be an allegory of the plight of the German people. She suffers at the hand of foreigners, obeying their arduous demands with politeness and integrity. The German people no doubt identified themselves with Cinderella, seeing themselves as bearing the weight of foreign influence. Even though this tale was written before the Grimm Brothers' lives,[81] they appropriated the text to give it the subtle nationalistic nuance. Furthermore, it also gives the German the hope for a savior prince who would sweep them off their feet, thus freeing them from and punishing foreign influences.

This appeal to authority is also ever present in this collection of stories. Obedience is a key virtue in these fairytales. The father figure is never defied or disobeyed; he is seen as the head of the family. To challenge is authority is to invite danger into the household. The kind also reigns supreme over his people. Kings are portrayed as mighty, wise, generous, emotional, and attractive.[82] Subjects are supposed to love, revere, and fear the king that they serve. In the same

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[80] Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, "Aschenputtel," *Kinder-un Hausmarchen* [Children's and Household Tales – Grimms' Fairy Tales], 7th edition (Gottingen; Verlag der Dieterichschen Buchhandlung, 1857), no. 21, pp.119-26

[81] Charles Perrault, "Cendrillon, ou la petite pantoufle de verre," *Histoires ou contes du temps passé, avec de moralites: Contes de ma mere l'Oye* (Paris). 1697

[82] Louis L. Snyder. *Nationalistic Aspects of the Grimm Brothers' Fairy Tales.* The Journal of Social Psychology, 1951, 33, 209-223.

token, young men in the fairytales display one major characteristic: courage. It is though his willpower, determination, strength, and courage that he overcomes the obstacles in his path. War is seen as something to be celebrated, much like in Rilke's famous 1912 poem, *Cornet.* Military service is seen as the highest honor, and fighting brings out morality through strength and courage.[83] Not only are the fairy tales filled with violence in depictions of warfare, but gruesome acts were also inherent in the domestic life of the characters.

The tales in the Brothers Grimm highlight brutal violence as a fact of life. In fact, because of the violent depictions in the stories, the collection was deemed as inappropriate for children. In subsequent editions of the tales, the Brothers rewrote and took some of the tales out of the collection.[84] One example of this occurs in the tale, "How Some Children Played at Slaughtering." In the story, a two young boys witness their father kill a pig. Then, as they are playing, one of the young boys decides to imitate his father and slits the throat of his younger brother. The mother, who is bathing another child, hears her son cry out in his death; she rushes downstairs, sees what happened, and in a rage, stabs her other son with the same knife. She hurries to attend to the child she left in the tub, but he has already drowned in the bathwater. The mother becomes so frightened and distraught, and she eventually hangs herself. Her husband comes back home after working in the fields; he sees the travesty that occurred, and he dies because of his sadness.[85] We see Cinderella's stepsisters as their eyes are plucked out. A wicked mother-in-law burned at the stake. A witch's daughter is ripped to shreds by wild beasts. While the characters that receive such terrible wrath are portrayed as wicked, their deaths are some of the most gruesome scenes written in folklore. These German fairy tales evoke an eerie

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[83] Ibid.

[84] Maria Tatar. *The Annotated Brothers Grimm.* W.W. Norton & Co. 2004. Pp. xxxiv-xxxviii

[85] Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, ""How Some Children Played at Slaughtering" [Children's Literature]," in Children and Youth in History, Item #113, http://chnm.gmu.edu/cyh/case-studies/113 (accessed November 28, 2015). Annotated by Donald Haase

overtone by placing death alongside the mundane. By placing these torments casually beside the commonplace, these fairytales set themselves apart from other mythical accounts of violence.[86] Regarding violence, Snyder writes:

> And so it goes, with Hansel and Gretel shoving the wicked witch into the oven for a merited cremation, bad step-mothers torn to death by wild beasts, others forced to dance in red-hot slippers, and tailors having their eyes gouged out one by one. To find a comparable obsession with vengeance and death it would be necessary to turn to ancient Egypt. But where the Egyptians linked death with elaborate ritual and a traditional piety, the characters in the Marchen [Grimm Brothers' fairytales] challenge it in a mood of hysterical fear and revenge.[87]

Revenge against the forces of evil was a central theme in these stories. But what were these outside sources. Sometimes it has hunger; other times it was coercion. But who tried to coerce these young children? Who played the adversary for our heroes? The main antagonists in the Grimm Brothers' fairytales were mostly women and Jews.

