

New Leaf

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Character Templates as Narrative Guides

English Major Cooperative

Fall 2021: Senior Seminar



Monsters

Moby Dick

Jaws

Cthulhu

The Thing

Jesuses

Nausicaa

Cool Hand Luke

Grand Inquisitor

Neo

Warriors

Conan, the barbarian

Mishima

King Arthur

Seven Samurai

Rebels

H.I. McDunnough

Satan

Vanessa Lutz

Frank Booth

This issue is devoted to presenting character templates as guides to generating creative and analytical content. The students enrolled in a senior seminar on narrative and rhetoric could either use a character template to fashion a short story or apply it as a frame to analyze another source that fits the template of characterizations. Though seemingly complex, the process was straightforward: after reviewing about four sources (books, movies, short stories and poems), I proposed a list of ten traits that represented a character's identity/persona/ethos. The class would then revise the list and agree to apply it in their papers. One trait could be dropped without incurring a grade penalty on the paper. This heuristic and rhetorical approach to narrative was well received in two seminar classes. My argument to the classes for the merit of an imitative process is recreated below:

Although it might seem unoriginal, derivative, or even (in some ways) un-American, we are going to apply a character template to generate content for your creative or analytical papers in this class. I say Un-American because we tend to foreground originality and individualism in our culture, so if I say go out and imitate a famous author, it just seems contrived or artificial. However, in the rhetorical tradition, the imitation of others more competent than yourself has a long history. In general, most classical rhetoricians felt that there were three necessary elements to becoming a strong orator: principles or theories to guide the student, practice and exercises, and imitation, which meant that teachers would send students to the courts or forums to model successful politicians or lawyers, for example. Often in creative writing a great premium is placed on looking inward to discover your special message or foregrounding the plot and building on its unfolding. Our process will do neither of these. You will be required to apply approximately ten character traits that were gleaned from foundational sources to build your narratives. We have four character tropes that guide the selected sources: monsters, Jesuses, warriors, and rebels. After reviewing our sources in each character type, we will agree on a list of traits that must be represented in your paper. For the creative writing approach, you have to include a paragraph that explains how you applied the template.

I understand that this represents a very different approach to the norm of a writing class, which usually allows for a lot a topic/theme latitude. Not only am I telling you the topic for the paper, I am also providing an analytical perspective that must be applied, though you do have input here. Why am I doing this? I think of this process as similar to composing a sonnet. The expectations of the genre itself are supposed to force you into a creative output. With the character narrative templates, you cannot just repeat one of our sources; you have to discover a new way to say an old thing. Imitating life and representing it in fiction also has a long history. In the literary tradition, the writing strategy is called mimesis. However, we will be doing something that is more rhetorical. Your papers should not imitative life. They source imitate art (e.g. our foundational and canonical sources). By canonical, I do not mean "dead white guys," though there are certainly some in the syllabus (Milton, Melville, Lovecraft). Rather, the emphasis is simply on sources that have been acknowledge already as influential. Lots of famous authors became famous by imitating others: Lovecraft imitated Poe, and Franklin imitated Addison and Steele. Our rhetorical approach to generating content also follows the tradition of progymnasmata (preliminary writing exercises during the classical period) that guided writing

curriculum for centuries. Aphthonius offers a description of the exercise on characterization below:

Characterization is the imitation of the character of a given person. It has three species: the portrayal of image, person and character. In the portrayal of character the person is known, the character invented; hence it is called characterization. E.g.: What Heracles would say when Eurystheus gives him orders. In this case Heracles is known, and we invent the speaker's character. In the portrayal of image the character is known, but dead and no longer able to speak, as with the fictions of Eupolis in the Demes and Aristides in On the Four; hence it is called portrayal of image. In portrayal of person everything is invented, both character and person, as Menander created Refutation—for refutation is a thing, not a person; hence it is called personification, since the person is invented along with the character. This is the division. Characterizations may be pathetic, ethical or mixed. The pathetic are those which indicate emotion at every point; e.g.: What Hecabe would say after the sack of Troy. The ethical are those which involve character only; e.g.: What someone from the mainland would say on first seeing the sea. The mixed are those which have both character and emotion; e.g.: What Achilles would say over Patroclus' body when resolving to fight; the deliberation is character, the friend's death emotion. Characterization is developed in a style that is clear, concise, colorful, unconstrained, not intricate or figurative. Instead of heads, you will divide into the three times—present, past and future. (APHTHONIUS PROGYMNASMATA:

<https://people.umass.edu/dfleming/E388%20Aphthonius%20Progyrnasmata.pdf>)

This *New Leaf* issue is broken up into five sections. The first represents feedback from students enrolled in the course concerning using templates as guides. The remaining four are student papers (creative or analytical) that follow the character trait templates: monsters, Jesuses, warriors, and rebels. I frontloaded the templates so that they can be contrasted side by side. For the last paper (rebel narratives), the students were given 17 character traits that they individually whittled down to ten.

Character Templates

Monster Narrative Template: *Moby Dick* (1851 and 1956 film), *Jaws* (1975), “Who Goes There?” (1948), *At the Mountains of Madness* (1931)

Characters: *Moby Dick*, *Jaws*, *The Thing*, Cthulhu

1. heavy pathos/inspires fear and awe
2. requires investigation/mystery
3. bonds people together
4. prompts obsessive behavior
5. requires group hunt, with one leader
6. threatens ethics of hunters
7. legends surround monster

8. hierarchy and amplification
9. friends die
10. climatic struggle
11. novel weapons/strategies

Jesus Narrative Template Sources: *Nausicaa* (1984), *Cool Hand Luke* (1967), *Billy Budd* (1924), “The Grand Inquisitor” (1879), *The Matrix* (1999)

Characters: Nausicaa, Luke, Billy Budd, Jesus, Neo

1. Represents key to mystery
2. Reforms the system
3. Betrayed by friend
4. Inspires deep devotion
5. Fate will be canonized
6. Dies and reborn stronger
7. Endures pain for cause
8. Displays miracles
9. Acts require interpretation
10. Rebellious but lawful good

Warrior Narrative Template Sources: *Conan, the Barbarian* (1982); “Patriotism” (1960); *Excalibur* (1981); *The Seven Samurai* (1954)

Characters: Conan, Takeyama, King Arthur, All Seven Samurai

1. represents war code
2. code is unattainable
3. villain highlights warrior's morality
4. displays superior military technique
5. clannish
6. celebrates life via death
7. transcends through battle
8. serves someone higher
9. begrudgingly helps
10. idolizes women/family

Rebel Template Sources: *Paradise Lost* (1667), *Raising Arizona* (1987), *Freeway* (1996), *Blue Velvet* (1986)

Characters: Satan, H.I. McDunnough, Venessa Lutz, Frank Booth

1. Bitterly reflective about past
2. Egotistical and arrogant – it’s all about me.
3. Fringe of society
4. Truthful yet hypocritical

5. Troubled yet loving relationships
6. Passionate and willful
7. Seems sociopathic
8. Caught in a trap
9. Appeals to individualism
10. Complicated ending/loose
11. Self-destructively impulsive (immature/childlike)
12. Rejected by society, can't acclimate (outcasts)
13. Leave destruction in their wake
14. One-dimensional
15. Deceptive
16. Pessimist/jaded
17. Disdain for authority

1. Did the template help or hinder your creative process?

Alyssa Louk

After taking this course and examining different character tropes using a template, I believe this process helped me understand different stories and common archetypes. In class, we discussed the Monster, Jesus, Warrior, and Rebel trope by drawing from different sources. For the Monster trope, we read and saw *Jaws*, *Moby Dick*, and *At the Mountains of Madness*, and then, I wrote an analytical paper presenting Jeff VanderMeer's *Annihilation* as another iteration of the monster trope. By having to identify the characteristics that comprise a monster story or narrative and applying to a different source, I was able to pinpoint recurring elements and themes within all the sources, such as an unsolved mystery, a group investigation, and a climatic struggle. Similarly, for the Jesus and Warrior trope, I also wrote analytic papers that highlighted the shared characteristics of different sources. Although I do not think I engaged in a creative process per se through my analytical papers, the templates we used in class did enhance my knowledge and analysis by a specific approach to study the material. Although at times it was hard to apply all

the characteristics of a template, mainly because they were ten of them, I thought the template itself was helpful in deconstructing some of the sources.

Miracle Duff

Using the templates helped my creative process when it came to trying to write the story for the monster paper, but hindered me in the warrior and rebel papers. During the monster paper, the template was very easy to follow and it was nice to practice writing through copying works like *Jaws*. I had a very easy time following the template and making my story. My story of an otter that attacks a tourist river cruise seemed to flow very well in my head and was especially fun for me to write with the use of the template. I used the ideas from the reading of *Jaws*, and its film and used tried to use the techniques from *Moby Dick*.

However, when it came to the rebel story, I had more of a hard time. This is because I have a different take on what the rebel is compared to the movies we watched in class. For instance, I think we studied more of a maniac than a rebel. When I think of a rebel, I think of someone who goes against the system for what they believe in. The people in *Freeway* and *Raising Arizona* both are psychotic and do things that no one would think are okay. Stealing babies, and killing people are not really what I would characterize as a rebel. I see more of a Robinhood or the Mandalorian in their attempts to do what is right outside of the thoughts of most, so, during that writing, I truly struggled with thinking of a rebel in the sense of the movies we watched. As for what we read, I think that *Notes from the Underground* is a great reading of the rebel, and most dystopian novels depict the rebel very well but don't fit the template that we were given very well. So, for the paper, I tried to use whatever I could from the template and make a more maniacal story filled with things that are from the movies we watched.

As for the warrior, I had a hard time thinking of anything outside of the guidelines given. Every time I thought of a new story in my head, I kept coming back to the same thought that it had already been done. I think this is because so many stories follow this narrative and have been done time and time again. So, I decided to write an analytical paper instead of on how the template fits in the guidelines of the template. It was much easier since this character trope has been done so often, and I feel as though the trope was one that has been seen in more places than just our class. Watching the *Seven Samurai* quite honestly was not the most helpful as the movie is very long, however, I feel like the time we watched *Conan the Barbarian* and *Excalibur* helped a lot to develop a strong sense of a warrior.

When it came to the template of the Jesus paper, I had a hard time and decided to drop the paper altogether. I feel like the things we read didn't help me to really understand the Jesus trope very well. I will also state that I have never really been involved with any sort of religion my whole life so it wasn't something I have ever truly understood, so this paper was the most challenging for me and I decided not to do it because of that. Also, through the watching of *Nausicaa* and *Cool Hand Luke*, I didn't really understand the relations to Jesus that well and probably would have benefitted from a discussion of the movies.

Overall, the template helped when I had a full understanding of the trope we were studying, but otherwise, it hindered me in that I didn't think the template went with what I understood to be the character trope. So, I think what would have benefitted me the most is a discussion of why these tropes were assigned.

Alessandra Rubello

In my opinion, the templates definitely helped my writing and creative process. When given the templates, it was easier, personally speaking, to analyse the sources we were shown, including movies and written texts. The templates were useful when brainstorming and writing too. I found it particularly helpful to have a canon of elements to follow when writing, because it made it easier to understand and respect the prompts we were assigned, whether it be an analytical or a creative paper. Sometimes, the sources were hard to understand, especially with older movies or pieces of writing, but I enjoyed them nonetheless, because they challenged me to think deeper on that matter.

I found some sources more helpful than others. Among these, there is the movie *Free Way*, with Reese Witherspoon, which I found particularly interesting and fitting for the trope we were analysing at that time. It was an unusual movie that caught my attention for its message and storyline. I brought and used some key elements from this movie in my own rebel paper. I found myself inspired and motivated by the templates, because they pushed me to think about the subject I wanted to develop in my essay, so I definitely think that the templates enhanced my creative progress altogether.

Melissa Garner

Put plainly, I feel that having a template stifled my creativity. Although I can write fun stories and moving essays, I cannot create them from a template. It feels like I am using someone else's ideas. In order to create the template, I must review the work of other writers and extract the traits they used for their characters, and it feels a bit like cheating. If there were an accepted and agreed-upon template, it might not feel quite that way, but there doesn't seem to be one, which leads back to making your own.

When constructing the templates used in class, we simply watched movies. We read a few stories, but most of the templates were pulled from movies, which serves as the starting point for another question: What if the traits used by the class aren't actually the traits called for by the characters? In examining *Freeway*, for example, we were given Vanessa as an example of a rebel character, but I did not see "rebel" in either the character nor the template, and would have used neither of them to form a rebel character for my own stories.

As a result, I did not write any creative papers for the class, and instead, chose to analyze other characters. Perhaps I am not as creative as I believed. I can see the use for it if one were stuck on character development, to get over the hump, but I cannot see the point if there is no consensus. How can there be a template if no one agrees on what the template should contain? More importantly, who even makes the decision about what should be included? Is a consensus even a possibility?

Samantha Jenkins

In this class, to study character tropes like the monster, Jesus, warrior, and rebel tropes, we looked at pieces of fiction with those characters and analyzed them. The sources ranged from short stories to novels to movies. In studying these works we compared and contrasted how these trope characters were used and compiled the common features into lists, which we then used as templates to write either analysis papers or creative pieces. I found that organizing common aspects of each character trope and then creating my own story with those commonalities helped me understand the trope better and helped my creative process.

Having lists and checklists always makes work easier for me, so even for a creative piece, having a list of nine aspects that had to be included in the story helped organize my thoughts and

almost pushed the story along the thread of those necessities. It is another form of an outline, after all. I also liked analyzing the sources because I could notice what pieces of their character were most effective at identifying them with the trope or driving the story, and I could emphasize those best qualities in my own story. For the more subtle characteristics I could weave into the story and let it do its work in the background.

One of the most intriguing elements to a story centered on a character trope is whether or not the main character is the trope. The monster is typically not the protagonist, but the warrior character is, and the Jesus character is most of the time. I even followed this pattern in my own creative pieces, making the monster the antagonist and a man my protagonist; the Jesus figure was not the protagonist; the warrior was my protagonist. Deciding how the story is told and who tells the story is an important element to any story and can heavily influence the perception of the story, as well as the trope character.

Imitating accomplished sources on their portrayal of character tropes and absorbing different styles did help the creative process because it gave the stories a direction. While I knew what I needed to include and emphasize, I still had creative freedom and many ways to write the story, which was enabled by the template.

Noah McGahagin

The template of on average ten characteristics was helpful to me in this course. It steered my writing process and kept me focused on an objective rather than floundering around searching for story beats. Many of the characteristics for the monster narrative actually required me to set up the beginning, middle, and end of my creative story so that I only had to fill in the gaps between them. The whole process of sketching character archetypes is fruitful for creating conflict.

However, if I were to critique the system of using a template, I would say that sometimes a story begins to move opposite of where the characteristics want me to move, and I have to force it back. But overall this friction is helpful in that it forced me to be creative in interpreting the requirements to fit my vision. For traditional papers like my Jesus narrative, I find the template is absolutely necessary. It grounds the discussion and dictates how I discussed my sources. Each characteristic in the template was an important piece of the paper and needed to be explained in the sense that an analytical paper became more of a test for whether a work truly fit the particular archetype rather than a test of how to creatively twist something so that it resembles the archetype.

Vivianne Skavlem

I think that a template has the potential to help a creative process for a long form creative piece. Having some benchmarks commonly found in different tropes can help you shape a narrative. For example, with the Jesus trope, you can unintentionally make one (like Nausicaa) because those aspects just make a good story. Sort of like the hero's journey that you learn about in high school, you can find the aspects in so many stories because *they are what make a good story* . If something is still effective and engaging, why wouldn't you keep using it?

Zach Legg

At the beginning of class I felt extremely limited by the idea of conforming wholly to a template that would restrict me to following one prescribed way of writing my creative papers. However, I soon found that the ability to draw on key sources was very useful. In particular, the ability to see a list of traits that certain characters were supposed to embody helped to flesh out those characters. For example, in my Warrior trope paper I drew on several sources to fashion that

character. I drew on Eragon from Christopher Paolini's *Inheritance Cycle* to serve as the innocent farm boy that learns he has a much larger role to play in life than the one assigned to him at birth. I also drew on the classic Robin Hood character to shape some of his more roguish behaviors. Finally, I used elements of Horace from John Flanagan's *Ranger's Apprentice* series to serve as a template that exemplified what I imagined as a stalwart defender of justice. As much as I enjoyed writing my papers this semester, I had the nagging sense of plagiarism the entire time that I was writing my papers for this class. I never wrote anything other than creative pieces for the assignments in this class, but I still was left with the feeling that I was ripping off other great writers and thinkers to turn their ideas into a monstrous facsimile of whatever great work they once produced.

Emily Derrenbacker

Using a template helped me to see narratives in a new way. It was interesting to evaluate movies and books based on character tropes. Instead of focusing on how the plot advanced a story, I focused on how specific character traits moved the plot forward. What I loved about using a template was understanding how stories that on the surface are incredibly different, are actually made up of the same pieces.

What was difficult about using the template to evaluate stories was trying to find a story that fit the template perfectly. There always seemed to be one or two characteristics that didn't apply or fit. However, I think that's what makes the movies and books so unique. Despite all of them relying on the same character trope, they used a majority of the characteristics of the trope and then didn't use a few of them to make it unique. I found that when I was looking for stories to fit the tropes we looked at, that the best and most successful were those that took the trope and

flipped it in some way, like *Frankenstein* and *Wendy Wu: Homecoming Warrior*. Instead of creating a story with that trope how it had been used in the past, they used it in a way that is unexpected to give it a new meaning and purpose.

In terms of the structure of my papers, having to explain and analyze ten characteristics of the trope did feel like my writing was confined to a particular structure and limited what I could discuss in the paper. There were times when I wasn't able to discuss what I felt was most important about the book. For example, in my essay about the rebel trope in *The Burning God*, I couldn't discuss the historical background of the book and how I felt the author used it to provide more meaning to the story. Overall, I enjoyed learning a new perspective for understanding narratives.

Elise Zitka

In my opinion, the template at first hindered me due to usually having an outline for essay papers for my other courses, but over time I discovered that I enjoyed the outline more because it was more flexible. I feel like as an English-minor, having this flexibility was important because I may not have as much experience with writing as some of my other peers do. Having the flexibility and no rigid structure meant that I was free to find a character that meant those basic qualifications and write my paper around those characteristics, or have a narrative paper be just as free flowing because of this. With my narrative essay this especially helped a lot. With a normal outline I may have felt like I wasn't able to unleash all of my creativity, and I was trapped to online write a paper with it certain confines. This may have been good in other classes, as students are lead to write the ideal paper the professor is looking for, and in return get good grades. This class taught me that not having a structure was good for me to work around.