When we read the fairytales of the Brothers Grimm, we see that women serve as protagonists. This makes sense due to the fact that the Jacob and Wilhelm collected their stories from oral sources. These sources were often German women, most of whom were spinners.[88] Female characters, however, often have traits that distinguish their moral sensibilities. A woman's attractiveness seems to be a central indicator of her worth and value. Female princesses are often passive, bearing burdens until a prince sweeps her off of her feet. On the other hand, unattractive females are often selfish, rude, and vindictive towards their more attractive counterparts. Thus, beauty is dangerous; it sets up the female for victimization. Instead of being submissive, older and less attractive women tend to be stronger and more determined.[89] Princes

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[86] V Brun. *The German Fairy Tale*. Menorah J., 1939, 27, 153-154

[87] Louis L. Snyder. *Nationalistic Aspects of the Grimm Brothers' Fairy Tales*. The Journal of Social Psychology, 1951, 33, 209-223.

[88] Ruth Michaelis-Jena. *Oral Traditions and the Brothers Grimm*. Folklore, (1971). pp. 265-275

[89] Alice Neikirk. *"Happily Ever After" (or What Fairytales Teach Girls About Being Women)*. Anthropology 324 Essay. Pp. 39

are handsome, but they are also violent. Princes have often never met the princess; they have only heard tales of her beauty. They risk their lives, slay dragons, and rescue the beautiful blonde damsels. Thus, the ideal woman in the eye of the audience would be one who is submissive, young, and beautiful (often blond).

Out of over 200 stories, only three in the collection contained Jewish characters: "The Good Bargain," "The Bright Sun Brings it to Light," and "The Jew Among Brambles." In "The Good Bargain," a Jew tries to cheat a young peasant out of his money. He and the peasant argue, and the matter is brought before the king. The peasant assures the king, "Ah, what a Jew says is always false- no true word ever comes out of his mouth!"[90] The king does not believe the story of the Jew, saying "The Jew has assuredly deceived one or the other of us, either myself or the peasant."[91] In this tale, the Jew is seen as greedy and deceitful. Then, in "The Bright Sun Brings it to Light," a tailor brutally beats a Jew to death, assuming that he has a great amount of money with him. Finally, in "The Jew Among Brambles," a merry and honest young servant meets a Jew, who pines after the voice of a songbird. The servant gives the stranger his entire earnings from three years of work. The stranger rewards him with three wishes; one of the servant's wishes is for a fiddle that would compel its listeners to dance. So, to punish the Jew for his greed, the servant forces the Jew to dance among the brambles. The Jew is tortured as his clothes are torn and his skin is ripped. Even after the man pleads for mercy, the servant thinks to himself, "You have fleeced people often enough, now the torn-bushes shall do the same to you," and he continues to torment the Jew. The servant steals the Jew's purse, which is full of gold, and runs away. The Jew goes into the town to report the crime, and the servant is brought

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[90] Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, "Aschenputtel," *Kinder-un Hausmarchen* [Children's and Household Tales – Grimms' Fairy Tales], 7th edition (Gottingen; Verlag der Dieterichschen Buchhandlung, 1857), no. 7
[91] Ibid

to court. The servant tells the judge that he did not steal the purse, but rather that the Jew gave him the purse of his own free will. The judge scoffs, saying, "no Jew would do that." Even though the servant is sentenced to be hanged, he uses his fiddle to torture the town until the judge offers to spare his life. Then, the servant makes the Jew confess that he had stolen the money, which he does. The Jew is then taken to the gallows and hung as a thief.[92] In all of these tales, Jews are portrayed as thieving, materialistic, and devious.

What we find from the Grimm Brothers' collection of fairytales is a tale that is rather grim. It seems that the brothers helped to shape certain traits within the German Volk. Discipline, obedience to authority, the glorification of nationalism and violence, the subjugation of women, and Anti-Semitism are all present within these folktales.[93] These traits, which were seen to embody the German Volkgeist, shaped the character of the nation. But before the Nazis rose to power, there was a brief period where a different kind of folktale was spread throughout Germany.

The First World War had brought many changes to the Western world. The long-standing monarchy in Germany was now dissolved, now being replaced with a democratic republic. The Treaty of Versailles had placed a heavy burden upon the German people, who struggled economically, socially, and politically. During this time, however, a new type of fairy tale emerged from German culture. These stories vary wildly in theme and style, reflecting the frantic climate in which they were born. The bridge between the Grimm Brothers' romantic tales and the Weimar Republic's progressive stories lies with Hermann Hesse.