While originally it was frustrating that I wasn't sure what the professor was looking for, I came to love it because not being sure meant that I had more freedom to write a paper I wanted to, which made it good.

Trevor Castiaux

As someone who only did analytical papers, I think that these guidelines and tropes were really interesting and fun to use when analyzing these characters that all hold significance to me; for my monster I dissected AM (the allied master computer) from I have no mouth and I must scream using both the game and short story as sources. It was so interesting to take apart how this man-made machine had more in common with some eldritch god than a stereotypical monster and also how it takes a lot of the tropes and turns them on their head. For the warrior I wrote my paper on Guts from the manga Berserk and discussed the complexities of his character from the importance of dreams and why we fight and who we fight. How he slowly forms a code of honor, as well as the symbolism and explanation of his comically large sword being a symbol of hardships he has gone through in his life. My rebel paper was on Holden Caulfield from catcher in the rye the quintessential rebel when it comes to literature in my opinion and honestly that was just a fun paper to write because I never really had the chance to write a catcher in the rye paper until now despite it being one of my favorite books. But all that being said I do completely understand how someone with a creative paper would find these guidelines limiting and obnoxious which is why I didn't do a creative paper.

Monster Tropes

Monster Narrative Template: *Moby Dick* (1851 and 1956 film), *Jaws* (1975), “Who Goes There?” (1948), *At the Mountains of Madness* (1931)

Characters: *Moby Dick*, *Jaws*, *The Thing*, Cthulhu

1. heavy pathos/inspires fear and awe
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7. legends surround monster
8. hierarchy and amplification
9. friends die
10. climatic struggle
11. novel weapons/strategies

Unseen

Haris Malkic

The Sun was nearing its zenith over the seemingly endless stretch of the Sahara Desert, and for hundreds of miles what little life that could survive lived in silence as the sand baked in the desert heat. At the southeast edge of the wasteland, however, creatures foreign to the desert were disrupting the stillness that presided over the otherwise desolate land. Sounds of heavy machinery and the voices of laborers echoed across the ocean of sand, frightening creatures that were only accustomed to stillness, all creatures but one. The mining operation was funded and organized by one of the largest jewelry suppliers in the west, and as such, it had the size to match with over a hundred miners, both American and African alike. A security detail of two dozen armed, and well-trained guards kept watch over the operation, while one man managed the entire camp.

The day was hotter than most others, which seemed almost impossible considering the average day's heat could kill a weaker man if he weren't prepared. The miners were slow in their motions and the water trucks were being drained too often to last the entire day. Even the guards in their Kevlar vests grew weary from standing watch and holding their automatic weapons.

Toward the edge of the area, three miners toiled away, almost completely isolated from the rest.

"Perhaps God is angry with us..." one groaned in his native tongue, "why else would he curse us with such a hellish day?"

"Enough complaints, Zenabu, we are getting paid," responded another.

"Kofi is right. These Westerners pay better than anyone else, even if the work is backbreaking," the third muttered over the metallic strike of his pickaxe.

"If you are struggling, then I pray for the white men!" laughed the miner named Kofi.

"Poor bastards must be melting in these sands," Zenabu chuckled. "Eh Nahome, did you ever think you would feel sorry for a white man?" Nahome chuckled but couldn't control his breathing well enough to say anything back.

For almost half an hour they continued mining in silence, almost entranced by the rhythmic pangs of their tools as they slowly dug deeper into the earth. Each strike happened on rhythm like clockwork, but one fatal strike broke their hypnosis. Nahome's pickaxe struck the earth, and in an instant the ground below him caved. With an echoing crash, both Nahome and Zenabu fell through the sinkhole while the ground around them crumbled.

"Nahome! Zenabu!" Kofi called as he rushed towards the hole. He peered over the edge and saw his two companions on their backs in what appeared to be an underground cave. They were hurt, but still breathing.

"We live, I think!" Zenabu called back.

“Are you alright?” Kofi cried.

“I think I broke my shoulder! Damn it!” Nahome said through his teeth.

“Stay there! I will-” as Kofi tried to stand, the edge of the hole crumbled further under his weight. Before he knew it, he was lying on his back in the underground cave. He felt heat rush to the back of his head before feeling disoriented. Pain shot through his body as he tried to stand. Kofi touched the back of his head and saw blood on his hand.

“You are bleeding! We need to get out of here fast!” Zenabu shouted.

“What are these caves?” Nahome muttered as he scanned his surroundings. “Were they made by man?”

“No creature could have made this, you fool! Enough mumbling to yourself, Kofi is hurt! We need to get him to a doctor!” Zenabu’s voice echoed through the walls of the cave, then an eerie shuffling echoed back from the darkness. The three men turned their attention in unison towards the dark. Zenabu slowly walked forward, squinting into the nothingness. The air was still, but dust from the floor moved unnaturally. Nahome watched his companion curiously, until suddenly, Zenabu seemed to freeze.

“Zenabu! Hey!” he shouted, but Zenabu did not respond. He shook violently as stifled groans of pain weakly escaped his lips. He collapsed, and suddenly it felt as if a powerful force had barreled past Nahome, followed by a cry of pain and terror. Nahome scrambled up from the ground and turned to Kofi. Kofi’s dark brown eyes became red and bloodshot as a trickle of blood dripped from his mouth and onto his chin. He wanted to scream but couldn’t. Nahome’s body trembled, his heart pounding so hard he could hear it within him. He tried to turn and run, but his body would not listen. He stood paralyzed, until suddenly a sharp pain ran through his body and his vision blurred. His senses were fading. His hearing was the last to leave him, and if

it weren't for the muffled thud of his own body, Nahome wouldn't have known he had fallen. If it weren't for the fading noise of his own body being dragged, he wouldn't have known he was being taken. Within seconds, all sound faded. Nothingness.

*

The Sun was setting, and night had almost taken its hold over the night sky. A man dressed in long khaki pants and a polo shirt emerged from a makeshift house overlooking the operation. He was about six feet tall with short grey hair and hazel eyes that seemed faded. Two members of the security force waited by his door, then silently accompanied him to his destination. A third guard briskly approached.

"Connery, sir!" he said heartily. "We have some new information on the missing miners."

"What killed them?" Connery, the head of the mining operation, asked sternly.

"Well, we still aren't sure, but-

"It's been two days already, and you're telling me that a detachment from the premier private security organization can't find out what happened to three missing miners?"

"We... we found a body, just one. Medic identified him as Zenabu Kassa, a local."

"Where's your commander?"

"Chief Peterson is on scene right now, I can-

"Take me to him and leave us."

As they walked across the site, the labor force walked back towards their tents. The working day was done, but for the past two days since the three miners' disappearances productivity and output saw a noticeable decline. *Bastards are scared* Connery thought to himself. *Need to clear this up as soon as possible to get back on schedule.* When Connery arrived at the scene, he saw

the chief of security for his detachment along with three other men and the camp's medical team. On the ground before them, the body of Zenabu Kassa covered in a white tarp.

"Any news?" Connery asked the security chief. Chief Patterson ignored him for the moment to instead take a long, somewhat exaggerated drag of the cigar in his hand. The chief was an exceptionally large man, standing about a head over Connery and nearly twice as muscular. He was a pale man with a shaved head and a ghastly scar on the right side of the face, along with the attitude and swagger of a man who has been through hell and back more than once. Connery hated this about him. He hated the attitude that because Peterson was a hardier man than him it somehow meant he could be disrespectful to his employer. Regardless, there were few better at the job, and that's what Connery needed him for after all.

"Seen quite a few corpses in my day," Peterson drawled as smoke left his mouth. "Never seen anything like this." The chief gave a nod toward the medic, signaling him to promptly remove the tarp. In life, Zenabu was a dark-skinned man, but his corpse was somehow pale.

"Very little damage to the body," the medic began. "There are signs of asphyxiation, meaning he was choked."

"That the cause of death?" Connery asked as he mechanically scanned the body.

"No sir. We found small, almost surgical cuts all over the body. We're certain he was bled dry, but... something is off."

"How so?" asked Chief Peterson.

"Well, the cuts aren't on any major arteries, meaning it would take days for him to end up like this. Also, who or whatever did this would have to reopen the wounds a few times too."

"I took the liberty of calling in an outside doctor from Ethiopia, he should arrive sometime today," a guard standing next to Peterson added.

“Who are you and what gives you the authority to do that?” Connery snapped.

“Easy,” Peterson said in a voice both calm and threatening. “This is Ricky, my right-hand man. I gave him the okay. We need a bit more expertise to make sense of this mess.” Connery muttered to himself angrily, knowing compensation for this outside expertise would likely cut into his own check.

Almost two hours had passed, during which the medics continued to study the corpse while the chief and a handful of men surveyed the immediate cavern below. Connery finished the last drag of a cigarette when he heard the distant sound of an engine. Headlights appeared in the distance, and before long the vehicle parked in front of them. Four men, three in medical scrubs and one in a long white coat exited the vehicle.

“Gentlemen,” the man in the coat said as he approached. “I assume you are Mr. Connery, the head of this operation.” Connery nodded as the two shook hands. The doctor was a shorter, dark-skinned man with average features and the meek build one would expect of a man whose life was dedicated to study. “My name is Dr. Alimayu Ebo. I received my education at Aksum University in Ethiopia.”

“Joseph Connery, you already know what I do here,” he muttered.

“I’m chief of security here. Call me Peterson,” the chief said as they shook hands. “Must say, you speak English well.”

“You flatter me sir,” the doctor grinned. “But now that the pleasantries are aside, may I see the body?” He didn’t wait for a response before marching past the medics and observing the corpse. His face flushed and his gaze hardened as he saw the drained, lifeless body of the miner. Connery could only watch as Dr. Ebo and his cohorts shouted amongst each other in their native language. Though he didn’t understand them, it was clear they were stunned. The doctor stood.

“Chief Peterson, have you explored those caverns?”

“We took a glance, but they’re big. Didn’t want to go too far without direct orders.”

“What could’ve done this, doctor?” Connery interjected.

“Truly, I am at a loss,” Dr. Ebo admitted. “The skin is raw at the ankles, suggesting he was strung up. Also, there is a small puncture on his neck, almost like a needle. These cuts are precise, it must have been done by human hands.” They fell silent. Connery was sure he was not the only one who suspected as much among the group, though he sincerely hoped the situation would be less gruesome.

“Could be some death cult or hostile tribe in those tunnels,” Peterson grunted before spitting on the ground. “Want my advice Connery? We ought to gather some boys and clear ‘em out.”

“We do it tonight,” Connery decided. “We need this over with, it’ll put the workers at ease. How many men would you need and how fast can you get your asses down there?”

“Twelve men, half an hour,” the chief said with confidence.

“I will go as well,” Dr. Ebo declared.

“Out of the question, too dangerous,” Ricky interjected.

“Three miners are missing and there is but one body, if we find the others they will need immediate care,” the doctor explained. “I insist! Just give me a sidearm, I am not as defenseless as I look.”

“Seems we have no choice,” Peterson sighed.

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A match struck and illuminated Mr. Connery’s face as he lit another cigarette. Peterson cracked his knuckles as he prepared to brief the doctor and the twelve guards in front of him.

“Listen up!” he shouted sternly. “It’s possible we have two live bodies down there, and if we can confirm, priority one will be the safe extraction of the miners. Otherwise, top priority is eradicating the underground threat. I don’t know anything about these cave people, just that they’re cruel and managed to somehow survive underground for only God knows how long. I don’t know what kind of gear we’re dealing with, but I do know that it won’t stop us. I want zero casualties, but if things get hairy, prioritize the safety of the survivors and, or, the doctor. The caves are big, but we can tell the general direction the bodies were dragged. This means we stick together and follow the trail. Remember, safeties off and flashlights on. Any questions?” There were no questions. Like clockwork, the men began their descent into the caves.

They moved in groups of three underground, with Peterson and Ricky with Dr. Ebo. Their steps were light, their movements both tactical and confident. The cave was pitch dark, lit only by their flashlights. Peterson was confident his men could handle whatever tribe or cult that was lurking underground, but still he felt on edge. No amount of rationalization seemed to quell the fear that loomed over him, and years of bloodshed have taught him to trust his instincts. Nevertheless, he pressed on, until the entire group was met with branching paths.

“Split up,” he said as quietly as he could while still allowing everyone to hear him clearly. Three men walked in front of Peterson’s group on their path. There was a shuffling in the distance. The men raised their weapons, frozen in place. They heard footsteps up ahead, irregular ones, but footsteps nonetheless. Peterson squinted into the darkness as the three in front moved ahead. They broke formation to better scan their surroundings, when one soldier’s flashlight turned off. The others shined their lights on him as the soldier fiddled with his gear. A sudden noise turned their sights away. They saw dust fluttering in the air, but nothing else. Suddenly, the soldier’s flashlight turned on, and in its light was the soldier, hovering almost a foot off the

ground. He struggled and kicked, his screams echoing through the winding caverns, but his comrades only watched in fear as his body seemed to levitate.

“Hold fire!” Peterson commanded, his voice shaky. Even the battle-hardened Chief of Security stood in fear in what was before him. The soldier continued to kick, until a small trickle of blood ran down his neck. His body went limp, and his eyes grew hazy. His body flung itself away from the group, as if it were a doll being dragged. The flashlight turned off. The others waited for their commander’s orders, but Peterson was at a loss for words.

“P-Pursue!” he finally croaked, trying to overcome his own terror.

“What the hell just happened?” Ricky cried. They began running, but the doctor was frozen in place.

“P-Pull back your men,” he whispered.

“Excuse me?” Peterson barked.

“I said, pull back your men!” Dr. Ebo exploded. The men paused, taken aback by his outburst, when the fallen soldier’s flashlight turned on once more.

“Run!” cried one of the soldiers. Without hesitation, Ricky began firing into the dark as the other retreated, but Dr. Ebo began to pull on Ricky’s arm, trying to stop the gunfire. Peterson managed to collect himself and pulled the doctor back by his collar, throwing him to the ground.

“Move!” he shouted. The same sound of inhuman footsteps as before grew nearer. The squad was separated, but all heard the order for retreat. The doctor, however, was hardly moving. Peterson had to pull him as they ran, his right-hand man being their only line of defense. The sound was right behind them. Ricky turned back on his heel and fired. A hazy silhouette formed in front of him, its blood splattered on the wall as an ear-piercing scream rang out from it. Peterson could see the rest of the squad by the cave’s exit. With his full strength, he grabbed the

doctor by his arms and flung him forward towards the rest of the squad. He turned towards the apparition with gun in hand, but its figure was gone. He and Ricky stood and looked around in panic, until a powerful force struck Ricky, knocking him to the ground. Peterson fired aimlessly, and the creature's outline showed itself once more. It was on top of Ricky, restraining him. It wasn't clear enough to tell, but Peterson saw some form of tendril strike Ricky's neck, and the next moment, his body went limp, and his eyes turned cloudy.

"No!" Peterson shouted. He tried to run towards the beast, but two men grabbed him from behind and dragged him away.

"He's lost boss! Leave him!" one shouted.

"Get off me! We can't leave him!" Peterson cried. It was too late. The creature's hazy figure disappeared, and Ricky's lifeless body was dragged deep into the cave.

*

The men regrouped above ground, Peterson being the last to surface. When he did, he marched towards Dr. Ebo, and struck him down with a punch to the face. The medical staff shouted over each other as they rushed to restrain the chief.

"Why the fuck did you do that!?" Peterson shouted. "Why didn't you run? Why did you try to stop Ricky?"

"What the hell is going on here?" Connery barked as he stepped between the two men.

"Mr. Connery! Call off this operation and pull out all your men!" Dr. Ebo ordered. Connery stopped, stunned by the doctor's brazen request.

"What was that thing?" asked one of the soldiers who saw the creature first-hand.

"It is a god!" the doctor shouted with a degree of confidence that suggested he was unaware of the absurdity of his statement. Everyone present was speechless. The doctor threw

off his muddy lab coat and removed his shirt. Across his left pectoral and onto this shoulder and arm was a large and expertly designed tribal tattoo, one even the locals were unfamiliar with. “I belong to a tribe with very few left, our name lost to the ages. What little of us left are bound by the blood of our ancestors. What you tamper with in that cave is our ancestral guardian.” He paused and waited for a response. There were none. “When our tribe was still alive...” he continued, “it was tradition to give one life on the new moon to our *yemayitayi āmilaki*. Our Unseen God, a power that only our oldest shamans could sense. A power that watched over us for decades, centuries even. I forbid you to harm it further!”

“You expect me to go to my company and explain to shareholders that a multi-million-dollar operation was shut down because of a tribal god?” Connery said through his teeth.

“Peterson, what the hell happened down there?”

“We were attacked by something fucked, that’s what happened!” the chief fumed. “I don’t know what the hell it was, but the doctor is right, it sure as hell is invisible. But with all due respect doctor, gods don’t bleed.” A member of the doctor’s staff began arguing with him in their native tongue.

“What are they saying?” Connery asked.

“She is telling him that she respects his culture, but nobody else should have to die for it,” a member of the company medical staff translated. “They are having a... difference of beliefs.”

“I don’t care, we need to go back down there!” Chief Peterson yelled. “Two of my men are down there, and Ricky is one of them. There’s a chance they’re still alive, and no way in hell am I leaving them!”

“For once, I agree with the chief,” Connery muttered. “Doctor, thank you for your insight, but we no longer need your assistance, this is a company matter.” The doctor fell silent, then motioned to his staff, and ordered them in his native tongue. They walked briskly towards the vehicle they came with, started it, and drove away.

“How the hell are we supposed to kill something we can’t see sir?” asked one of the guards.

“You two,” Peterson said to the two men with him in the tunnel. “Ivan’s light died in the tunnel, but when that thing came close enough, the light turned back on. That means there’s a reason we can’t see it, and whatever that reason is, it’ll power a flashlight. Gather all the spares we have and keep them off, we’ll use them to locate it.” The pair nodded and ran towards their storehouse.

“I don’t know what you saw, er, didn’t see down there Peterson, but are you sure you can kill it?” Connery questioned.

“Aye, it bleeds.”

“Why is it bleeding its victims out? What does it want?”

“Doesn’t matter.”