Hesse wrote many poems and novels, the most famous of which is *Siddhartha*. His fairytales tended to reflect on dreamlike worlds, nature, and the consequences of war. He

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[92] Ibid. no. 110

[93] Louis L. Snyder. *Nationalistic Aspects of the Grimm Brothers' Fairy Tales*. The Journal of Social Psychology, 1951, 33, 209-223.

emphasized the need for creativity and for the individual to know his or herself. If the Grimm

Brothers' tales looked back towards an idyllic past, then Hesse's *Marchen* looked upon realistic

(and often pessimistic) modern present. Whereas the Grimm's fairytales took place in enchanted

forests and quaint villages, Hesse's tales took place in modern landscapes. Instead of being

endangered by poverty, wolves, or witches, these tales highlighted the dangers of a capitalistic,

bourgeoisie, and conservative society.[94] Hesse was confronted with the terrible realities of war,

and he was likely torn between two worlds. Regarding the social use of fairytales during wartime,

Dawn Heerspink writes, "fairy tales held a central place in wartime society as a means of

socializing children through the use of familiar tales with a new context, as an area of

hybridization of childhood and adulthood to confront wartime reality, and as both a way to deal

with trauma and a critical discourse on war."[95] Fairytales were a way to process the changing

social order around him. Hesse's "Strange News from Another Planet" and "The Poet" reflect a

longing for peace in the midst of a drastically unstable social order. This theme was even

reflected in other authors, such as Thomas Mann's "Magic Mountain" (1924) and Oskar Graf's

"Licht und Schatten" (1927).[96] Hesse retained a hopeful optimism within these works, as the

protagonist always overcomes adversity through intelligence and wit. Later Weimar writers,

however, were not as optimistic.

The fairytale writers in the Weimar Republic were plagued with an overwhelming

pessimism as they dealt with the reality of a rapidly changing social and political landscape. The

stories of the Weimar writers deal with the breakdown of society and the implications of

injustice in the modern world. Bertolt Brecht's two fairytales (1929) deal with the breakdown of

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[94] Peggy Riley, "Nazi Fairy Tales," Oct. 11, 2011. Accessed on Nov. 29, 2014 Web. URL=http://peggyriley.com/2011/10/04/nazi-fairy-tales/

[95] Dawn Heerspink. *"No Man's Land": Fairy Tales, Gender, Socialization, Satire, and Trauma During the First and Second World Wars*, Grand Valley Journal of History: Vol. 1: Iss. 1, Article 1. 2012.

[96] Jack Zipes. *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*. 2nd Ed. New York: Routledge. 2006. P. 145

communication in a tumultuous world.[97] Some of the writers of this time simply reappropriated traditional fairy tales and changed them to correspond to the contemporary social and political condition.[98]

Folklore was also highly politicized, as evidenced by Zur Muhlen's Marxist work, *Fairy Tales for Worker's Children*. Her work pointed out the exploitation of class and race, as well as discriminations and injustices being faced by the proletariat. In the story, "The Sparrow," a young sparrow decides to leave his bourgeoisie home, and he is determined to fly to other countries just like the bigger birds do. Through perseverance, he travels thousands of miles and witnesses scenes of oppression. While he wants to fly back to give this knowledge to his brothers and sisters so that they can be free, the sparrow dies, leaving the message in the hands of a young boy, who took the sparrow's counsel and continued the struggle.[99] Her work sought to shed light on the exploitation inherent within the centralization of property and wealth, and she posited how these conditions could be changed. Lionel Gossman comments on the morals of Zur Muhlen's fairytales, writing that her stories "prescribe models of behavior radically opposed to those of traditional fairy tales, the basic lesson of which had been that all one's wishes will come true if one overcomes temptation and faithfully observes established norms of good conduct."[100]

In the Weimar Republic, fairytales reflected a chaotic struggle to find a social and political order. This, however, could not last. Jack Zipes writes, "Given the fascist optimism and doctrinaire stress on a new world order, it is quite apparent why the new literary fairy tale of

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[97] Ibid.