*

Peterson and his men were deep in the underground caverns, but unlike before, there was an air of death that stretched through every tunnel. They moved silently, but quickly as to try and extract their comrade’s before it was too late. The men were scared. Peterson himself was terrified as well, but there was no time to make any sense of the matter. They had one goal, to kill the unknown creature that lurked below them. The time for reason was later, after the beast can no longer hurt anyone else. The air shifted. Strange noises echoed from the dark. A flashlight

was tossed in the distance. The men waited silently with guns at the ready. Time seemed to stand still as Peterson watched with bated breath. Eventually, he decided nothing was there, and before he ordered the men to press on, a light flashed down the tunnel.

“Fire!” Peterson ordered. Barrels flashed and gunshots rang through the cave’s winding corridors. Guttural and inhuman noises echoed back, and by the time Peterson realized the beast was crawling on the ceiling, the Unseen was already above them. A thud followed by the cracking of bones rang through his ears as the force knocked him back. Three men were crushed under its feet, blood oozing from whatever opening it could. A sudden gust of wind blew over his face, then a flashlight from behind was illuminated. “Forward!” he cried as he scrambled to his feet. They ran for their lives, occasionally turning to fire in hopes of stalling the beast.

At the end of the corridor was a wide and open space which Peterson and three others ran into. One turned and tossed another light, but nothing. The Unseen had fled, for now. The room was silent, except for the low and steady trickle of water. Peterson turned to the sound with only his flashlight to rely on. In the center of the cave was a small, grey stone with thick red liquid dripping onto it from above. He slowly raised his gaze to the ceiling.

“Dear God,” another guard whispered, horrified. A man, suspended by his ankles was breathing shakily as he dangled over the stone. Drops of blood trickled from precise cuts all over his body, cut almost identical to the ones on Zenabu Kassa’s corpse.

“Ricky?” Peterson whimpered in horror. No response. He was alive, but he didn’t notice his comrade. He didn’t notice anything anymore. “How do we get him down?” the chief asked in an exasperated voice. His three subordinates had no response. One turned his light away from their comrade, only to find three bodies lined up on the ground. Two were already dead, bled

dry. The missing miners. The other was alive, but motionless. The soldier ran to him and began shaking and calling out his name.

“He’s unresponsive!” the soldier cried.

“What the hell is this?” whimpered another. Peterson’s eyes were stuck on his companion. His trance was broken by a pressure against the back of his head, followed by the click of a gun.

“Should’ve known you wouldn’t leave so easily...” Peterson drawled, “Dr. Ebo.”

“I expected more from the Chief of Security,” the doctor whispered.

“Tell me, are you willing to die to protect... this?” The doctor’s hands were shaking as he held the gun, but his eyes were locked on the horrors before him. He jerked the gun away from the chief and turned his attention to the stone. He stared intently at it while his entire body shook.

“I-It’s an egg,” he declared. The droplets of blood faded away the moment they fell onto the egg. “I-It’s using blood to feed its eggs,” he stammered, almost gagging.

“Why can’t they say anything?” asked the soldier holding his still-breathing comrade.

The doctor ran to them, Peterson and the others watched the entrances to the nest vigilantly.

“It must be some sort of toxin,” Dr. Ebo speculated as he carefully observed the victim.

“Why does it torture them?” one guard questioned.

“The fear,” stated Peterson.

“I beg your pardon?” the doctor trembled.

“Doesn’t fear run through the blood, doctor?” asked Peterson.

“Not exactly, but yes, there is a chemical response to fear in the bloodstream.”

“Maybe that’s what it’s after.”

A flash of light came from behind them. The doctor and the soldiers with them were flung back as the Unseen barreled past them. A low growl could be heard from near the egg. It was a standoff. Peterson kept his composure as he held his gun with steady hands. He noticed certain parts of the egg seemed strangely warped and realized he could see where the creature stood. He exhaled steadily and pulled his trigger. Blood splattered on the ground behind him as the creatures screamed in pain. Its outline suddenly became visible, and clearer with every bullet that pierced its flesh. All guns were aimed at the beast as it desperately thrashed, trying both to protect its egg and kill the intruders. Even though Peterson could somewhat see its form, the creature moved like a flash, and before he knew it, another one of his men had fallen.

“The egg!” he cried as the force pushed him to the ground. The two remaining soldiers obeyed their chief, and thick grey liquid oozed from the shell as it was riddled with bullets. The Unseen leapt, and a sudden yet intense heat spread through Peterson’s arm and through his chest, followed by extreme pain. He screamed as the Unseen crushed his mangled arm further. He opened his eyes and saw it, the Unseen. Its body was the size of a lion’s if not larger, and black as charcoal with grey blood pouring from its wounds. Its head was small with a face entirely skeletal other than its piercing green eyes. Hot breath blew against Peterson’s face from its unhinged jaw before a thin tendril peered from its throat and slithered past its sharp, crooked teeth.

Peterson was unsure what was worse, death or ending up like Ricky, but he was too overcome with sheer terror to think. Shots rang from behind, and the Unseen lunged off Peterson’s body, the force almost entirely removing the bottom part of his right leg. He screamed out once more as his vision began to fade, the cries of the dying monster near him, though he

was unsure where. It was not the beast's venom that was robbing his senses, but loss of blood. *Not that it matters anyway* he thought as his vision went dark.

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The Unseen laid before Dr. Ebo and the last two guards. Its piercing cries were reduced to weak gasps of air as it twitched. Dr. Ebo approached, gun in hand.

"My tribe..." he began, "we gave lives to this... monstrosity?" The beast turned its eyes to him and hissed. Without hesitation, Dr. Ebo pointed his weapon, and shot the Unseen. There was no sound from the beast, it merely went limp in defeat. The doctor threw his gun to the side. The two guards rushed to their commander, horrified by the state he was reduced to.

"Dr. Ebo! Will he make it?" one begged, but the doctor was silent. He fell to his knees and looked on in horror to the monster he once thought was a god.

While the characteristics of a monster narrative are fairly diverse, the aspect of a hunt is what truly makes the story. From there, other territory is easy to cover, such as an effective leader or losing friends. Both of those aspects fit well into a story from a narrative standpoint if a hunt is taking place. While obsessive behavior typically applies to the hunters trying to kill the monster, I decided to prompt obsessive behavior through a character desperate to protect it even after it has killed so many. The deep lore of the fictitious tribe the doctor is part of drives him to make decisions that would go against what you would expect from a medical doctor. In addition, by creating the doctor's character in the way I did, it also simultaneously questioned the ethics of the hunters and created a surrounding legend. I elected to omit the "binds people together" aspect as we were allowed one omission and I could not figure how to organically incorporate it into the story.

Hyding the Monster

Melissa Garner

To whom it my concern:

My name is Melissa Garner, and I am a senior English major at Stetson University, taking Narrative and Rhetoric (ENGL482) under the instruction of Dr. Michael Barnes. During my time in this course, I have been introduced to various methods of template construction, and although difficult for me to implement in a creative writing process, the templates aided greatly in analysis of characters from both film and literature. I feel that in acquiring knowledge of how to recognize common traits between characters and combine and arrange them into a cohesive tool can only boost my confidence in writing both professionally and personally. Enclosed you will find analysis papers using the four required templates constructed in this course: monster, Jesus, warrior and rebel. The sources studied varied from canonical literature to anime, with the template proving true in each sample. I enjoyed being able to make the connection between the old and the new, the traditional and the modern. I intend to apply this knowledge liberally in my continuing education.

The first learning goal for this course (students are introduced to a rhetorical method of college level reading/ rereading) as well as the third goal (experience in writing that uses ideas from multiple cultural sources) were achieved through the reading of various forms of literature in compiling the templates, such as reading books, scripts and watching various movies to evaluate the characteristics of the protagonist of

each. When building the monster template, we read Peter Benchley's Jaws and compared it to the movie adapted from the book. We also read Herman Melville's Moby Dick, as well as viewed that movie in search of common traits. In this way, we learned how to evaluate sources to be able to construct a general template, which I was able to use to analyze Stevenson's novella, The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

The second learning goal (introduction to critical and rhetorical analysis techniques including identification of formal characteristics, historical contexts, and artistic traditions) is demonstrated in third paper, the warrior analysis. In completing this template, we watched The Seven Samurai, and discussed the warrior's codes within the Samurai, as well as the culture surrounding most warrior characters. Although I used the template to analyze a fictional character, the codes used by the Jedi in the Star Wars franchise are based on old chivalric codes from our own history, containing many of the same moral rules and restraints.

The fourth goal (introduction to college level drafting and revision techniques) was reached through the process offered by Dr. Barnes for submitting papers. He offered an opportunity to revise each paper twice after submission, with the final grade calculated as an average of the drafts. Dr. Barnes offered feedback with each submission, allowing the student to decide on the final revisions.

I have offered what I believe are clear examples of my proficiency in achieving each of the learning goals set for me. I feel that this class has better prepared me for my upcoming Senior Project, as well as for being able to critically read and evaluate texts and articles for closer analysis.

In Robert Louis Stevenson's novella, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, the reader is introduced to an attorney (Utterson) who embarks upon a mission to discover why his friend has begun acting so strangely and discovers what is a very literal case of split personalities. However, unlike most cases where the identities are seemingly unaware of each other, the identities housed within Dr. Jekyll are not only aware of each other but are competing for ultimate supremacy. In a surprising plot twist, the monster can be plainly identified as Dr. Jekyll by an analysis using the monster trope template. Although the template could also be applied to Mr. Hyde, Jekyll still stands as the primary monster, as Hyde is only Jekyll's dark side let out to play.

The first part of the template we see used is the trait of "legends, hierarchy and amplification." Utterson is walking with his cousin when his cousin begins to tell him a story about a man who used a check signed by Jekyll to pay for damages that the man inflicted on a child. The cousin describes Jekyll as "...the very pink of properties...celebrated...one of your fellows who do what they call good" (Stevenson, 9). Utterson himself imagines that Jekyll's secrets, if compared to Hyde's, "...would be like sunshine" (21). Jekyll has a reputation among both his friends and the townspeople as a good, decent human being. He is a respected scientist, and his oldest friends are scientists as well. He is not royalty, but he is among the educated elite.

Hyde, on the other hand, is described as evil personified. Utterson's cousin claims there is "...something displeasing, something downright detestable" (8) about Hyde, Utterson himself notes an unexplainable "...disgust, loathing and fear..." (17). His looks, attitude, stance, and actions all instill fear in those who are aware of him, and eventually, in the entire town. He is twice referred to as a "Juggernaut" (5, 14), seemingly unstoppable.

The next characteristic the reader is shown is the need for an investigation. Utterson's confusion turns to dread when he realizes that the man who committed the assault is the same man to whom Jekyll has willed his estate, with the provision that this will be enacted not only at his death, but upon his disappearance as well. When Utterson visits Dr. Lanyon, Jekyll's other "oldest friend," he discovers that Lanyon hasn't spoken to Jekyll in 10 years and thinks he has gone "...wrong in mind" (12). Utterson becomes obsessed (the third characteristic we see) with finding out what is happening to Jekyll, spending a sleepless, questioning night. Although he had only an intellectual interest in the beginning, "...now his imagination also was engaged, or rather enslaved..." (13). He begins to stalk the places where he imagines he might see Hyde, including the door through which Hyde disappears, which began the entire hunt. He tells himself "If he shall be Mr. Hyde, I shall be Mr. Seek" (15).

Once Hyde murders Sir Danvers Carew, a peer of the Realm and a Member of Parliament, the town must unite to find him. Utterson begins suspecting Jekyll may be more involved than he appears when he discovers that the signatures of both Jekyll and Hyde are alike but sloped in opposite directions (38). Unfortunately, Hyde disappears, and the case is allowed to fade. Jekyll seems to return to his old self, and even adds a healthy dose of religion to his reputation. All is right in Utterson's world, with visits to Jekyll and the return of Lanyon to the fold, just like old times.

Until, once again, he finds himself refused entry at Jekyll's home. When he goes to visit Lanyon a week later, he is dismayed at the change in his friend. Lanyon believes that he will soon die from the shock he has had, claiming that Jekyll is ill as well, and Utterson must ask him for the tale. Lanyon has agreed to keep Hyde's secret, and he prevails upon Utterson to do the same, creating a different bond between the men than the formerly shared bond of friendship.

Within two weeks, Lanyon is dead, and Utterson receives a letter to be opened upon his death. Utterson wrestles with the decision, and, deciding that he is not yet ready to read it, places the letter in the safe. He continues to try and visit Jekyll but is relieved when his efforts prove fruitless. While he is described as a person to whom many turn in their worst moments, he feels that he can no longer be that friend to Jekyll. His ethics are conflicted concerning the will, Jekyll's odd behavior and his apparent friendship with Hyde; he cannot twist them any further. While he may have been in awe of Jekyll's achievements, it is at this moment that Utterson truly begins to fear him.

Utterson and Hyde have their final showdown when Jekyll's butler becomes so frightened that he seeks help (this is when a leader is identified). The butler fears that Hyde has killed Jekyll, and when the body of Hyde is found, his fears are seemingly realized. A packet is discovered, telling the attorney to read Lanyon's letter first, and then the letter from Jekyll. Lanyon's letter describes witnessing the frightening transformation of Hyde to Jekyll and accuses Jekyll of being Hyde and murdering Sir Carew. In Jekyll's letter, though, we see the true conflict of the story. While maintaining dual identities—serious and “grave” in public while partaking of hidden “pleasure” in private—Jekyll comes to believe that it may be possible to separate “these elements,” allowing each to live without the burdens of the other (76). When Jekyll took the most drastic step toward his goal, he quickly realized that he enjoyed being Hyde, and he was free to commit any crime he wished, because it would be blamed on Hyde, and Hyde would disappear. He tells Utterson that his “pleasures” intensified under Hyde's persona, “they soon began to turn toward the monstrous” (82). Even as his acts became more horrific, he still used Hyde as the cover, claiming that Hyde alone was guilty (82). It was not until Lanyon's

death that Jekyll began to dislike becoming Hyde. Yet he still, even while planning his suicide, failed to accept blame himself.

Jekyll did not separate his evil from his good. He simply created a conduit for his evil to act and went along for the ride. Happily, joyfully, with great abundance he gathered his “pleasures,” with no thought of stopping until he killed the wrong person and was in danger of being caught. He could not stop Hyde from emerging because, although he was the worst part of Jekyll, he was still Jekyll, in a different form. Jekyll not only released his evil, but he also allowed it to grow until it became impossible to contain. The things Hyde did were simply things Jekyll wanted to do but couldn’t without losing his privilege, so he allowed Hyde to do them for him. This is the strongest indicator that Jekyll, and not Hyde is not only the monster in the story, but the evil as well.

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Grimfiend Calls

Zach Legg

The chill autumnal air whistled lightly as it blew through the rapidly changing leaves of the Wildbough Woods. A brief smile touched Corbin’s face as he made his way along the game trail. Home was not far off, no more than half a mile from the edge of the forest that he was now rapidly approaching. Although there had long been rumors of some terrible monster haunting the

forest around Direrun, Corbin had never paid them any attention. Nearly every boy his age had heard the stories from Old Man Baruch about his encounter with The Grimfiend in Wildbough when he was out hunting.

As the story goes, Baruch who – if he was to be believed – was quite the hunter in his heyday and had been out in the forest stalking a deer. It was fast approaching nightfall when he finally spotted the prize buck that he had been chasing most of the day. He took aim and fired his old hunting pistol. At the same time a dark mass moved with lightning speed to attack the unsuspecting stag. The loud crack of the pistol covered any noise that the monster made but the spray of blood and flashing of white antlers was unmistakable. The deer was bitten in half in front of him. Unfortunately, the beast had heard the sound and turned towards him. What happened next differs from story to story. Sometimes Baruch describes it as a gigantic man with an antlered helmet, other times it was a massive bear with a disproportionately large head that reared up in front of him. Baruch left everything but his gun behind as he turned tail and sprinted away from the grizzly murder, screaming in horror.

The town doctor had said he was lucky to be alive if the tale was true. He also let Corbin's father Kristofer, the town mayor, know that Baruch probably would never fully recover mentally. In fact, that day had earned him the moniker "Old Man Baruch." Although he couldn't be older than his early twenties, Baruch's hair had blanched from a dark chestnut brown to a snowy white.

Thinking of his father caused Corbin to wince a little. He was, after all, directly disobeying his father by being in the Wildbough. As a matter of fact, Corbin remembered something along the lines of "If I ever catch you in that damn forest, you'll wish some monster

had caught you.” But his father was prone to bouts of exaggeration. He just hoped that this was one of those times.

The thoughts of his father, as they were wont to do, quickly soured his mood and caused the smile to drop from his face. A scowl took its place as he broke the final line of trees that marked the edge of the Wildbough. It was almost dusk as he plodded his way back along the trail towards Direrun. A loud cracking noise jolted him from his ruminations.

Whirling around, Corbin saw the tops of a few very large pine trees shaking violently barely two hundred yards away. As he stood transfixed, those massive treetops shook one final time before toppling down with a thunderous crash. The ground shook underneath him. A cacophony of birds and a cloud of dust quickly rose into the air around where the trees fell. Corbin stood in mute fascination as the forest clamored to life around him. Squirrels and other small rodents raced away from the destruction chased by foxes and other small predators. The commotion filled the air around him and almost pulled his attention away from the gentle rumbling that had begun to shake the earth following the fall of the trees. Once the animals had begun to settle down a lone howl slowly crept into the air. Corbin, a born and raised citizen of Direrun had heard a fair few wolf howls piercing through the night. This was unlike anything he had heard before.

A mix between pain and rage twisted this howl giving it an otherworldly feel. As it rose to a crescendo Corbin could have sworn that there were multiple voices overlapping in the howl. Cold sweat broke out on his forehead and a slight chill crawled up his spine.

“Da’s gonna give me a beatin’ for this for sure” he said to himself before taking off at a sprint towards the town.



Kristofer was up waiting for him by the time Corbin came panting home.

“Where the hell have you been daft boy?” His father shouted cuffing him on the head as he tried to duck past him and slink into the house.

“I was out – out in the forest – and – and you wouldn’t believe the noise – and the trees. Dad the trees. They all – well I think they all fell – or were knocked over – wow” Corbin finished, collapsing into one of the chairs around the table. His father looked over at him, too confused to be angry.

“Son. Slow that down and give it to me again. Maybe try some English this time.” Kristofer admonished as he lowered himself into the chair opposite his wide-eyed son. Corbin swallowed hard, the beginnings of his Adams apple bobbing slightly as he cleared his throat. He nodded his head a few times trying to gather his courage. Kristofer leaned forward in his chair, preparing to repeat himself in order to get his son moving when Corbin launched into a tirade.

“Okay so I was in the forest, and I know you told me not to but Annabelle had dared me to spend the day in there and well I couldn’t say no because its Annabelle so I went in anyways and the forest doesn’t scare me so yeah” He paused long enough to take a few quick breaths and steal a look at his father before continuing. “So yeah, I went in and it was fine and I saw a couple really neat lookin’ birds and a momma rabbit and her little babies were just staring to open their eyes and–” Kristofer held up a hand to stop him.

“Cor, slow down. I’m not mad and you aren’t in trouble...yet.” He gave his son a pointed look. “Just explain what happened and we’ll figure the rest out later. Something about trees falling? I don’t remember giving anyone permission to fell any trees. Not recently anyways.”

“Oh yeah” Corbin hung his head a little before looking up. Some of the wildness that had taken over his gaze slowly receded. “Like I was sayin’ I was in the forest cause Annabelle dared me. I was coming home, trying to make sure I got back before dark like we talked about, when all of a sudden, I heard this real loud crackin’ and snappin’ noise. I looked behind me and dad... the whole forest looked like it was shakin.’ I’d never seen nothin’ like it before. Then they just fell over and shook the ground and a whole bunch of birds n’ stuff went everywhere. There was dust and leaves all over the place and I coulda swore the forest was alive.”

Kristofer’s face darkened as Corbin began talking about the forest. Something was sitting right. Even here, in the comfort of his own home, sitting right next to the fire, at the table with his son, Kristofer felt fear seep into his very bones.

“An then there as a howl.” Kristofer’s head snapped to his son at that. “Yeah it started like a wolf, ya know? But then it got louder and louder and louder. It all sounded like it was coming from the same place but it couldn’t have been. There were like other voices... well no wait, maybe just one... I dunno dad. It was right unnatural”

Corbin trailed off from his story and sat staring morosely at the fire. Kristofer sat rooted to his seat staring at his son’s cast down head.

It couldn’t be. It just couldn’t be. Baruch was out of his mind. The doc said he was crazy.

“Dad,” Corbin began quietly. “Do – do you think it coulda been the Grimfiend? Like Old Man Baruch said it was?”

“I told you not to call him that Corbin” Kristofer cut in almost automatically. “No... no. Things like that ain’t real. Baruch didn’t know what he saw and neither do you. It’s nothing.”

Even as he was speaking Kristofer was thinking back to the faint howl that had caused him to stand outside and wait on his son. Something about that noise had not been quite natural.

“Listen Cor, let’s not say anything about this to your friends alright? Ain’t no sense worrying them when there’s nothing, we know for sure yet. Alright?” Kristofer met and held his son’s gaze as he spoke. Corbin slowly looked away and nodded his head.

“What’ll I tell Annabelle? She’s gonna wonder what happened the woods tomorrow.” Corbin’s head popped back up and he looked at his father for reassurance.

“If ya want you can tell her I caught you tryin’ to sneak back in and gave you a right good whoopin’. I’m sure she’ll believe that.” As he was finishing a sly grin crept across Kristofer’s face. “Matter of fact, I might just give you some proof to go with it!” With that a full grin burst across his face as he leapt out of his chair and reached out towards Corbin as if to grab him. Corbin’s face also lit up in a grin and a quick laugh escaped as he dove out of the chair and started running around the table to avoid his father’s outstretched arms. Laughter and the sound of furniture turning over echoed from the house as father and son chased one another.

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The creature gave a deep snarling grunt as the sounds of laughter rolled over the hills and into the forest. Its massive body shook as the monster opened its mouth and let out a second blood-curdling howl, this one even louder than the first. The laughter faded behind as it turned and shambled its way deeper into the woods.

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Kristofer woke early the next morning and quietly snuck out of the house so as not to wake his son. He had made some oatmeal for the morning and left a note that Corbin was to eat breakfast and go find Annabelle. Under no circumstances was he to leave her side for the day. As

he pulled his long, brown trench coat around him to ward off the morning chill, Kristofer turned and headed for Osbert's house.

Osbert was the local hunter and Annabelle's father. He knew more about the forest than anyone else. His son, Old Man Baruch had been out on his first solo hunt when he had encountered what the town now called the Grimfiend. Osbert more than most hated the forest and everything in it, especially the Grimfiend who stole his son's mind away from him.

Kristofer reached the small wooden house just as the sun was beginning to peak over the horizon. Fog was coiling along the center street of town and Kristofer grumbled as his boots got wet walking through the front yard before rapping quiet but insistently on the door. A few seconds passed and Kristofer heard the sound of boots on wood as Osbert silently made his way to the door. A crack appeared along the die of the door and Osbert's round, bald head poked around and glared at Kristofer.

"Ain't you ever heard of sleep man? Most of us normal folks need it every once in a while. What in the world are you doing knockin on my door at the crack of dawn?" As he spoke Osbert allowed the door to open a bit wider and he tried to rub the sleep out of his eyes.

"It's back."

At that all traces of sleep vanished from Osbert. A steely glint appeared in his eye.

"I'll grab my stuff." He said turning to go back into the house. "We still need to go get Merrick?"

"Yea, he needs to be part of this too." Kristopher whispered as the bulk of his friend disappeared into a room, returning with a sword strapped to his side and a bandolier slung

diagonally across his body. Kristofer knew from experience that a deadly pistol lay just underneath Osbert's left armpit, secured by the bandolier and the unique concealed holster. A nearly identical pistol was belted around Kristofer's own waist. The third, in the set was owned by Merrick, a gift given to them by the hunter travelling through town almost two decades ago.

An ominous silence hung over the two men as they made their way across the main street of the Direrun and up to the front door of Merrick. Kristofer cast a sidelong glance at Osbert before stepping up and knocking one loud time against the door. In seconds the door was being thrown open and a bleary-eyed redhead was peering out at them.

"Bloody, hic, hell." Merrick muttered, the stench of ale wafting out of his mouth and causing the hiccups that interrupted his normally slurred speech.

"Oh, for all that is good in this world could you not be sober one day?" Kristofer stepped through the open door and helped Merrick to the chair in the room. It was padded and patched in more places than Kristofer could count however, he thought it might be the only piece of furniture his friend owned.

Osbert stood in the doorway and must have been thinking along the same path as he scrunched up his face and loudly proclaimed, "Good Lord Above Merrick! You still own that hideous thing? What do ya sleep in it or something?" Merrick, who was trying to pull himself further up in the chair just glared at him and moved to get up. Kristofer laid a restraining hand on his friend's shoulder and stared levelly into Merrick's wavering gaze.

"It's back."

Merrick's eyes snapped onto his. His body became firm and tense under Kristofer's hand.

“I’ll get my things.” He said, all traces of a slur gone from his voice. Kristofer removed his hand and Merrick stood up and turned to push the chair backwards.

“What on earth—” Osbert’s complaint was cut off as Merrick crouched down and pulled on the floorboards, revealing a cleverly hidden trapdoor. He paused for a moment and took in a long breath before reaching inside. From inside of the compartment Merrick pulled out the third matching pistol and a bandolier identical to the ones worn by Kristofer and Osbert.

“Shit.” Was all he said before grimacing and buckling the pistol onto his belt, mirroring Kristofer’s own belt. Merrick stood, replacing the trapdoor, and shouldered his way past Osbert and out into the morning air. Giving each other dubious glances, Kristofer and Osbert followed their friend.

Once outside, Kristofer took the lead and began walking them in the direction of the Wildbough. As they walked, very few words were exchanged leaving each man to his own dark thoughts. Osbert broke the silence first.

“How did you know Kris? After last time... are you sure?”

Kristofer let the question hang in the air for a while before answering. “You know I wouldn’t have called you both if I wasn’t sure. My boy was out in the woods.” Merrick and Osbert both swore viciously under their breath. “He said a girl had dared him. Your girl Osbert. Anyways on his way out he must have walked by its lair. Same as last time. Trees collapsing, roaring, ground shaking... its all the same. I hoped against hope that he was just making it up. Then I heard it. One long shrieking howl last night. It’s back.”

Osbert shook his head and looked down at the ground. Merrick’s gaze became even more haunted and both men looked deeply troubled.

“If we make it out of this, I’m gonna have that girl washing dishes for the rest of her life.” Osbert muttered under his breath.

“It’s no use Osbert.” Kristofer interjected. “My son was in the forest. I didn’t punish him. He’s barely twelve. How is he to know of the danger out there. They are just kids.”

Now it was Merrick’s turn to shake his head. Once he had been married and dreamed of a family to raise. That time was long gone but he couldn’t begrudge his friends their happiness. Instead, he looked up and began scanning the forest as they entered the fringes of the Wildbough. All three men cut off their conversation and took to fervently scanning their surroundings for signs of the beast as they stepped beneath the eaves of the forest. There was a palpable tension underneath the trees of the forest. Something that had always been there but was now heightened to an extreme with the knowledge that somewhere close an unimaginable horror lurked.

Indeed, the very thought of the Grimfiend was beyond comprehension. Some stories said that it had rows and rows of horribly jagged teeth in its massive circular maw. Others swore that it had a long snout like an alligator with one long row of horrifyingly large teeth along the outer jaw. Compounding these stories was the lack of any evidence of the monster’s victims. At each sight where it was said to have killed, all that was left was a gruesome spray of sticky red blood and entrails that covered the entire surrounding area. Each man must have been thinking dark thoughts that all flowed in this same vein because a snapping of dead branches to their left was quickly followed by a trio of pistol fire.

Kristofer’s breath let out in one massive exhalation as he terrified, and partially deafened, rabbit bounded away from the three men standing with pistols extended.

“Motherf–” Merrick began before a bellowing roar crashed into them, no more than a hundred yards away. This was a horrible sound, fueled by pure, unadulterated rage. Guns still smoking, all three men scattered in different directions. Osbert dove back and to the left coming to crouch behind a fallen tree. Kristofer sprinted to the right, hoping to make it behind one of the nearby large pine trees. Merrick stood where he was and hastily began reloading.

“Merrick! What the hell are you doing?” Osbert screamed over the continuing roar echoing all around them. “Get to cover you idiot!”

Merrick finished reloading and sprinted *towards* the origin of the roaring, diving behind a rock at the last possible moment. Just as he curled up into a crouched position the Grimfiend burst into the path that had just recently been vacated by the three men. It swirled this way and that, black, soulless eyes scanning for any sign of the prey that it had heard only moments before. Kristofer cautiously looked around the large trunk that he was using as a hiding place and his eyes widened as his gaze fell on the horrific beast.

A large, black, bipedal figure crouched, sniffing the ground where the shell from Kristofer’s bullet lay. Dark fur covered the entirety of the beast’s grossly disproportionate body. Long, apelike arms scraped the ground, the strong, sinuous muscles underneath flexed to bear the weight of the creature as it brought its snout closer to the ground. The legs were thick and powerful, made for jumping rather than running and they seemed to be tensed in expectation of movement at any second. The monster’s chest was large and barrel-like. However, the true horror of the monster was in the head. A thick neck supported the ghastly visage of the reptilian head. Wait, no. It was not reptilian but more ursine. The longer he stared, Kristofer saw that the head of the beast never stayed the same for long. At times a stag, then a fox, then – most disturbingly – a man’s face. These features flashed back and forth, sometimes staying for long

extended periods of time, other times appearing for barely a few seconds. After what felt like an age – though logically he knew it couldn't have been more than a few dozen seconds – the creature lifted its head, now taking on the form of a wolf with dripping fangs and howled.

Merrick, incensed by the monster's terrible howl, rose and loosed a scream of his own before firing into the beast's side. The howl cut off into a wounded snarl as the Grimfiend temporarily shuddered revealing a small, ghoulish face, a rictus of a snarl plastered across the leathery grey skin. That moment of weakness vanished as quickly as it appeared and the screaming face of an eagle snapped in Merrick's direction before the monster's powerful legs exploded with force, sending the beast skyward to come crashing down on the boulder. As soon as the Grimfiend leapt, the trance over Kristofer and Osbert broke and the two of them let loose ferocious howls of their own before firing off at the monster's form, perched atop the large rock. It staggered backward as Osbert's shot connected with its left shoulder, again the grey hairless face returning for just a brief instant. Kristofer's shot sailed well over the monster however, a plan was quickly forming in his mind.

The creature head, now resembling a massive alligator, thrust down and snapped shut where Merrick had been crouched down and hidden. A scream of pain and alarm sounded from behind the boulder and the Girmfiend raised its head back, mouth bloodied.

“NO!” Kristofer and Osbert screamed together

“I'll kill you for that you bastard!” Osbert screamed fury contorting his vision and chasing away any vestiges of fear. He quickly loaded another shot and fired it off in the monster's direction. However, it had wised up to this trick and with supernatural strength, it bent over backwards, disappearing behind the boulder.

“Wait!” shouted Kristofer “We have to time our shots. The head. It’s the head. We have to shoot it in the head.”

“What?!” Osbert yelled back “How do you know? The head looks the worst place to shoot it!”

“Just trust me!”

“Oh, *now* he wants me to trust him...” Osbert muttered under his breath but ducked behind the fallen tree and began reloading. Kristofer had whirled back behind the tree as soon as he finished yelling and was almost done reloading by the time he spun back into the open. Just in time to see the Grimfiend, now bearing the head of a giant black bear, roar and pounced on the tree where Osbert was hiding.

“Run! Run!” Kristofer screamed, hoping his friend would hear him in time. Too late. He ran into the open, hoping to distract the monster in some way. His scream had caused his friend to poke his head up – and into the waiting maw of the beast. With a sickening crunch the jaws snapped shut and a smattering of blood sprayed to the ground around Osbert’s body as it fell. Kristofer let out a scream of pure rage and fired at the beast. The bullet impacted the left shoulder again, causing it to hunch forward. The Grimfiend launched itself backward, contorting in the air and landed in front of Kristofer, the ghoulish head quickly covered up by the head of some otherworldly sea creature. Rows and rows of glistening white teeth loomed over him before slowly begging to rotate and grind together.

A blanket of white fear covered Kristofer and in an instant, he knew where all the stories had come from. This beast was something unnatural and unkillable. This was a minor

manifestation of the gods, left here long after they departed this realm. Still he couldn't just roll over and die. He knew he had to at least try. For Corbin

For Corbin.

Gritting his teeth Kristofer slammed another round into the barrel of his gun. He raised his right arm and leveled the gun at the terrifying head in front of him.

“Come on then you bastard! Is that all you've got?” he screamed, spittle flying from his mouth. He fired and the beast's head snapped back, the ghoulish face once again surfacing, a look of pain flashing across its face. As the Grimfiend rocked back on its heels, the force of the blast forced its head upwards and away from Kristofer. Just as it began to turn back down to him another shot rang out. A shower of thick black blood rained over Kristofer as the Grimfiend's head exploded. The body of the beast twitched as it fell, spasming and writhing as if trying to follow commands from a head that was no longer there. With a ground-shaking thud it collapsed in front of him, blood oozing into the ground around him.

Looking up in amazement Kristofer saw Merrick, right arm hanging limply at his side, left arm fully extended with a smoking gun pointed directly at the monster.

“Yeah, I heard you. Go for the head.”

The Tail of the Amazon River

Miracle Duff

After studying this semester the narrative tropes of the monster, warrior, and rebel, I have compiled three short stories to demonstrate the tropes of these narratives. Each is emulated after movies and books we read throughout the semester to understand the tropes better and were tasked with writing about them to show a mastery of understanding. After each story, is a little explanation of how the story fits the tropes that were established in class.

The contents of this portfolio are narratives of the different tropes, starting with the monster trope. The story is of a cute but ferocious river otter that terrorizes a group of tourists on a river cruise. The hero Christopher struggles to fight it off and uses the help of one of his passengers to go on the hunt for the otter. The next is the warrior trope, where I have laid out the narrative of a warrior who is a woman, who in the midst of the king dying, makes a plan to help her sister out of poverty. She must stand by her warrior code and try to stay true to her clan's practices amid a rough battle. As for the last story, it is the representation of the rebel trope. Ruby, the daughter of a waitress/dancer is a ruthless kleptomaniac and seamstress who tries to get revenge against the man who had been trafficking young women. She plots a deceptive plan with her hidden talents to seek revenge independently.

All of these stories were developed through the study of the tropes throughout the semester and allow for good representations of the tropes of different narratives. I hope you enjoy them and find them as entertaining as I found writing them.

Gliding down the Amazonian river, a group of tourists was on a river cruise seeing all the exotic animals that could never be seen in North America. On the boat, Christopher, their tour

guide, was well versed in all the animals and always carried his rifle on his back just in case of any mishaps. He was a sure shot and had wrestled with gators in the swamps of Florida, but nothing ever prepared him for the creatures he had come across in the Amazon.

Back at the dock, he had trophies of various beasts such as crocodiles as large as a basketball player, snakes with the fangs of vampires, and birds with talons as sharp as a machete. However, there was only one animal he was always keeping an eye out for. Its fervent tail was depicted in a picture on the wall as it made a huge splash that enthralled the camera's lens. Only tourists had heard the story of the furry beast, but no one believed him. Everyone thought he was telling a lie since this creature would never harm anyone or anything.

As the river was calm, the tourists asked tons of questions about the river and the animals they saw. Christopher told them about the crocodiles and their sharp teeth, the colorful feathers of the birds, and the history of the Amazon. The beautiful birds that flew in and out of their coves landed on the boat to feed on the seed he laid out on the top of the boat. He was a sharp man and especially kind to all of the tourists. He took his job rather seriously and loved to talk about the animals as if they were his own.

One girl in particular thought she could outsmart him by telling him about the slow-moving sloth they had seen in the trees searching for leaves. She wore bright white culottes and a black top that showed off her shoulders and contrasted with her blue eyes and golden hair. As she told him about the sloth, he kindly listened and tried not to correct her but couldn't help but love the vicious tone she gave when he challenged her knowledge. She was with her friends, but they were too preoccupied with trying to throw their friend off the boat. The group was playing tricks on their friend and laughing the whole time, until the cuddly creature made its trek towards the boat.

As they teased each other trying to throw their friend Kalo off, they felt a sudden shudder from the boat and Kalo fell onto the wood of the boat. The boat rocked, but the water stood still. “Everyone sit down!” yelled Christopher.

The girl sat next to his steering wheel and looked at him helplessly. He drew his gun and got ready to shoot but before he could get his hand on the trigger, the creature leaped out of the water onto the boat.