[98] Jack Zipes. *Fairy Tales and Fables From Weimar Days.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. 1989. P. 19

[99] Herminia Zur Muhlen. *Fairy Tales for Worker's Children.* Trans. Ida Dailes. Chicago: Daily Worker Publishing. May 1925

[100] Lionel Gossman. *"Fairy Tales for Workers' Children." Zur Muhlen and the Socialist Fairy Tale.* UK: Open Book. 2010

Weimar did not and could not thrive in Nazi Germany."[101] The democratic experiment of the

Weimar Republic had failed. In the face of such uncertainty and confusion, the Nazis had a clear

(if entirely disturbing) vision for the future of the German people. The Nazis proposed that they

had the answers to the country's woes, and in the face of crippling debt and social disorder, the

German people readily accepted their radical ideology. The Nazis were ruthless; they banned

every other political party and attempted to crush competing ideologies. As such, when the

Nazis came to power, the fairytales of the Weimar Republic were crushed under the National

Socialists' heel, and the former "innocent" folktale became an ideological weapon.[102]

When the Nazis took control of Germany in 1933, many of the Weimar folktale writers

were either killed or forced into exile, leaving few traces of their work.[103] Instead, the Nazis

capitalized on the older folktales of the Volk. Following Volkish ideology, many folklorists

believed that The New Reich had to be built on the foundation of the traditions preserved in the

peasant community.[104] A large portion of Nazi children's literature was simply a modernized

version of the Grimm tales.[105] The Nazis also, however, adopted these tales to use for

propaganda. Little Red Riding Hood's iconic red cloak was now emblazoned with a swastika,

symbolizing the German people. The prowling Wolf symbolized the danger of the sinister Jew.

Her savior was a strapping young man wearing an SS uniform.[106] Furthermore, already existing

anti-Semitism within the Grimm Brothers' collection was exploited and emphasized. As we saw

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[101] Jack Zipes. *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion.* 2nd Ed. New York: Routledge. 2006. P. 145
[102] Peggy Riley, "Nazi Fairy Tales," Oct. 11, 2011. Accessed on Nov. 29, 2014 Web.
URL=http://peggyriley.com/2011/10/04/nazi-fairy-tales/
[103] Jack Zipes. *Fairy Tales and Fables From Weimar Days.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
1989. P. 3
[104] Christa Kamenetsky. *Folklore as a Political Tool in Nazi Germany.* American Folklore Society.
The Journal of American Folklore, Vol. 85, No. 337 (Jul. - Sep., 1972), pp. 221-235
[105] Petrova, V., & Vibakh, A. *Nazi Literature for Children.* The Living Age, 1934, 347, 365-366.
[106] Allan Hall. "Nazi Fairy Tales Paint Hitler as Little Red Riding Hood's Saviour," *The Telegraph*,
Telegraph Media Group, 15 Apr. 2010. Web. 27 Nov 2015.

before, themes such as obedience to authority, military strength, violence, nationalism, and hatred for the foreigner tickled the ears of the National Socialists. They used the material that was already there for their own purposes. Therefore, stories such as "The Jew Among Brambles" became a goldmine for the Nazis to use in their anti-Semitic propaganda. Not only did the Nazi's use already existing folktales to propagate their nationalistic and racist agenda, but they also created their own fairytales.

Two major examples of anti-Semitic children's folklore written by the Nazis come to us in Ernst Hiemer's *Der Giftpilz* (The Poisonous Mushroom) and Elvira Bauer's *Rau keinem Fuchs auf grüner Heid und keinem Jud auf seinem Eid* (Trust No Fox on his Green Heath and No Jew on his Oath). *Der Giftpilz* starts with a scene of a young boy and his mother picking mushrooms in a field. She explains to him that just as there are safe mushroom that are good to eat and dangerous ones that are poisonous, so too there are good people and bad people. When she asks young Franz if he knows how to identify such people, he proudly replies, Of course I know, mother! They are the Jews! Our teacher has often told us about them."[107] She then praises him and tells him that no matter what disguise they wear or what good thing they say, they will always be Jews, and therefore liars. She then tells him, "For our folk they [Jews] are poison."[108] The story ends with a warning: one must be able to recognize a Jew in order to protect oneself. The rest of the tales are used to "tell the truth about the Jewish poison mushroom…they show the Jew for what he really is: *The Devil in human form*."[109] The various tales cover topics such as "How to Identify a Jew," "How Jewish Traders Cheat," "How Jews Torment Animals," "What Christ Said About the Jews," and, most chillingly, "Without Solving the Jewish Question, There

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[107] Ernst Hiemer, *Der Giftpilz* (Nuremberg, Stürmerverlag, 1938).
[108] Ibid.
[109] Ibid.