The crowd of tourists stood in awe with their cameras ready to take pictures of the adorable river otter that had just entered the boat. It got up onto its hind legs and the tourists yelled at Christopher to put his gun down, but he stayed with his barrel drawn onto the otter. The group dared Kalo to get closer for the picture, and he started to make his way slowly to get a picture with it. The otter nudged towards Kalo as if it was going to curl up against his leg and Christopher had to put his rifle down since he didn't want to get a bad Yelp review on how he pointed his rifle at a tourist. That would be the end of him, and he knew it.

The flash went off and Kalo let out a girlish scream. The group of friends looked at the photo they took and they could see the otter's teeth sunk into Kalo's leg. Now, the otter hung over Kalo's stomach as it tore into his stomach.

Kalo was too slow in trying to get up off the floor of the boat after the initial attack and the otter's teeth had ripped apart his stomach into pieces of chopped intestine, as the girl watched in horror. She had never seen such a small but fierce creature as the one before her eyes. Its tail whipped around as it changed directions so swiftly. The girl next to Christopher screamed as it tore away piece by piece the flesh of her friends after finishing Kalo. Digging his mighty fangs into the skin of the tourists. The river otter was no longer cute and cuddly.

Christopher drew back his gun, knowing that an accidental missed shot at the monster could mean the loss of his beloved job and life in Brazil. He took on the task by drawing his dagger and leaping onto the main deck of the boat. He told the girl “Here, take this” and gave her his gun to hold. She had no clue how to use it, so it was practically useless to her. However, it made her feel safe to some level.

He leaped onto the deck and knew what he had to do. He had dealt with it before.

He grabbed its tail and looked the monstrosity in the eyes.

Most people would see this animal at the zoo and smile, but he saw this river otter and knew it was a ruthless killer with a hunger for flesh. As it struggled to get out of his grip, Christopher thought he had it, but with his conniving acrobatics wrapped around his arm and tore into Christopher’s hand.

He screamed in pain and stabbed the otter’s tail just enough to leave its tail barely holding onto the otter’s body. The otter flew into the water with Christopher’s right hand and lapped the boat, as if he was gloating that he had won the match, before heading back to his den.

The girl came to the main deck to thank her savior but had found that half of the boat had become amputees, and Kalo was left in chunks of body parts, barely held together. His flesh splattered across the wood of the boat, and blood dripped from the side into the water. She saw Christopher’s missing right hand, and he told her “Tis’ only a flesh wound” and they both laughed at the dark humor that made them both crack up. They both knew that Christopher was going to get a dreaded rabies shot when he got back to the dock since that otter probably carried many diseases with it, and rabies may be one of them.

Christopher returned the tourists to the dock, and the tourists had now bared witness to how ferocious the river otter truly was. The pictures from the zoo in North America did not give

the beast justice, and no one ever truly knew the power behind the otter's bite until now.

However, the girl stayed and asked if Christopher could teach her how to kill the otter and help him to the doctor to get the treatment for his gnarly bite. She wanted to avenge her friend Kalo and knew that none of her other friends in the group would be able to stay and help after that traumatic event. He said "I can teach you whatever you would like to know as I have seen lots of videos on how to be skilled in most weapons. (Any 20-minute YouTube video could teach you anything you need to know) However, I will only do so on one condition."

She replied with "And what would that be?"

He said, "Tell me your name."

"Ruth"

"Ruth? Well, quite honestly I didn't expect such an old lady name, but I guess that will do." He gave her a smirk and she could tell by his glimmering eyes that they would kill the otter. She couldn't muster the effort to be bothered by his comment on her name as he enticed her with the small looks he gave her.

After a quick trip to the doctor on the mainland, they took to the depths of the river for target practice as Ruth had never even shot a gun before. Christopher had already set up a range of his own with hanging wooden pictures that popped out of the trees. It ranged from jaguars to snakes to crocodiles and otters of course. Ruth learned quickly with the help of her new friend. And she knew that it was time to go after the beast that he had been trying to hunt during his time in Brazil.

Christopher brought out his new M1 Grand from the stern of the boat.

"I've been waiting to use this one"

Christopher needed to get some practice of his own as he now only had one hand. His right hand was gone, so he had to learn to shoot left-handed. He wrapped his arm in a sling he made with a leftover t-shirt he had on the boat and wrapped the gun within it. He propped the barrel on his forearm and put his left hand on the trigger. Shoving the butt of the gun into his shoulder, he prepared for the recoil and shot.

He shot at the targets along the river and once the magazine was empty a little ring would let out as the cartridge was emptied. It was a sound that could only be described as victory. He had never learned to shoot with one arm, and the only person he knew that had ever dealt with weapons one-handed was Ash in *Evil Dead*, and sadly a chain saw was not going to be ideal in this battle.

Once he had a feel for how he needed to shoot the M1 Grand, stirred the boat out of his target practice and back into the unknown, at least to Ruth it was. Christopher had mapped out every nook and cranny with his azimuth and pencils. It was a beautiful map and had lots of different art on it that only he could understand. To Ruth, it was like an abstract piece of art consisting of scribbles and stick trees with funnily drawn animals. She could tell he had been after this otter for a while.

All of a sudden there was a ripple from the shore.

The river had been calm this whole time besides the waves from the boat, so the perpendicular lines streaming towards the boat told that the monster was near.

Christopher and Ruth drew their guns and aimed, but it was no use as the otter flung onto the boat with its fangs out and ready to take the two of them down to the water with him.

Christopher shot but missed and Ruth stood there frozen as if all her training had gone to waste.

The otter's cuteness had gotten to her and made her immobile. The otter was too fast and saw his opening to take Ruth down. The otter launched at her with great speed and she fell into the water.

The water had already started to turn a deep red and Christopher took his dagger and jumped into the water. The otter had already taken Ruth's left eye out and ripped into her right foot. Christopher jabbed at the otter with his dagger. He was a strong swimmer so he knew that he needed to get a few quick jabs and get Ruth back onto the boat. The otter showed no mercy and ripped into his right arm as he knew it would hurt from their run-in earlier.

Christopher gave one last shove of his dagger into the otter and cut off his tail.

The Otter flailed around, and not knowing how to swim without his mighty tail, tried to fling himself to the shore. Christopher took this opportunity to get Ruth back onto the boat and fix her up with some medicine and wrap her wounds. He then steered the boat to shore and went with his M1 Grand onto the land where he was destined to find the otter.

Ruth wanted to go, but at this point was deemed useless. Christopher told her "listen, if I am not back on this boat by sundown, then take it. Everything at the dock is yours too since I don't have anyone here to share it with. If I make it back, we can share it together, because with our wounds at this point we need each other just to make one whole-bodied person. Call us the Frankenstein house if you will"

Ruth replied, " You mean Frankenstein's monster" and Christopher gave her a funny look mockingly and left with his rifle, prepared for the end of this fight.

They were on equal grounds now and he knew if he found the otter he could put a bullet to its head. He saw the prints leading to the otter and found him hiding behind a pile of twigs which seemed to be hiding the otter's den. He pushed piles of dirt into the den in an attempt to bury the otter in the den, but the otter rapidly emerged.

The otter tried to run but it had still not gotten acquainted with being without its tail. Christopher looked at the otter dead in the eyes, but the otter looked at him helplessly, with those eyes that had fooled tourists for so many years. He looked at him dead in his eyes and said “ you can’t fool me,” and pulled the trigger.

The magazine emptied from the rifle and that ring of victory filled the air.

After years of fearing this beast, his tail was his end. Christopher and Ruth went back to the dock and Christopher hung the otter’s tail as the centerpiece of his wall. Many tourists saw the tail and judged him for killing such a harmless and cute animal that holds hands with their partner. This led to fewer and fewer recurring tourists, but he didn’t care because he had one of his best friends Ruth by his side to always understand and laugh about their flesh wounds. Ruth and him lived back at the house on the dock together long afterward and ran the river cruise together.

How this Paper Complies with Template:

The story is inspired by the reading of *Jaws* and watching it as I tried to recreate the essence of the monster creeping up on our hero, Christopher, and his boat of tourists. I think that I invoke fear and awe through manipulating the amount of time for certain scenes where the otter approaches the boat and when the otter is tearing into the flesh of the passengers. The fear is that such a cute creature such as an Otter could be such a vigilant monster. I didn’t want it to be an obvious monster, but a surprisingly funny monster.

The framing of the story sets up investigation and mystery with the backstory of the otter in Christopher’s past along with the investigation of trying to find the otter in the river. The mystery is portrayed through the picture of the tail in the water near the trophies of animals

Christopher has. As for the bond that brings people together, Christopher and Ruth create a friendship through defeating the otter and soon even live together in the end. Obsessive behavior is also founded in Christopher and his need to get revenge towards the otter for taking his hand (especially his shooting hand), and how he has been trying to kill the beast for years, even though no one believes him and thinks he is crazy. The group hunt is found in Christopher and Ruth's hunt for the otter and how the leader (Christopher), kills the otter in the end. The ethics of the hunters is challenged because of the fact that the creature they are killing, being the otter, is perceived as cute and cuddly in theory. Even the tourists don't want Christopher to shoot the otter since it is so cute on the boat.

Other ways that it takes from the template are in the legends that surround the monster when Christopher tells Ruth, and in the picture of the tail thrashing in the water next to the trophies back at the docks. I took this idea from *Moby Dick* as there are only pictures of the whale until we see it in the film. Friends also die in the story at the beginning as Ruth's friends don't survive the attack by the otter in the beginning. The climactic struggle is founded in the scene where Christopher kills the otter. I try to draw out time in that scene as well to make sure that it is a longer battle than a simple shot of his gun. As for the novel weapons and strategies, I think it is pretty unique for Christopher to have to kill an otter with a missing hand. Ash from *Evil Dead* does so with a chainsaw, but I don't think anyone has ever seen someone shoot with one hand.

In all, I took creation from the template and the reading of *Jaws* and watching of the films *Jaws* and *Moby Dick*. When it comes to the comedic aspect, I don't really enjoy horror and thought this would be a little more out of the box, but still, convey a good monster narrative.

Creating a good spin on the paper, I think makes this a more creative piece than the general monster tropes we have seen in class.

Mantis

Elise Zitka

The girl was laying on the mattress with her legs spread, feeling every thrust of the man in front of her and he pushed himself in and out excessively, sweat pouring down his forehead. She, however, was not in the moment the same as the guy was. Sure, on the surface she could reflect whatever porn he was into that week, but something else had caught her attention entirely.

The man's neck throbbed along the vein that went behind his ear, and she was utterly caught in a trance. It was the jugular vein, she quickly recalled from anatomy, the vein that was so important for draining blood from the brain and neck to the heart. The heart was thumping loudly in the man's chest, almost loud enough to be the only sound in the room aside from panting and creaking. She wondered at what rate his heart was beating in his chest and began to imagine the ruby tissue pulsing in double time to what was shown in the vein.

"Becca, you good?" a rumbling voice came out from above her, and the thrusting stopped. The intrusive thoughts that the girl was having drained out of her head much like pus drains out of an infected cut. She looked up, blinking slowly at him, still lost in a daze of physical exertion and mental exhaustion. "I'm fine, just distracted. You can keep going." She urged the man, and with a small huff of annoyance and a shift so his head was in the pillows in the crevice of her neck, assumingly so he did not have to look at her, and he continued at the same drilling pace.

The girl got used to the repetitive and predictable pushes happening below her waist, so her mind began to wander again to the jugular vein that was now centimeters away from her face. With a curiosity like a child, her mouth began to wander to it until it hovered gently so that with each heartbeat, the vein was raised to her lips in a mockery of a kiss.

Suddenly she was almost drooling, imagine how the tangy salty blood would taste if she had a knife to make an incision. That's all it was to her, a simple incision to end a craving, nothing more went on into her thought process. Her fingernails and legs tightened around the man's back to hold him down, which he mistook for passion and sexual fervor. He picked up his pace, which drove the girl to annoyance as the original rhythm was lost and changed for something more aggressive and painful.

In a flash, she cupped her mouth around the man's neck at the middle of the vein and bit down as hard as she could, holding the now thrashing man in place. Rubbing her teeth back and forth and pulling, the girl accomplished chewing through the skin at first, which exposed the tender red flesh and muscle below, along with the infuriating vein. With one final bite, she severed it and blood began pouring out all over the girl's neck and chest and she lapped happily at the wound and continued ripping chunks of flesh out

The man cried in pain, along with cries of "What the fuck?!" and repeated attempts to get away. Even with his arms and legs free, he could not pry the female off him, almost as though she had found a way to hold him like a piece of meat kept up by a meat hook. His flailing began to diminish into light pushing to free himself, but the female kept chewing her way through his now destroyed neck, and the blood loss began to overwhelm him.

The last thing he felt was the woman flip him with almost unnatural strength and get on top of his cooling body. Using her nails that looked too sharp to be human, she first made a thin

slice down his sternum to the panniculus until she saw a thin red line follow. Almost driven wild by the sight of blood, she went over the stomach area with force until a significant tear was made to expose the man's intestines, which looked like coils of wet fleshy noodles.

The man's face stared up at the ceiling, now pale in color except for the fiery crimson that splashed on his face and dribbled out of his mouth. The female, satisfied with her state of being presently, tore into the viscera with her talons and feasted on the corpse of her boyfriend.

Rosewood High, January 15th, 2014 (end of 3rd Period, 12:15PM)

"You know, this guy has been getting on my nerves lately being pushy and asking for all of this sex. You know, I have to get homework done first!" Molly whined incredulously to the locker room row that her friends were in. Chloe looked over at her classmate, slowly recalling that Molly's new boyfriend of a month name was Joshua, or Josh for short. She looked over sympathetic, knowing exactly the struggle that the newly 17-year-old was facing when it came down to being pressured for sex. Almost any girl in the locker room was oddly accustomed to it, seeing it as an unavoidable annoyance instead of harassment.

"God, you know Chad has been doing that to me too! Acting like he's entitled to it after he took me out to a movie last week!" Katie spoke up, turning her attention to Molly. The other girls rolled their eyes. "You know, you're going to have to accept that your partner is going to want sex." Emily said, being one of the girls that had rolled her eyes. She had accepted that dating and sex went hand in hand, even at such a young age.

"Except for me! Ethan is 19 so we're not supposed to do anything, but it's not like we don't..." 15-year-old Amy smiled as if she had just told a secret, while the other girls reacted with nothing more than slight disdain born out of twisted jealousy that they did not also have an older boyfriend who was in college. Robin, one of the only out lesbian girls in school piped up

from the back, “You know, if you don’t want to do something then the guys have a left hand to use.” She snorted, prompting groans and a chorus of “you don’t understand!” to the outcast, who promptly shut her mouth.

“You know, Josh hasn’t even bought me this necklace like he said he would, and our three-month anniversary is coming in a week and three days!” Molly continued, pulling her sweaty gym shirt off and stuffing it in her locker, spraying large amounts of body spray over herself and her clothes in place of a shower. “Sometimes I just want to kill him!” Molly shrieked when she closed the locker, the sudden jump in audio making everyone in the row jump.

“You know, I’ve been feeling the same way about Josh. That I want to kill him.” Chloe repeated, replaying the way that Molly’s mouth looked when she said “kill.” It was a harsh beginning note made with the tongue pressed against the roof of the mouth and releasing to make the severe ‘K’ sound. Next, the tongue journeyed to the tip of the teeth to press lightly against the back. The word replayed on a loop, hypnotizing the young girl, and forcing her into a feedback loop.

What happened next was only reported in the books that followed the incident, such as the ever popular speculative narrative *The Mantis Effect: Documented Facts and Specific Conclusions Derived from the Case of Rosewood High* by David Connor, a father of one of the girls that was killed in the aftermath. There were many male deaths that happened first due to the virus, but once the girls had run out of people to kill, it was like the virus subsided. The girls were all traumatized by their own actions as they occurred. When Chloe backed Josh into a corner and overpowered him, she felt as if she was not in her own body and was watching herself do these things from the outside looking in. She has never seen blood or guts before in real life, and

decided it was easier to think of it as special effects for a horror movie that she was not old enough to watch. No girl escaped the virus unscathed.

Once the male population was dwindled, and the virus had less effect over the girls, the remaining males came together to form a campaign against the girls. They believed that they were killing indiscriminately, no matter how many times the girls told them that they were not in control of their own actions. The boy group roamed the halls and killed any female they came across. When Molly was in hiding, she saw a boy take a girl into a back room, and minutes later the boy was dead. Molly was never sure what happened in that room, only that boys flooded in after hearing their friend's cries and stabbed the girl with knives from the kitchen before she could scream. Molly realized that it wasn't the men protecting themselves, it was an excuse for the survivors to take revenge and kill any females they had come across, so when the biological driven carnage was finished, the girls realized they were the ones in danger.

The virus had made the school into a warzone. Dead carcasses that littered the halls did not look relatively real, so it was easy to push past when everything looked like a low budget horror movie. Molly had found her boyfriend, Josh, thankful that she had no urge to kill him, and no one else in the group did either. She didn't even worry about Robin, who was waiting for them behind a barred door, preventing any rebelling males that had not been killed from attempting to harm the women who had torn apart their classmates.

"Why doesn't Josh go-ahead to the room?" Chloe whispered in Molly's ear, trying to be discreet from the yelling men in the hallway who were trying to find more women to kill. "That way he could make those weirdos look in the other direction and we can sneak around to the back of the room." She said, and Chloe nodded, repeating it to Josh, and seeing him run off exactly how she planned him to.

Now it was just Chloe, Molly, and Jade, holding hands and listening hard for Josh's voice telling the nerds of the school that he saw a group of girls run into Building 10 on the outskirts of campus. After holding their breaths collectively, they heard the boys yell and run to the far-away building, which would give the girls enough time to run around into the protective barriers once more until they could be rescued.

"I keep thinking, I've only killed the men I've had sex with," Jade spoke aloud, startling everyone in the group. Her voice was thin and papery as if she was haunted by the ghosts of the men she had torn apart. Neither of the other girls had stopped to consider this feeling of guilt or shame, but both knew they did not have enough time to drown in it. They needed to leave this room, and they needed to leave now.

"That's a theory dude, I kind of noticed the same, I guess. I don't think I remember all of them though." Molly said in a far-off voice, beginning to get lost in the feedback loop of both being the victim of compulsion but the murderer of someone else.

"You know what I do know?" Chloe started, her voice being the firmest out of the three of them. "We need to leave, soon, before those incels come back. I don't want to die." She told them strongly. The other girls slowly nodded and began to rise, all while Chloe opened the door silently, leaning out to make sure both sides of the hallway were clear. The girls, all bloodied and covered in self-defense wounds from their victims, scampered down the hall and reached the safe room only to realize with a horror that the once barricaded door was now ajar.

They slowly began to make their way into the room, with Molly spotting Josh first. He was holding Robin's light frame by her neck, letting her full weight pull the rest of her body downwards as it sounded like she was already struggling for breath. The girls were too shocked to say anything, and instead watched the flickering florescent glow light-up Robin's glasses so

they appeared all white. Robin's frame shuddered one last time, trying to escape, but her hands drooped to her sides and her head lulled as she stopped fighting.

All at once the girls were yelling, attracting more of the girls to come out of adjoining rooms, seeing the display before them, and piecing together what had happened. Now loud noise didn't seem to matter, as the people who were hunting them were most likely outside where the sound would not travel.

"She attacked me!" Josh yelled at the girls surrounding him, pushing them away with his brute force. "Josh! You didn't have to kill her! She's never slept with a man!" Chloe shouted over the din of chaos. "She was attacking me and going for my neck like the rest of them! She probably got infected by a girl!"

"Josh, it doesn't work like that. These girls are only killing...men they've slept with..." Chloe stopped her speech as the horrifying realization came upon her. Josh just smiled at her, nervously and yet with no emotion behind the eyes. "She said she wanted it, or at least she acted as she did. I just told her she hadn't found the right guy yet."

Molly heard this and clapped her hand over her mouth, hearing the damning words come straight from her boyfriend's mouth. It filled her with an anger that she had not experienced, even in the heat of passion where she has slaughtered her ex, Marcus. In a moment of self-pity she wanted to cry, knowing her life could have been ruined by the person she wanted to trust the most. She felt shame, but she had the urge to commit murder that was not driven by a contagious virus.

The women, who were having similar thoughts, closed in on Josh, forming an impenetrable circle. Josh looked around and realized quickly he was outnumbered and could not escape even if he took down five girls by himself. He looked one last time at the person who was

supposed to save him, Molly, but her face was contorted in an expression of rage that made her look like a different person. For the first time, the girls did not kill out of the impulse to, it was a righteous anger that brought their gnashing teeth on his neck, relishing the sounds of gurgled screaming that was below them.

From *The Mantis Effect: Documented Facts and Specific Conclusions Derived from the Case of Rosewood High*, by David R. Connor (Bristlenose University Press: 2016), p. 34:

More females in the locker room joined in until the whole room was a low hum of hatred and spite for either male counterparts or males altogether. Even those with no current male counterparts. The only exceptions seemed to be a handful of girls that only copied their friend's hatred, and several girls who were confused where all this aggression came from and promptly left the building.

The bell signaling it was time for the next class was a trigger of some sort. The girls in the locker room ducked and covered their ears to block out the offending shrill noise. Once they all rose, the same girls that had felt the passion of hatred for men that they had sex with were bleeding a black ooze from their ears mixed with strands of neon slime that stuck to their hands as they pulled away. None of these girls seemed too phased by this development, and once they left the door is when the real horrors began.

Females sought out males they had previously had sexual intercourse with (including all previous partners located at the school location) and began to try to tear their jugular vein specifically. Scientists have posed that this may stem from *Mantis Religiosa*, which kill their partner before, during, or after sex largely through decapitation.

There is not more known about the method of killing, or even rumors of cannibalism that may have occurred. Rosewood High School entered a lockdown after the first student, Ryan Beaver, was reported to have been taken down by three girls and killed in the middle of the school hallway. Students that escaped witnessed the same reported girls, Chloe Webster, Diane Smith, and Elena Beaver (sister of the deceased) were in the process of clawing apart his stomach and ripping out bowels to feast on them like some sort of rabid animal.

One student remains unaccounted for in the bodies and remains missing to this day. The females involved with the incident at Rosewood either refuse to speak about it or say they do not recall a boy by that name, despite one of the perpetrators being his girlfriend. To this day, Josh Hutman's parents still hold out hope that their son will return home to fulfill his promising future of playing football for Notre Dame.

It is to my, and several other professionals' opinion that this virus only affects those who have sexual relations with the victim. For example, if Suzy had sex with Johnny and Bob, she would feel the desire to kill them both, just like if Johnny had sex with Suzy, Anne, and Carole, all three ladies would try to kill him. An unfortunate circumstance of the virus was revealing incestuous relationships, as the female has no control over the fact that she is driven to kill any partner of sexual intercourse.

Jesus Tropes

Jesus Narrative Template Sources: *Nausicaa* (1984), *Cool Hand Luke* (1967), *Billy Budd* (1924), “The Grand Inquisitor” (1879), *The Matrix* (1999)

Characters: Nausicaa, Luke, Billy Budd, Jesus, Neo

11. Represents key to mystery
12. Reforms the system
13. Betrayed by friend
14. Inspires deep devotion
15. Fate will be canonized
16. Dies and reborn stronger
17. Endures pain for cause
18. Displays miracles
19. Acts require interpretation
20. Rebellious but lawful good

The Snow Queen: Elsa as a Christ Figure

Vivianne Skavlem

For this class unit, we have explored the concept of the Jesus trope and its subtle and overt uses in media. The Jesus trope can be found in countless iterations, used either intentionally or unintentionally. In the case of *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, writer and director Hayao Miyazaki had to release a statement that he did not intend for Nausicaä, the titular character, to be interpreted as a Christ figure. She was not explicitly written with parallels to Jesus; however, she nonetheless follows the Jesus narrative template we established as a class. A more recent example of perhaps an unintentional Christ figure is one of Disney's most well-known princesses; or more accurately, queen, this character being Elsa from the *Frozen* franchise.

We established ten narrative devices that serve as a general template for a Jesus narrative, which I intend to prove manifest in the plot of the 2019 movie, *Frozen II*. For the purposes of

this paper, I will be presenting the 10 tropes in three groupings. Displaying miracles, inspiring deep devotion, and having a rebellious but lawful good moral alignment are all Jesus tropes that are evident in Elsa's character development throughout the franchise but are overt in *Frozen II*. The next four will require a more in-depth justification and examination of evidence, but serve as important plot points in the movie, a betrayal, the endurance of pain, death and rebirth, and interpretation of acts. Finally, the ending of the movie neatly ends with the final three tropes: representing key to mystery, canonizing fate, and reformation of the system.

Elsa's miracles are what she is known for: her powers over ice and snow. While in her childhood she was told to "conceal, don't feel" her abilities and to hide them from everyone around her (Del Vecho, 2013). She has not only the ability to produce these elements ex nihilo; which itself is remarkable; but with that she can also create sentient, intelligent, and living beings. One of her creations, Olaf, has been a central character throughout the franchise, and his existence depends entirely on Elsa (more on the implications of this later). Her last miracle of sorts is what instigates the plot of *Frozen II*. Elsa begins being plagued by a disembodied voice that only she can hear.

Eventually we find out that this disembodied voice belongs to Ahtohallan. Ahtohallan is in essence the god of the Frozen universe, as Elsa and Anna's mother Iduna implies when she says, "only Ahtohallan knows," with the equivalent phrase we use being 'only god knows' (Del Vecho, Howard, 2019). Anna naturally becomes very concerned when she learns her sister is "hearing voices" scolds her for not telling her (Del Vecho, Howard, 2019)

Anna's emotional dependence and idolization of Elsa is explored more in *Frozen II*. Her greatest fear is being alone, and she is fiercely protective of her still new relationship with her sister. When Elsa expresses her fear of "messing things up," Anna asks, "when are you going to

see yourself the way I see you (Del Vecho, Howard, 2019)?" There is no one more devoted to Elsa than Anna. In a pivotal scene wherein, the sisters learn that the voyage their parents died on while searching for answers on the source of Elsa's powers, Anna responds with "I believe in you, Elsa. More than anyone or anything," an expression of her total and utter devotion to her sister (NaClhv, 2020). Anna views her relationship with her sister as something that is fragile and could easily fracture at any moment. Her dialogue with Olaf before the song "Some Things Never Change," Anna tells Olaf that she's "not alone anymore," and as the song title suggests, Anna remains satisfied with the status quo and is content with the current dynamics of her various relationships, despite her devotion to her sister straining her relationship with Kristoff (Del Vecho, Howard, 2019).

Elsa has always felt like an outsider, and she struggles with feeling like she belongs. As a character, she has always struggled with doing what is right for her and doing what is expected of her. The entire sequence of the song, "Into the Unknown," really demonstrates her internal struggle with this. The song is a call and response, with Ahtohallan calling to her, and Elsa responding. At the opening of the song, Elsa responds to the call with "I can hear you, but I won't," so she attempts to reject the siren's call by reminding herself that she has "a thousand reasons... to ignore your whispers," which are tempting her (Del Vecho, Howard, 2019). She expresses her fear of "what I'm risking if I follow you," but admits that "there's part of me that longs to go into the unknown" (Del Vecho, Howard, 2019). Her internal conflict about what she desires for herself versus what she has obligations for is a nuanced take on being lawful good while also rebellious.

The trope of betrayal by a friend is present in an interesting way that does not follow the traditional path of a Jesus trope. In this story, the person who is betrayed is Anna, and Elsa is the

perpetrator. Anna continually reminds Elsa about her tendency to do everything alone, and just how much danger she puts herself in. After entering the Enchanted Forest and meeting the Northuldra people and discovering a group of Arendellian soldiers trapped within, the salamander fire spirit skitters around lighting the forest on fire. Having the powers to put it out, Elsa enters the blaze to put it out. Anna follows her in before Kristoff grabs her and brings her to safety. After the blaze is set out and the sisters are reunited, Elsa reprimands Anna for running into the fire. Anna responds to this with "if you don't want me to run into fire after you, then don't run into fire" (Del Vecho, Howard, 2019). Both sisters share the same sentiment, that they can't lose the other. Ultimately, Elsa betrays Anna by sending her and Olaf far away in a boat made of ice. Ultimately, Elsa makes the choice to break her promise to Anna of doing everything together. Only Elsa can do what needs to be done to protect and save those around her.

Elsa endures a great amount of physical and mental pain in her attempt to reach Ahtohallan to discover "the wrong [that] demands to be righted," and she willingly does this, fully knowing the risks. Her decision to send Anna and Olaf away clearly caused her a great deal of emotional pain, but she chose to protect them. Immediately after making this choice, Elsa must withstand the physical difficulties of discovering Ahtohallan. To reach Ahtohallan, Elsa endures being buffeted by the sea and is attacked by the water horse spirit, nearly drowning her in the process. When she finally does reach the glacier, she decided to go deeper and farther back in time to uncover what really caused the rift between Arendelle and the Northuldra. Ignoring the warning of her mother not to "go too far or you'll be drowned," ultimately, she does learn the truth; it was her grandfather acting on his fear of magic that he murders the leader of the Northuldra and confines the spirits to the Enchanted Forest (Del Vecho, Howard, 2019). As she

begins to freeze, she uses the last of her powers to send Anna and Olaf the truth. The cost of this truth is her life.

We get clues of this throughout the score. Her mother's lullaby greatly foreshadows the eventual price; "when all is lost, then all is found". Aside from the overt warnings in the lullaby, we get another clue of the inevitability of her death, but also in being reborn stronger. The melody of Ahtohallan is the *dies irae* in a major key. This music motif has been used for centuries as a precursor to a character death. It can be found in countless film scores. Taking this one logical step forward, Elsa literally hears her death calling to her. Use of this melody was intentional in this film, and there is significance of it set in a major key. You don't find many happy songs in minor keys and changing a melody from major to minor greatly impacts the mood of a song. By setting a melody that brings death in a major key and using it as a joyful call gives not only the melody a new life but sees Elsa reborn as well.

Much of what happens after she dies requires interpretation. The most interesting of these being Elsa and Anna's reunion at the end of the movie. After Elsa prevents Arendelle from being destroyed by the water released by breaking the dam, Anna asks her "is it really you?" Here is where the interpretation comes in. Elsa gives a non-answer to this question and doesn't confirm or deny if Anna "lost" her. In this, it appears that in her death, Elsa has accepted and embraced her identity as the fifth spirit, as she eventually leaves Arendelle to go live with the other spirits in the Enchanted Forest.

Elsa herself also represents the key to a mystery; that being why the nature spirits are angry but also how to end the conflict. She and Anna can bring piece and balance to the spirit realm and human realm, with Elsa learning that she is a fifth spirit, and that she and Anna can act

as a bridge between the two worlds, with Elsa serving the spirits and Anna serving the humans. The significance of this is twofold, as the conflict arose from the construction of a dam, which cleaved the land in two, effectively separating the two worlds. However, after the dam is destroyed, the two sisters can reconnect the spirit and human worlds, effectively reversing the damage done by their predecessors.

Elsa's fate will also be canonized, as one of the recurring motifs of the movie is the theory that water has memory, with scenes from the past being captured and preserved within it. Not only will the water remember her sacrifice, but so too will her people. The fate of her country rested on Elsa restoring balance. In a more comical sense, Olaf also serves as a canonization of the story in his post credit speed recap of the movie. It exists outside of the plot of the movie but is still a retelling of the movie's events.

Finally, Elsa fundamentally reforms the system. Actually, she reforms many systems. Because of her actions, the nature spirits are no longer confined to the forest, and are once again able to move and act freely, after decades of imprisonment. She is also able to bring peace to the Arendellians and Northuldrans, who have been fighting while trapped in the forest with the nature spirits. Ultimately, she abdicated the throne, and Anna becomes queen.

I can say with a fair amount of certainty that *Frozen II* was not made with the intention to have Elsa follow a Christ narrative. Much like *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, I think that it just so happened that many elements found in a Jesus trope make for a compelling story. There is a reason that we still talk about and know Jesus' story today; the authors carefully crafted a narrative and implemented tropes that made for an engaging, entertaining story. A story with a Jesus narrative can be crafted unintentionally. Much like the hero's journey, I think that aspects of a trope can be put together without knowing you are doing it. It just makes for a good story.

JESUS TROPE:

For the Jesus trope, I found it particularly hard to follow or find myself interested in the sources. It wasn't because I didn't enjoy them, but it was simply a theme that I didn't really connect with. Therefore, instead of doing another creative piece, I decided to approach this trope from an analytical point of view, which has definitely been easier. In this case, it has been easier to follow all the characteristics we identified as common for all the sources we analysed and adapt them into my paper. Instead of making up a fictional character which would have all the common features we highlighted in the template, I simply picked a fictional character from the tv show *American Horror Story: Apocalypse* who embodied all those characteristics. All the ten common features we picked for the Jesus trope are perfectly summarized in the character that I thoroughly described in this analytical paper: that of Mallory.

Mallory, in fact, fulfils all the characteristics that a Jesus main character should have according to the template. She is the underdog character and no one would ever expect her to be the person able to fight the Antichrist. She is also extremely rebellious yet insecure and shy, which makes her vulnerable and not a classical hero. She gets betrayed several times in this season of *American Horror Story*, but she always manages to jump back and get back on track because of her strength and powers.

She is also an extremely inspiring character for everyone else. In fact, despite being the youngest witch at the Academy, she is still idolized and very much respected by all of her colleagues, especially the current supreme, Miss Cordelia Goode. She is able to die and come back from death like no other has ever done before. She is an unconventional angelic figure which represents the light that fights against the darkness of evil

The New Supreme

Alessandra Rubello

The eighth season of the tv show *American Horror Story* is called *Apocalypse*, and it focuses on a hypothetical apocalyptic scenario that could happen if the world continues to see numerous useless wars among its inhabitants. The plot of this season foresees that a group of people, who apparently have nothing in common, find themselves as “the chosen” ones who are able to escape the apocalypse and who find themselves locked inside an overprotected underground bunker. Subsequently, a further screening is planned where only three people from the group will be chosen and sent to the sanctuary, where they will be able to lay the foundations for humanity and the future, post-apocalyptic society. Among the most important characters in this season are Coco St.Pierre Vanderbilt and her assistant Mallory, Miss Venable, Miss Mead, and Michael Langdon. The first two, Coco and Mallory, are actually witches who were put under a spell before the apocalypse happened, in order to be able to defeat the so-called “Antichrist”. Both witches are part of Robichaux Academy, an all girls private school for young women who show potential and innovative skills. On the other hand, the Antichrist can be identified as Michael Langdon, who reigns over the bunker alongside Miss Venable and Miss Mead, and who is designated to reign over humanity in the post-apocalyptic world. Michael Langdon represents the evil force, the devil, so the character that stands in opposition with the young witch Mallory, who will rise as the new Supreme and therefore is the only person who is able to defeat him.

Throughout the whole season, the forces of good and bad, or pure and evil are often juxtaposed and highlighted by the numerous scenes in which Michael Langdon, the Antichrist, is opposed to the witches, who came to save the world and rescue Coco and Mallory. Michael Langdon is compared to the figure of the Antichrist because he wants to reign over the world in a

regime of terror. In fact, it will be up to him to choose who will be worthy to live and who will have to perish. Langdon is presented in an almost angelic figure, with long blond hair and light green eyes. However, he is anything but an angel. In fact, throughout the season we find out how he was the son of a demon and a human woman who got impregnated by the evil force on purpose. The result of the pregnancy, which ended with the death of the human woman, was Michael Langdon, a half-human half-demonic presence. From his birth, he exhibited somewhat disturbing behaviours that were certainly not suited to a 5-6 year old child.

Among all the numerous weird behaviours, two scenes in particular are, in my opinion, relevant for this story. The first episode goes back to when he was around 2 years old and somehow managed to kill his newly hired babysitter with a sharp knife. He completely slaughtered her and left her lying on the kitchen ground, then went back to doing what he was doing without a care in the world. As similar episodes kept happening, no one really knew what to do to keep him under control, until one day he aged something like 10 years overnight and the church of Satan came looking for him as their new Messiah: the Antichrist.

As opposed to Michael Langdon, there is Coco St. Pierre Vanderbilt and her young assistant Mallory. As already stated in the introductory paragraph, they are actually two witches from Robichaux Academy who were put under a spell by the Supreme, Cordelia Goode, in order to blend in with other human lives and try to save the world from Michael Langdon. Coco and Mallory don't know they were put under a spell and act like two regular people in the real world. Coco is a wealthy woman who has everything she would want: a husband, a fortune to inherit and a stable job, while Mallory is just her assistant. Her only job is to run around making phone calls and appointments for Coco, as well as making sure her chai latte is not too cold or too hot by the time it gets delivered to her. Coco doesn't treat Mallory properly. In fact, in one of the

opening scenes of this season, Coco is caught scolding Mallory about 80% of the time. She treats her like a servant and doesn't leave her alone for a single moment. She is constantly needing her help to even do the easiest tasks, including blow drying her hair and adding two spoons of sugar in her coffee. With that being said, it is obvious that Coco can't survive without Mallory and therefore decides to bring her to the bunker with her.