is No Salvation for Mankind."[110] Each story is also accompanied by illustrations depicting Jews as ugly, swindling, and perverted creatures. This combination of vitriolic text and consistent imagery reinforces anti-Semitic thinking in the minds of young children reading it. In fact, the anti-Semitism is so blatant and forceful that Goebbels privately denounced it, believing that subtle anti-Semitism was much more effective. He believed that these stories were so flagrant that even children could see through the propaganda. Feeding into his ambivalent relationship with the book's publisher, Julius Streicher, Goebbels wrote in his diary in 1938, "Streicher has published a new children's book. Terrible stuff. Why does the *Führer* put up with it?"[111]

Finally, we have one more piece of anti-Semitic folklore written in Nazi Germany to examine: Elvira Bauer's *Rau Keinem Fuchs auf Grüner Heid und Keinem Jud auf Seinem Eid* (Trust No Fox on his Green Heath and No Jew on his Oath). Elvira Bauer was an eighteen-year-old art student, and her work was used as an educational tool for German children. Published by Der Stürmer (at which Streicher was the head) in 1936, this work was not a fairytale in the traditional sense. Instead of having a basic plot, the book is filled with rhymes and illustrations that emphasize the differences between Germans and Jews. Nearly every single line of the book is filled with anti-Semitic language, as the Jew is portrayed to be the root of every evil in the world. A section titled "The Eternal Jew" explains that Jews are a cursed race on account of their murder of Christ. This claim has its roots in Medieval Christian circles, as both Luther and the Roman Catholic Church used the theology of deicide as a reason as to why Christianity superseded Judaism. In these repurposed fairytales, we can see the continuation of such thought. Jews are depicted once again as being crafty, swindling people. The book applauds the deportation of Jews, lauding, "Here Jews are not wanted. The German is the owner here. So,

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[110] Ibid.

[111] Randall Bytwerk. *Der Giftpilz*. Calvin College German Propaganda Archive. URL= http://research.calvin.edu/german-propaganda-archive/thumb.htm

friend Yid, best disappear!"[112] In the final passage, the author emphatically insists that the Jews leave Germany by any means necessary, saying, "In far-off South is the country, Which cradled Jewish ancestry. Let them go back there with wife and child, As quickly as they came!"[113] These virulent texts taught children that a Jewish person was less than human and did not belong in the German Reich. This work served as a pretext to the Final Solution of the Jewish people, in which millions of men, women, and children were slaughtered.

The German people were surrounded with competing narratives about themselves and the world around them. German fairy tales have been used to promote war, death, and subjugation. These stories had a way of reaching the Volk through the subconscious, subtly suggesting a pattern of behavior. The narrative of the Nazis became, in a way, its own kind of fairy tale told to a desperate Volk. However, like all good fairy tales, this one has a moral lesson. The question is, will we learn from it? Today, we must take this into consideration, for we are not isolated from such fantastic tales. Similarly, we too are surrounded by narratives. As Jack Zipes said in a recent interview,

> Almost every single commercial on television for shampoo, sports shoes, drinks, food, clothes, perfume, cars, etc., is a short fairy tale, for they are given magical qualities. In other words, if you use the right shampoo or perfume your hair will glisten, you will smell fragrantly and you will become a princess or prince. If you wear the right sports shoes, you will fly through the air and win any kind of game. If you whistle for an insurance agent, he or she will appear in an instant. Fairy tales are with us day in and day out, not just in commercials, but references in the theater, movies, museums, schools, etc.[114]

We all consume narratives from the books we read, the television shows and moves we watch, and the music we listen to. We are all being told something about who we are, where we are, and

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[112] Elvira Bauer, *Trau keinem Fuchs auf grüner Heid und keinem Jud auf seinem Eid* (Nuremberg: Stürmer Verlag, 1936).
[113] Ibid.
[114] Amy Goetzman. "Jack Zipes, A Scholar of Fairy Tales, Has Two Brothers Grimm Books Out." Minnpost, Minneapolis, MN. January 27th, 2015

where we are going. Johann Gottfried von Herder wrote, "A poet is the creator of the nation around him, he gives them a world to see and has their souls in his hand to lead them to that world."[115] Let us all be poets who are cautiously, yet optimistically aware that the fiction we create could very well indeed become reality. May we be shapers and writers of our present reality, keeping in mind the dangers of our foibles of the past.

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[115] Johann Gottfried von Herder and Heinrich Kurz. *Gedichte; Auszug aus einem Briefwechsel über Ossian, und die Lieder alter Völker.* Bibliographischen Instituts, 1871

Conclusion:

"Of course it is happening inside your head, Harry, but why on earth should that mean that it is not real?" –
Professor Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore

In the chronologically first book of the Chronicles of Narnia, *The Magician's Nephew*, our two main characters stumble onto a strange world. After initial confusion and lethargy, this place is discovered to be a link to all of the various worlds, including Narnia, Charn, and Earth. This "Wood Between the Worlds" acts as an intangible, immaterial link between all of these different and strange lands. Similarly, in Tim Burton's *The Nightmare before Christmas*, our Pumpkin King protagonist, Jack Skellington, finds himself lost in the woods as he laments his boredom with his stagnant role. There, in the midst of the forest, he finds several trees with decorative doors, each representing a different holiday. It is then that he is accidently thrust into the door to Christmas Land, a world that had previously remained strange and foreign to Jack. Jack then becomes obsessed with the world that he has experienced, and he cannot communicative his wonderment to the people of his hometown. Thus, like the freed man in Plato's cave, Jack retreats to isolation. The rest of the film details Jack's attempts to make this world that he has experienced real in his own realm of existence.

The stories that we tell act in a similar fashion. This is an opening to the possibility of different worlds. It is an invitation to transcendence, which makes it inherently religious in nature. As I have argued through the last chapter, literature can be dangerous. It can be subversive. But it can also be liberating. Just like the cathedral I walked into in Rome, texts are also points at which the divine-human encounter takes place. These become sacred spaces, portals to another world. They reveal that the veil between worlds is thin and malleable. It is like a fabric that changes and folds around the corners of reality. What we see in material reality is a façade that can be broken through. It is there for us to reach out and grasp. Literature takes us beyond the false reality of things. The idea that literature serves as a sacred space is not a new or

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innovative idea. In fact, Jewish history, the Protestant Reformation (and its subsequent denominational divisions), and countless other religious movements presuppose this fact. The Holy Scripture becomes an arena in which the divine communicates to us; it is a space to be upheld and treated with the utmost fear and respect. They continue to fill us with fear and dread, while simultaneously offering hope and comfort.

The monster is an integral part of this process. Fantasy is the central component of ideology. Fantasy provides an easy answer. Monsters within fantasy isolate our fears and project them upon a simple object. Thus, our fears become much more manageable and easier to control. It unites the volk against a common enemy. When one replaces the multitude of fears within a culture or society with a single, antagonistic entity, then solutions become much more simple. This projection allows us to create a concrete image of the enemy, which enables us to take action and mobilize against this perceived threat. In this case, the formula for peace and prosperity becomes incredibly straightforward: if we kill or incapacitate of the monster, then we eliminate the problem as well.

We attack the monster because it reminds us of ourselves. Their grotesque nature makes us uncomfortable. They are figures of disparity within the well-established order of the world. In 1919, Freud wrote about what he called the *unheimlich*, or the "unhomely" or "uncanny."[116] He asserted that the *unheimlich* was a feeling of strange familiarity, rather than danger or mystery. The *unheimlich* unconsciously reminds us of the id, which holds our repressed and forbidden (and often sexual) impulses and desires. According to Freud, our superego reacts in the fear that, through these unconscious impulses, societal norms would be transgressed. Monsters are the embodiment of the *unheimlich*. They throw us into chaos and disorientation, and they reveal

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[116] Sigmund Freud. *Das Unheimliche.* First published in Imago, Bd. V., 1919; reprinted in Sammlung, Fünfte Folge. Trans. Alix Strachey. Massachussets Institute of Technology: Cambridge. Web. Accessed Jan. 16, 2015.

hidden insecurities of faith in oneself, society, and the world.[117] They are frightening and fascinating beings that, through their fear and dread, lead us back to the familiar. They return us to our repressed selves, and aid us in working through these anxieties.

Therefore, monsters are also a product of bourgeoisie ideology. Monsters are used and exploited as a way for the established ruling class to regain a sense of identity; by uniting against a common threat, the anomie and ennui of peace is mitigated and alleviated through the danger and adrenaline of the hunt. Having the available tools to successfully hunt and slay the monster is the privilege of the ruling class, as peasants call out to nobility and clergy to save them from the monumental threat. This theme is exemplified in the werewolf and the zombie, as those who lack available resources are faced with the largest threat. There is an implicit critique of the proletariat within zombie literature. For even though the power of the sovereign is shown to be a farce, the rule of the proletariat is riddled with death, cruelty, and barbarism. Thus, the subtle critique of common rule and democracy is perpetuated through these fearsome narratives. These political notions unconsciously terrify us, and the monster reveals the repressed improprieties that we have about ourselves. Through the construction of these creatures in fantasy, we can project ourselves into the narrative, feeding off of the imagined possibility of a more dangerous world. Then, we return to everyday life, satiated by the imaginary "what if." The monster allows us not only to escape from the present reality, but to also be the hero of our own egos, fearlessly imbedding ourselves within the constructed narrative. We voluntarily allow ourselves to live within the narrative, unconsciously desiring to face our repressed fears and desires. Through glimpsing at these fantastical constructions of evil and horror, we begin to get a clearer (and more frightening picture) of who we are, who we aspire to be, and our basal fears and anxieties.