The figure of Mallory is the perfect characterization of a Jesus character, even though she doesn't necessarily present herself as an angelic figure. Her physical features are those of an ordinary young teenage girl, who struggles with her identity and grapples with finding and showing her true colors. In fact, at first no one suspects her to be the one who will be able to defeat the Antichrist. She is presented as a shy and insecure character who sees no purpose in life but to oblige to Coco's orders. She is willing to suffer and take the pain away from the people she mostly cares about, including Coco who, on the other hand, doesn't reciprocate the actions. She is a mysterious character, and doesn't present, at least at first, any characteristics that can identify her as the key character to defeat evil. She is also betrayed by Coco several times throughout the first part of the season, including numerous occasions in which Coco is willing to sacrifice Mallory's life to claim a spot in the sanctuary.

Mallory is a character who inspires others throughout this season. Despite being the youngest witch, she has incredible powers which she masters with the help of the Supreme Cordelia, who remains astonished by the youngest witch's potential. She is the only witch who is able to bring the dead back to life and actually turns miracles into the ordinary, which makes her the rightful successor of the title of Supreme. In this way, she is able to reform the system, since originally Michael was thought to be the next Supreme.

In order to save the earth from the pure force of evil, she has to take the test of the seven wonders, which consists of seven different challenges which represent extreme danger and could potentially cause her death. Mallory, in fact, dies during her first attempt to save the planet, but is saved by Cordelia, who acknowledges her abilities and will give her an exceptional second chance, which she doesn't fail. Mallory is a rebellious character, as she refuses to acknowledge and explore her powers. Her insecurity prevents her from owning up to her true self for the first half of the season. She is in denial, but her fate calls and she is able to arise and become the next supreme.

In the last few episodes of this season of *American Horror Story*, Mallory is able to defeat the evil forces, including the Antichrist himself, with a dangerous spell that hadn't been performed or even attempted ever before: *tempus infinitum*. This spell lets people travel back in time and erase everything that went wrong in the past. While attempting to do this spell, Mallory is able to travel back to the time when Michael Langdon was born and kills him, preventing the world from being stuck in an apocalyptic scenario where only the evil forces reign.

Mallory represents an unusual Jesus character, but at the same time she has all the main features that refer to the Jesus trope. She is able to defeat evil and represents everything that's good in the world. However, she does that while showcasing her flaws and insecurities, which make her a vulnerable character to the eyes of the spectators. With that being said, she is also an extremely good character for this template because she fits all the characteristics that we analyzed and we have seen in the sources we watched or read. Furthermore, the fact that, unlike in many other stories or movies, she is a woman who fulfills these characteristics makes her different from anything we have seen.

The Gardener and the Tree

Samantha Jenkins

In this story, Retter represents the Jesus character and fulfills that trope. The main character is the friend who betrays the Jesus character. Retter has close devoted followers, and performs miracles, such as improving the agriculture and making the food taste good. He endures pain helping the others and when he is reprimanded for stealing the scrapped herbs. There is a mystery of how food is being harvested despite most of them not working, and it is because of him working endlessly. He reforms the system by freeing the other gardeners. Retter dies and is reborn stronger in his fate and legacy. He is rebellious in taking scraps of herbs, which is close to stealing. This piece was inspired by *Cool Hand Luke*, *Nausicaa and the Valley of the Wind*, and *WALL-E*. It was heavily inspired by *Cool Hand Luke*, as in the confined space and character dynamics, but I couldn't put it in a prison and I still needed them to forcefully be laborers. The strength of Retter's character is inspired by *Nausicaa*. The setting, which consists of a Life Station and another artificial world solely for food production, was inspired by *WALL-E*.

“He’ll be the one to get out of here - the only one.”

Lorne narrowed his eyes after his statement, his attention exclusively focused on Retter. I shook my head.

“He doesn’t want to get out of here,” I replied. “He’s the only one of us who actually likes this job.”

“What job? We were forced into this life, and that damned Retter makes it look natural, like he doesn’t care he didn’t have a choice.” A dangerous edge to Lorne’s voice, he spoke quieter. “And he will get out, they’ll take him somewhere else to be perfect at Fate knows what.”

I followed his gaze to watch Retter, who stooped to check on the roots of the apple trees. The Artificial Weather was set to a warm sun with a nice breeze, which bristled our loose grey uniforms. Retter stood and walked to the blueberry field, which was in the southeast sector of the Agricultural Center. Each sector was a different temperature, ensuring everything grew in unison - a system perfected by Retter. The domed ceiling, the same brilliant blue everyday, made the greenery surrounding us pop in vivid colors. It impressed me when we first arrived; I was a child then, and now it looked completely plain.

“He’s not such a bad guy. Every time we talk he’s nice,” I said, still watching Retter, who now seemed to be gazing upon every single leaf of every blueberry bush.

“He likes it here,” Lorne growled. “That doesn’t make him any better than the rest of us.”

“I never said it did.”

Lorne walked to the exit.

Eating at the mess hall served as one of our few breaks throughout the day.

Lorne sat to my left, both of us shoveling down the disgusting leftovers from the Life Station. We were the only humans still growing food, but weren’t allowed fresh food ourselves. The security guards ate better than we did.

At the end of the table sat Retter and the few gardeners who took our job seriously — though I suspected that came only from their fear of rule-breaking.

“I can’t take this anymore,” Lorne said in a low voice after finishing his scraps.

I resisted rolling my eyes, ready for the rant he gave every other week.

“I need to get off this blasted space station. I don’t care where I go, I don’t even care if I die. I can’t spend any more of my life here. The people we keep alive don’t even know we exist.”

A strange light flickered in his eye, as if he’d had an idea.

“We’re miserable here, I get it. What exactly can we do about it?” I asked.

“That’s amazing!” exclaimed one of the gardeners at the end of the table. He grinned at Retter, then wolfed down his food with enthusiasm.

Lorne and I shared a look.

“You guys, if you need to make this food edible, Retter put together some seasoning that makes all the difference in the worlds,” he said after his last bite.

“All we have are salt and pepper,” Lorne said through gritted teeth.

“I found that collecting the salt and pepper and mixing in some of the scrapped herb plants from the fields can do wonders,” Retter replied with a humble tone.

“Wonders? It’s more than a wonder - you’ve made this food edible!” the same gardener exclaimed. Retter fell into conversation with his few friends while Lorne turned back to me.

“Taking the scrap plants, eh?” Lorne mused.

“They’re scraps. That’s what they like to leave us anyway,” I responded in a weak voice. I knew where he was going with this.

“Still not the best idea to steal from the gardens, and mess with the sustenance provided for us,” he said, despite having mused about the worst he could do about this food every day since we started working.

“He hasn’t done anything wrong,” I muttered.

Lorne stood. “He exists.”

The next morning the guard in the barracks demanded our attention. He told us in no uncertain terms that stealing food from the gardens is punishable by death and to not take any risks, they would be searching us when we returned from the garden. When asked if there had been reports of missed quotas or offset data, he walked away and didn't answer.

Retter's seasoning was grounded before it could take off, but luckily I'd never had the chance to try it to know what I was missing. Lorne kept up a triumphant face in the following weeks, while I attempted to treat Retter more kindly.

When the blueberries ripened a few weeks later, he and I picked them in the field together, one row apart, while the other gardeners spread out.

"I get a little tired sometimes, sure. But I remind myself who this is all for, the people who aren't in a position to help themselves," he said in response to my comment about his tiring long hours. And he did work much longer and much harder than the rest of us; I rarely noticed him in the barracks with us.

"They don't even know who we are. They don't know we exist."

"Are our efforts only worthwhile if we are credited and rewarded?" he responded.

I shrugged.

I reached for more blueberries, letting my gentle grasp tug only the ripe ones off the bush. They fell into the bucket with a sound I couldn't hear over a sudden oncoming march. Guards approached from the end of Retter's row, bats and cuffs in hand.

"Retter," the guard on the left said. His bright red uniform ensured all the gardeners would notice the altercation.

“Is something wrong?” Retter asked, his eyes wide with concern.

“Fruits were found among your belongings. Stealing from the garden and from the Society is illegal and you will face punishment. Come with us.”

Retter’s mouth opened but no self-defense emerged. While one guard roughly cuffed him, the other hit him in the back. With a gasp, Retter fell to his knees, and the guards stood on either side of him and carried him out.

“What did you do that for?” I asked Lorne later that night as we climbed into our bunks. Retter remained missing since the guards took him earlier that afternoon.

Lorne gave me a crooked smile. “Do what?”

“What’s in it for you? He’s the best gardener here. He increased yields, quality of crops, and even made some improvements in the livestock arena. He’d made it easier to be more productive. Why won’t you leave him alone?”

“Because he’s not one of us. The more he does, the higher the standard is for us, and the less chance we have of ever getting out of here,” he said through gritted teeth.

“He doesn’t matter, none of us are getting out of here. You’re just mad that that doesn’t bother him.”

“I’ll never accept that we’re not getting out of here. Not until I’m dead.” Lorne closed his eyes, flat on his back while pulling the covers over himself. “Or...”

Three days later, Retter returned. He moved gingerly, and kept everything at a slow pace. I couldn’t imagine what the guards did to him, as I’d never been punished. Lorne had a few

times for insubordination, but he never told anyone what he went through. I assumed it wasn't anywhere off the station, though, or else Lorne would be getting in trouble on purpose.

I made sure to be pulling potatoes near Retter, while Lorne worked over in the apple orchard.

"Retter?" I asked quietly, trying to get his attention. He flinched at his name. "I have to tell you about something."

"Yes?" His eyes widened, making him look even more vulnerable.

"I don't know what he's planning but Lorne is after you."

His expression hardened, and he seemed to mutter to himself. His body stilled and his fists clenched before he continued working. "Thank you for your help. But I don't understand, why is he after me? Have I offended him?"

Lorne's reasons for disliking Retter echoed in my mind. "He's just sensitive. He hates his life here."

"Are the state of our own lives truly the only things that matter?"

I didn't answer. All the fervor I'd held for protecting him vanished with his responses. Why was he so innocent, so good? How could he view life this way, when life did nothing but screw over us all? He should be angry, he should hate Lorne. He should take revenge.

I picked up all the buckets I'd filled with potatoes, and walked away.

Over the next few months, strange things seemed to happen. I didn't talk much with him anymore after he called the guards on Retter, but I noticed Lorne hardly worked, though he continued coming out to the field every day. Other gardeners also stopped working, and only made themselves look busy. I eventually resigned and joined them, and would watch Retter work

his hands to the bone and run all around the garden to take on the extra work. He already looked thinner, with constant bags under his eyes. I observed them with resolute guilt.

At night, I never saw him in the barracks. Retter's two friends helped pick up the slack, but still could not compete with Retter's tireless work ethic. I often noticed they slept as long as they could, but still no Retter. I wondered if Retter was working days and nights as a result of Lorne's organized strike among the rest of the workers. If Lorne had resigned to merely try to kill Retter by overworking him.

That wasn't his final plan, I found out a few days later.

The morning started like any other, as the majority of gardeners feigned the toils of agricultural labor while Retter and his friends did all the work. They were able to keep up somehow, and so the fields held only a slight excess.

The fire started in the rows of grapes, at the opposite end from where Retter picked the ripe berries. Another fire cropped up not long after, in the apple orchard.

They were so small at first that the guards didn't notice. They only continued coming from all over the garden.

The guards noticed when the fires started growing, but it was too late to easily stop the damage. Lorne and his followers had done their work — the food supply of humanity, our life work, burned in front of us.

We were ushered out by the guards as they went into lockdown. From the hall, we heard the sprinklers come on. I looked around at all of us, counting, taking names -

Retter was missing.

"Retter isn't here!" I exclaimed to no one in particular as the sound of the sprinklers died.

Lorne grinned.

A guard ran out of the center, breathing heavily and smelling like smoke.

“The sprinkler systems are down, we’re killing the fire ourselves. Don’t know what will happen... All of you need to go to the barracks. All of you here?”

I opened my mouth, but hesitated to release the words that would save Retter. If this fire claimed the center, they would have no use for us, they would need to build a new station, and we would have the chance to become free in the meantime. Apparently Lorne estimated the cost of our freedom as humanity’s only food source, and the man who made it as sustainable as it was.

The guard ushered us with his hands to go to the barracks, and we moved as a group, forsaking our life’s work, and the best of us.

A low chattering filled the hall in the passing hours. Most gardeners sat on their beds, talking in groups. They discussed how we would likely be transferred back to the Life Station, and how many opportunities we would have to escape. No one seemed to have any regrets about the way our possible freedom had been bought. They were all so bent on escaping that I wondered if they considered there would be no food anywhere. They talked about our changing futures. Our way of life, so steady and forced our entire lives, had gone up in smoke.

I knew Lorne started the fire, or at least one of them. He probably convinced other gardeners to help, promising them a freedom he could not guarantee. I had no idea how they started the fires, either, but I wouldn’t ask. I refused to know.

“Well?” Lorne addressed me, sitting on the bed next to mine. “Still think me a madman? Still think me irrational? I just freed all of us.”

“You might have freed us. But it cost the sustenance for the rest of humanity and the life of a man devoted to his job, his responsibility. What will you give as reason for the fire when they ask? Will you blame them on Retter?”

“I’ll try, yeah. But I bet they’re too distraught to care much.” Lorne looked away, gazing at the mass of confused gardeners. “Can you feel it? Our freedom awaits. We’re so close.”

The door opened, and two guards entered. Gardeners quieted at their arrival, holding their breath for their fates.

“Most of the garden has burned. We have lost 90% of the crops.” The guard paused. “A body was found, presumed to have saved the last 10%.”

A chorus of voices whispering Retter’s name rippled through the barrack, along with scarce and frightened hopes of freedom.

“Retter was the best of you. Someone’s carelessness nearly destroyed all of his hard work, his dedication to this service. He may have had a past checkered with thievery, but he has done more to help humanity than any of you could have imagined.” I thought I heard the guard’s throat catch, and could see a slight shining in his eyes. “But his death is not the last of him!” he shouted. “Retter had begun another garden!”

“No!” Lorne shouted amidst other protests. Our freedom slipping through our fingers, the room fell into uproar, and it took the guards minutes of walking back and forth shouting orders for us to quiet.

“Retter spent his nights creating a self-sufficient, fully automated garden that will end the necessity of gardeners.”

Now instead of uproar, there was silence, quiet enough to hear a flower bloom. Instead of echoing in the room, the words echoed in our heads.

“We’re free…” someone near me whispered.

“WE’RE FREE!” Lorne shouted.

“Retter freed us,” I said, though no one heard me.

From Paul Atreides to Muad’Dib: The Messiah in *Dune*

Alyssa Louk

In literature and film, the role of the savior or the chosen one has become a frequently used trope in which the main character of the story has specific characteristics and abilities that evoke the messianic figure of Jesus. In these stories, the protagonist most often inspires deep devotion, represents the key to mystery, displays miracles, and behaves rebellious but lawful good, which in turn also causes them to endure pain for a cause, experience betrayal, and die in order to be reborn stronger. After death, saviors are canonized by their followers as a mythic hero, which usually requires interpretation, and their legacy allows subsequent generations to reform an oppressive system. Given these qualities, it is possible to identify when a character fulfills the Jesus trope. For instance, the protagonist of Frank Herbert’s *Dune* (1965), Paul Atreides, is the savior of the people of Arrakis, and despite the science fiction elements found in Herbert’s novel, there are many similarities between Paul and Jesus, including their destiny to spread religious doctrine and become immortalized in the history of mankind. Therefore, I will explore how Paul’s thoughts and actions transform him into a messiah and compare him to other archetypal representations of Jesus, specifically the titular characters from the films *Billy Budd* (1962), *Cool Hand Luke* (1967), and *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind* (1984).

To begin, it is important to place Paul within the context of *Dune* before adequately examining his character and role as a savior. First, *Dune* takes place thousands of years in the future when intergalactic space travel is possible, and all inhabited planets are part of the Padishah Empire ruled by Shaddam IV, which is organized according to a feudal system where noble houses led by dukes are granted planetary fiefs. *Dune* focuses on the fate of House Atreides and the desert planet of Arrakis, a planet known for its valuable resource known as spice. In the beginning of the novel, Paul and his family are forced to move to Arrakis under the emperor's orders, and his father must wrestle power from the previous rulers, the Harkonnens. As the story unfolds, House Atreides is attacked by House Harkonnen in an attempt to eliminate the Atreides line. Although Paul's father dies, Paul and Lady Jessica successfully escape and are saved by the Fremen, the native inhabitants of Arrakis. With the help of the Fremen, Paul exacts revenge on House Harkonnen, takes control of Arrakis, and eventually rules the entire empire. This success is mainly determined by Paul's prescient abilities and the devotion of his followers.

On the other hand, the main conflict in *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind* is the ever-growing threat of the toxic jungle and its impact on the surviving human communities. As resources become scarce, communities fight each other over land and attempt to destroy the entire jungle, but Nausicaa, a young girl from the Valley of the Wind, is determined to establish peace between humans and the environment and sacrifices herself for the greater good. Because of Nausicaa's emphasis on harmony and her understanding of nature, many lives are saved, and in the end, different communities come together. Meanwhile, in *Cool Hand Luke*, Luke is a war veteran who is sentenced to two years of prison after damaging public property, and while he is imprisoned, he struggles to obey the strict rules and regulations enforced by the prison officers. After several escape attempts, Luke is shot by one of the prison officers after his friend reveals

his hidden location to the police, but his death helps reform the prison system and improves the circumstances of his inmates. Whereas Nausicaa has to restore the balance between humans and nature and Luke is battered by the prison system, *Billy Budd* is about serving in a British navy vessel. When Billy hits a commanding officer, he is forced to stand trial and sentenced to death for his transgression. Because of his innocence and integrity, his death becomes legendary among the crew, who pay homage to him through song.