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[117] Timothy K. Beal. *Religion and its Monsters.* (New York: Routledge). 2002. Pp. 4-5. Print.

The monster is an inherently paradoxical creation. It is a construction of darkness, yet it acts as a light. It is entirely grotesque, yet we are attracted to it. We desire to flee from the monster, but we are simultaneously enraptured and fascinated with it. We desire to kill the monster, but we continue to keep them alive through our collective fiction. French philosopher Jean Brun conceded, "The constitution of the monster implies that taboos have been transgressed to promote adventures into the realm of impossible possibilities…it is an evasion at once liberating and intoxicating, lifting from life all barriers confining the species. And so, the monstrous is exciting (exalting)."[118]

This paradoxical nature of the monster is what makes it sacred. We all seek and create the sacred in various ways, even through horror literature. The sacred all at once overwhelms and terrifies us. The sacred is the *mysteruium tremendum et fascinanas.* That is, as Kripal succinctly put it, "the mystical (*mysterium*) as both fucking scary (*tremendum*) and utterly fascinating (*fascinans*)."[119] The sacred completely enraptures us with fear and trembling, while at the same time it offers us hope and comfort amidst the darkness. As I walked into the Roman cathedral, I was all at once captivated and terrified of the majesty of such an ornate and holy place. I felt incredibly insignificant and powerless. Yet, at the same time, I was given comfort by being told that this force, this God to which this cathedral was dedicated, was on my side. This divine source was in my corner, comforting me and alleviating my fears. The same principle applies to horror literature.

We, as humans, seek out terrifying experiences. We watch horrific movies, seek out haunted houses, and revel in the spookiness of Halloween for an entire month. After watching a

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[118] Jean Brun. *"Le Prestige du monstre" Le Mythe de la Peine.* (Paris) 1967. P. 303
[119] Jeffrey Kripal. *Authors of the Impossible: The Paranormal and the Sacred.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press). 2010. P. 265. Print.

scary film or reading a terrifying book, we begin to become paranoid. Every creak becomes a footstep; a rough wind becomes a beleaguered moan. Yet we seem to attain a grotesque pleasure from being terrified. It releases opiate endorphins within our sympathetic nervous system, filling us with fear (of an outside entity, outside of the house/ourselves) and anxiety (of an internal threat, within the house/ourselves). Then, when the film or book is over, we are flooded with a sense of relief, as we remind ourselves that it "was just a movie." The recovery period between fear/anxiety and homeostasis differs from person to person, but we eventually go back for more. This could simply be explained as an addiction to trauma, yet I find that far too reductionist. For horror literature does not seek to alleviate our fears by suggesting that the *tremendum* is not real; rather, horror literature acts as a sacred space, revealing our repressed selves in an effort to transform fear into anxiety. The external fear of the "other" now becomes the internal fear of the self, which becomes a much more manageable and terrifying arena.

Overall, in this work, I am all at once afraid and ecstatic that more questions arise than answers. But asking questions, no matter how seemingly absurd or unanswerable, is the only way that we make room for discovery. But as we work towards a theory regarding the nature of fiction, language, and reality, we must pose several questions. For example, is consciousness limited merely to our five senses? Could one have a thought or experience beyond the conscious five senses by extending (transcending) beyond them? Could one have an original thought only by extending beyond the five senses, beyond physical experience? Are original thoughts (and, in essence, the Real) repressed by the failure to communicate them (either willingly or forced by our limitations) and thus they bubble up through fiction itself? In a sense, could the fiction really be Real? Could the Imaginary Order be our closest attempts to grasp toward the Real? It could be argued so, even though I do not propose it is indeed so. I am much more comfortable saying that the principles and themes that arise through the fiction we create indeed real and pressing,

but I am much more hesitant to say that zombies, werewolves, vampires, and ghosts actually exist. However, we must not completely rule out that possibility, especially considering our limited consciousness and understanding. As Dr. Jeffery Kripal wrote, "I am convinced, with Myers and Freud, that the hidden mind of the unconscious is as much a Gothic basement filled with the haunting ghosts of suppressed desires, unspeakable aggressions, and gullible nonsense as it is a potential window into the supernormal and the sublime."[120]

With Kripal, I am convinced that these characters and tropes must come from somewhere within our collective unconsciousness. As such, we must be wiling to challenge ourselves to ask what is real. We must be willing to gray the line that distinguishes fact from fiction. Maybe it's just my naiveté. Maybe it's just my inner-child who wants to believe that the world of Harry Potter could be real. But I believe that the world of magic, wonderment, and the unexplainable must exist somewhere. It has to exist. We experience it through various modes of transcendence, whether it is through art, literature, music, or even religion. We all seek transcendence, a break from the normality of material existence.

Monsters are just a small part of our yearning for the transcendent. Monsters arise from the "oceanic," the feeling of eternal expanse with which we must fill in order to gain a sense of transcendence. We all feel the sort of emptiness that beckons us to feed it. We fill it with everything that we think will satisfy us. When these things, which are finite, ultimately fail to fill it, we look towards the infinite. But the infinite, when taken at face value, can ultimately do nothing more than give a façade that the emptiness is satisfied. However, if we move to the transcendent, the can get short glimpses, or tastes, of contentedness. This is the recursive call of the void: to empty ourselves and be filled with the infinite transcendent. However, this call is one that is incredibly difficult to accept.

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[120] Ibid. p. 9

It is difficult to come to grips with our own transcendent desires because they transgress what we perceive to be real. However, what we consider to be reality is merely social agreements rooted in shared experience. The fictional narratives that we write are attempts to test and define the boundaries of what we perceive as reality. When one begins to assert that these figures and monsters are indeed real, then that breaks the social understanding of our shared experiences. Therefore, that person becomes pathologized as clinically insane, and therefore dehumanized so that social order may be maintained. In order to protect our social contracts that are developed through the Symbolic Order, we allow our super-ego to trap and constrain our innate desire for the transcendent. It is the narratives that we construct about the world around us that permit our superegos to delineate faith from insanity. What differentiates one's faith in the supernormal and one's confidence in reason comes down to authorization. What stories do we authorize to be true? Everything comes down to how we construct metanarratives.

When we authorize the metanarrative of science (the world has a predictable order and we can trust our senses), we are able to make incredible advances that seem to legitimize the metanarrative. Science, just like faith, must have a way to legitimize its own presuppositions, and it does so through philosophy.[121] We then put our trust into the presuppositions that make up the metanarrative, even if they are not entirely proven. We do the same with religious systems. We authorize the metanarrative of supernatural beings and miracles interjecting upon the natural world. Then, when we see things that cannot be explained by natural or rational means, we fall back upon the supernatural metanarrative that we have already authorized. To those who have not authorized these metanarratives, the conclusions that one group comes to seem ridiculous

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[121] Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge.* Trans, Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

and silly, mostly because the presuppositions of their respective metanarratives have not been adequately recognized and accepted. The stories that we tell ourselves, and the consequential acceptance or rejection of those narratives, authorize us to act in the world around us.

These stories, however, are not stagnant. They are not static pieces of art, forever etched into history. They, just like individuals and society, are still in a state of "becoming." The fiction that we write is not only indicative of our present condition, but it is also a barometer to measure our vision for humanity. The development of the zombie shows us our nihilism and cynicism toward the future, especially in the face of biological warfare. The subtle shifts in werewolf literature shows us that the struggle between our two natures is eternal, but differs in depth and controllability. The development of folklore in Germany shows us that even old stories can be repurposed and exploited for entirely different ends than the author intended. It reveals our subconscious connection with the past, using the narratives given to us as templates to make sense of the current turmoil that surrounds us and the uncertainty of the future.

Thus, through all of these examples, we see that not only do stories reveal what we presently believe about the world around us, but also what we wish the world would look like. Through the stories that we tell, we can begin to gently sculpt and shape the world in which we live. The stories that we authorize, and the imprints that they contribute to the psyche, form the basis of our identification. We orient our lives and our place in the world by the stories that we tell ourselves. Then, as we live our lives in the present, we use these stories to guide us. They give us correction. They give us comfort. They give us hope. They provide us with the very essence of what it means to live a meaningful existence. They give us the tools to build a better, more thoughtful world. So may we see beauty and meaning, even in the horrific. Let us all be poets, playing with the words that we are given so that we can begin to build better bridges between us.

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