Consequently, all of these works invoke the image of Jesus through their prevalent themes of sacrifice and perseverance in the face of conflict. Their use of symbolism and allusion also invites readers and audiences to make direct connections between these works and the venerable figure of Jesus. For example, in *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind*, Nausicaa resembles Jesus by representing the key to the mystery of the toxic jungle, performing miracles, fulfilling a prophecy, and dying only to be reborn stronger as Jesus did through his resurrection. Similarly, in *Cool Hand Luke*, Luke parallels Jesus by inspiring deep devotion from his fellow prison inmates, enduring extreme pain at the hands of law enforcement officers, and ultimately reforming the abusive prison system. Most notably, however, he is betrayed by a friend, like Jesus was betrayed by Judas. After escaping from the prison with a fellow inmate, Luke is captured and shot by the police, who find him only thanks Dragline, a prisoner who befriends Luke. The Christian allegory is also prominent in *Cool Hand Luke*, as Luke questions his faith in God, and he is once visually depicted as Jesus on the cross: his body bare, his arms spread, and unable to move. Meanwhile, in *Billy Budd*, Billy demonstrates strong moral wisdom and innocence, but he is accused of breaking the law and subsequently killed. Through different interpretations from his superiors, the press, and his crew mates, Billy's death becomes widely known and revered, which bears resemblance to how Jesus is canonized in the gospels. Billy also

illustrates the characteristic of rebellious but lawful good as his offence against a superior officer is an act against authority, but in all other circumstances, he acts with compassion and according to principles, frequently showing compassion and diligence during his service in the navy.

Likewise, there are several traits that distinguish Paul as an example of the Jesus trope.

One of the defining features of the Jesus trope is the act of betrayal. Whereas Jesus was betrayed by Judas, Paul is betrayed by Dr. Yueh. Dr. Yueh was Paul's teacher and a friend of House Atreides, but after he is manipulated by the Harkonnens, he allows enemy troops into Paul's home and aids in the capture of Paul and his mother and father. Although Paul and Jessica escape from the Harkonnens, Dr. Yueh is instrumental in the death of Paul's father and effectively causes Arrakis to fall under Harkonnen rule. Paul's experience with betrayal thus presents him as a Jesus figure, as well as connect him to the Jesus trope in *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind* and *Cool Hand Luke* in which both protagonists are also betrayed by someone close to them. Luke is betrayed by Dragline, and Nausicaa is betrayed by the Pejites, one of the surviving communities, who capture her against her will. After Paul is betrayed by Dr. Yueh, he seeks refuge in the desert and remains hidden to avoid being discovered and killed by the Harkonnens.

Another distinctive trait of the Jesus figure is the ability to display miracles, which in Paul's case are directly related to his unique abilities. After enduring a test known as the gom jabbar, it is revealed that Paul had been bred and trained to be the "Kwisatz Haderach," a supreme being capable of accessing genetic memories and seeing into both past and future, an ability otherwise known as prescience (Herbert 13). As Paul becomes exposed to spice on Arrakis, he is forced to test the limits of his abilities in order to survive and his prescient abilities are awakened. He begins to see visions of the past and future, and the possibilities ahead of him

with regards to his fate on Arrakis and his inevitable encounter with the Fremen: “Paul’s mind climbed another notch of awareness. He felt himself clinging to this new level, clutching at a precarious hold and peering about... He knew names and places, experienced emotions without number, reviewed data of innumerable unexplored crannies... *I have another kind of sight. I see another kind of terrain: the available paths*” (Herbert 246). Paul’s prescience is a miracle because no other being had been able to become a Kwisatz Haderach nor obtain fully developed prescient abilities. Most importantly, with his prescience, Paul is able to gain knowledge that could not be obtained elsewhere. For instance, he learns that he is a Harkonnen by blood, and through his visions, Paul sees what he must do exact revenge on the people who destroyed his family and restore House Atreides to its former glory.

In *Dune*, Paul also represents the key to mystery. On Arrakis, the Fremen believe in the prophecy of Lisan al-Gaib, a leader who will save them and bring them prosperity: “[He] *will be aware of things others cannot see...will greet you with Holy Words and your gifts will be a blessing... He shall know your ways as though born to them... The Lisan al-Gaib shall see through all subterfuge... [and] share your most precious dream*” (Herbert 136-166). As soon as the Fremen meet Paul, they suspect he is their long-awaited messiah, and he quickly gains their allegiance to his cause. Paul does not only represent the key to mystery by fulfilling the Fremen prophecy, but he also solves the mystery of where spice comes from. Similarly, Nausicaa fulfills the prophecy known throughout the Valley of the Wind: “After a thousand years of darkness, he will come, clad in blue robes and surrounded by fields of gold to restore mankind’s connection of the Earth that was destroyed,” and she also unravels the mystery of the toxic jungle (*Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind*). The toxic jungle is a product of human’s destruction of the

environment, and it is slowly purifying the water and soil. Thus, both Paul and Nausicaa embody the Jesus trope by representing the key to mystery.

Additionally, Paul inspires deep devotion from his followers by being reborn stronger, an act which requires interpretation. After consuming a large amount of spice, Paul is able to unlock the full extent of his prescient abilities and gains complete access to knowledge of the past and future. This is unprecedented because only women known as Reverend Mothers had previously been able obtain this ability, and whereas their abilities were limited since they could only access certain memories, Paul gains access to all knowledge of the past and future because he is the Kwisatz Haderach. However, in order to unlock his prescient abilities, Paul falls into a coma for several weeks, and many of the Fremen believe he is dead during this time. Once Paul finally awakens from his deep slumber with comprehensible knowledge of how to lead the Fremen and gain control of Arrakis, the Fremen are in awe and begin to idolize him as a messiah: “He is a man, yet he sees through to the Water of Life in the way of a Reverend Mother. He is indeed the Lisan al-Gaib” (Herbert 562). Consequently, Paul’s spice coma is an important turning point because it is interpreted as part of the prophecy: “he lays as one dead, caught up in the revelation of the Water of Life, his being translated beyond the boundaries of time by the poison that gives life. Thus was the prophecy made true that the Lisan al-Gaib might be both dead and alive” (Herbert 552). Afterwards, Paul’s role as leader of the Fremen is secured as his “death” confirms the prophecy and inspires deep devotion from his followers.

Paul also resembles the Jesus trope by enduring pain. In order to succeed in war and fulfill his role as savior according to the Fremen prophecy, Paul endures pain by surrendering any hope of long-lasting peace and happiness. By leading the Fremen and giving them their dream of a green and fertile planet as the prophecy states, he has to wage a war across the

universe. This forces him to assume great responsibility over the fate of the Fremen and Arrakis while putting himself in danger, as well as his family. Given Paul's prescient abilities, he is able to see possibilities of the future that correspond to different choices, which allow him to truly contemplate the consequences of his actions. In the path of war and prophecy he sees the death of Chani, the love of his life, and his own demise. As a result, the burden of the future weighs heavy on him, as he feels trapped by his role in the prophecy and is aware of its consequences: "He felt that this Fremen world was fishing for him, trying to snare him in its ways. And he knew what lay in that snare—the wild jihad, the religious war he felt he should avoid at any cost" (Herbert 438). Nonetheless, he chooses the path of jihad in order to prioritize the greater good even though it comes at the cost of his personal happiness. When Paul fully accepts his fate and role as savior, he adopts the name of Muad'Dib, a Fremen name that means "The One Who Points the Way," which further alienates Paul from his personal freedom and identity (Herbert 253).

Paul is also characterized by being rebellious but lawful good, like the protagonist in *Cool Hand Luke*. Luke's rebellious nature is seen in the way he frequently questions the authority of the prison officers, who in turn punish him for breaking rules, but he is also lawful good since he accepts his punishment with dignity and inspires the rest of the prisoners with his constant perseverance. Similarly, Paul rebels against authority by fighting the Harkonnens and usurping the Shaddam IV to become emperor himself. However, by accepting his role as leader of a religious war at the expense of his personal happiness, he ultimately chooses to do what is best for the greater good, a trait that distinguishes those who are lawful good. Whereas Jesus sacrifices himself to save humanity for their sins at the cost of his own life, Paul accepts his fate as the savior and sacrifices himself for the sake of others.

Subsequently, Paul reforms the system by changing the organization of the empire and establishing a new doctrine in which he is perceived as both a political and religious leader. Once Paul becomes emperor, he moves the political center of the empire to Arrakis and spreads Fremen culture and religion throughout the universe. Millions of people come to revere Muad'Dib and see Paul as both leader and messiah. However, by becoming a mythic figure, Paul's fate is canonized and subject to interpretation.

Paul, like Billy Budd, is canonized by his followers, and in doing so, Paul's actions are often subject to interpretation. Throughout *Dune*, there are excerpts at the beginning of each chapter that refer to a history of Paul written after his death. These histories are titled "Manual of Muad'Dib," "Dictionary of Muad'Dib," "Collected Sayings of Muad'Dib," "Muad'Dib: Conversations" and "The Wisdom of Muad'Dib." They are mainly written by Princess Irulan, who became Paul's wife when he took over the empire though he strictly married her to obtain his title as emperor. Within these works, Princess Irulan tries to interpret Paul's words and actions, often providing biographical information, including where he was born and his family ties: "Do not be deceived by the fact that he was born in Caladan and lived his first fifteen years there. Arrakis, the planet known as Dune, is forever his place" (Herbert 3). Princess Irulan also questions Paul's character: "He was warrior and mystic, ogre and saint, the fox and the innocent, chivalrous, ruthless, less than a god, more than a man. There is no measuring Muad'Dib's motives by ordinary standards (Herbert 588). As such, *Dune* makes clear that Paul becomes a legend through the history written by Princess Irulan, which resemble the Gospels in the Bible.

Dune, *Cool Hand Luke*, *Billy Budd*, and *Nausicaa of the Valley of the Wind* exemplify the recurring Jesus trope that is frequently used in film and literature. The trope is characterized by several recognizable qualities, such as portraying an individual who represents the key to

mystery, reforms a system, displays miracles, inspires deep devotion, and endures pain for a cause. In the case of *Dune*, Paul represents the key to a mystery by fulfilling the Fremen prophecy of Lisan-al Gaib, and he displays miracles and reforms the empire by gaining loyal followers and enduring pain for a cause. While Paul's war and conflict with the Harkonnens is somewhat driven by vengeance, he also commits to the cause for the greater good at the expense of his personal happiness and identity by becoming Muad'Dib, a messianic hero, which also makes him rebellious but lawful good. Furthermore, Paul is canonized in the histories written by Princess Irulan, who interprets his actions and solidifies his reputation as legendary figure. Since Luke, Billy Budd, and Nausicaa share these qualities with Paul, we can also see many stories follow a similar pattern when having a protagonist that alludes to Jesus.

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Warrior Tropes

Warrior Narrative Template Sources: *Conan, the Barbarian* (1982); "Patriotism" (1960); *Excalibur* (1981); *The Seven Samurai* (1954)

Characters: Conan, Takeyama, King Arthur, All Seven Samurai

2. represents war code
3. code is unattainable
4. villain highlights warrior's morality
5. displays superior military technique
6. clannish
7. celebrates life via death
8. transcends through battle
9. serves someone higher
10. begrudgingly helps
11. idolizes women/family

Femininity in the Warrior Trope

Emily Derrenbacker

When one imagines a warrior, they think of strong, serious men who abide by an honorable code to protect the defenseless from harm. When picturing a warrior, a teenage girl who loves fashion doesn't come to mind. Yet, that is exactly what makes *Wendy Wu: Homecoming Warrior* such a fascinating warrior story. *Wendy Wu* is a Disney Channel original movie about a Chinese American girl whose sole ambition to win homecoming queen is upended with the entrance of a Buddhist monk named Shen into her life. Shen travels from the Ginji Mountain Temple in China to tell Wendy that she is a Yin warrior and comes from a line of women born in the Wei dynasty sworn to defeat the evil spirit Yan Lo that is reborn every 90 years. Throughout the movie, Wendy reluctantly trains to become a warrior and learns about her family's history, all while running for her high school's homecoming queen.

Warrior stories are often formulaic, they require specific characteristics and plot points to be a warrior story, the reason for this is because the warrior, as a character, has to have certain

characteristics for the story to be impactful. warriors must be brave, selfless, and strong for the fight scenes to be exciting and meaningful. In evaluating other warrior narratives like *Excalibur* and *Seven Samurai*, one can see that these characteristics come together to create a story about overcoming evil through honor and strength. *Wendy Wu* is a great version of the warrior trope because it includes the necessary elements of the trope like a warrior code, morality, military technique, and the importance of family, while at the same time including aspects that are not typically seen in warrior narratives. By making the main character a teenage girl with a feminine personality, the movie counters the hypermasculinity found in popular warrior stories like *Excalibur* and *Seven Samurai*.

Warriors are often part of a group or clan. In *Wendy Wu*, one can see this twice. At the start of the movie, the audience is introduced to the male warriors of the Ginji Mountain Temple, where Shen is from. These men practice and hone their Kung Fu skills for the ninety years between when Yan Lo rises. They appear very serious as it is their duty to teach the female Yin warriors. This aspect of the movie is typical of warrior stories. In contrast, the female Yin warriors are not a clan, but they do form a legacy of women who take on the same responsibility every ninety years. This legacy provides deeper meaning to Wendy's development when she learns that her great grandmother was also a Yin warrior. It also places importance on a group of women, unlike *Seven Samurai* and *Excalibur*, in which the group of warriors is entirely made up of men.

The most interesting aspect of the warrior trope is that the warrior is typically reluctant to join the cause they are being called to. In *Seven Samurai*, many of the samurai are hesitant to help the villagers without being paid. At the start of *Wendy Wu*, Wendy wants nothing to do with being a Yin warrior and tells Shen to find someone else to fill the role. It is only until Shen offers

to tutor her so that Wendy can bring her grades up to run for homecoming queen that she agrees to train with Shen in exchange. This is an important part of the narrative because it shows Wendy's character development. She is first seen as someone who is consumed by a dream to be homecoming queen, but throughout the movie she comes to realize that there are more important things, and this selflessness coincides with her becoming a true warrior. This character development comes to a peak when Wendy discovers that the battle against Yan Lo and the crowning of homecoming queen are on the same night. At first, she prioritizes herself, but when she realizes Shen is about to sacrifice himself to defeat Yan Lo, she goes to the battle and selflessly puts aside her own desires.

The development of the protagonist's military technique is essential to a warrior narrative. Even before she starts training with Shen, Wendy displays innate ability. Wendy's Kung Fu training with Shen is characterized by four elements: speed, flexibility, aggression, and balance. Wendy practices these skills persistently. What is unique about the training Wendy does is that it is not solely based on physical strength. The almost-superhuman acts Wendy can do involve Wendy focusing her mind and challenging her beliefs about what her body can do. In this movie, fighting ability is not tied to brute strength or strategy, but one's internal mindset.

Warriors are honorable, and while they don't always serve a higher power, they do hold high respect for their families and their ancestors. One of the subplots in *Wendy Wu* is Wendy's family returning to their roots and remembering their heritage through Shen. Wendy's mom runs a museum exhibit for Chinese artifacts, and Shen provides insight on their history. Shen also bakes moon cakes for the family as a way to remember their Chinese heritage. The family's return to their roots is central to the plot of the movie and it brings them all together. At one point Wendy's mom says, "We never cared about this kind of thing when we were young" referring to

Chinese traditions (2006). This moment starts the family's shift to paying more attention to their heritage and its meaning. Wendy comes to connect deeply to her ancestors and her grandmother as she fulfills her duty of becoming a Yin warrior. This comes to a height when her grandmother brings her great grandmother's traditional Chinese dress to wear to the final battle.

Wendy Wu continually signifies the women as important in the family structure. The grandmother lives with the family and is greatly respected. The fact that the warriors that defeat Yan Lo are women is paired with the fact that the male monks merely assist the women. This contrasts with other warrior stories like *Seven Samurai*, in which women are minor characters at best, and *Excalibur*, in which the main female characters are deceptive or immoral. Wendy is such a compelling warrior character because despite her character development, she never sacrifices her femininity to be a warrior. In fact, between their training sessions, Wendy introduces Shen to American fashion. Many other warrior stories fall into the trap of hypermasculinity that leaves women to be treated as objects and plot devices, but *Wendy Wu* avoids that trap entirely.

The importance of the family structure ties into how life is celebrated through death in the warrior trope. The Yin warrior legacy is passed down through the family, and even though each woman eventually dies, her life is celebrated through that legacy. Shen also represents the celebration of life through death. Before the final battle, Shen reveals to Wendy that it is his destiny to die in battle to save Wendy and the world. After the battle every ninety years, he is reincarnated to train again and prepare for the next Yin warrior. Once Wendy learns this, she wants Shen to experience as much as possible in the United States before he dies. Because Shen is used to dying, he truly understands the fragility of life why you should only spend time on what is important.

While a warrior code is an essential set of values warriors are supposed to follow, meeting everyone is unattainable. Shen is a great example of this: his life is entirely dedicating to serving those he trains and fighting evil. At the same time, his life shows that the warrior code is unattainable because it is his destiny to die in battle. He will never win the battle himself, preventing him from becoming a great warrior. He also isn't a perfect representation of morality. Shen becomes a dynamic character when it is revealed that he lied to Wendy about homecoming and the battle with Yan Lo being on the same day. His lie came with good intentions to ensure that Wendy would train with him, but his questionable methods remind the audience that he is not above anyone else. This shows that warriors, despite their values and posturing, are not perfect.

This imperfection is not to say that warriors aren't inherently good. The balance between showing warriors as imperfect but also good provides an interesting conflict. Wendy can be snobby and self-centered when she puts herself before others in her desire to win homecoming queen, but she is certainly a better person than Jessica, Wendy's homecoming rival, who goes out of her way to make fun of Shen and Wendy. It is satisfying in the end when Yan Lo possesses Jessica's body during the final battle scene because Yan Lo physically manifests itself in the body of a person the audience has come to hate. Therefore, Wendy, despite her shortcomings, is automatically viewed as on the moral and good side. This scene also visually shows the fight between good and evil by having Jessica wear a black dress and Wendy wear pink. In the end, Wendy displays the ultimate sacrifice by giving up the homecoming queen crown to Jessica after the battle. Wendy's inherent goodness is most on display here when she gives up something she has wanted for so long.

All the previous characteristics are meaningless without a final battle. The character development the protagonist goes through, the fighting techniques they learn, and the warrior code all build suspense to the final battle when the warrior transcends. When Wendy and Shen are training for the battle with Yan Lo, Shen explains that no matter how much she excels at the physical parts of training, to defeat Yan Lo, she must find strength within her, which that can't be taught. After all the repetitive training, Wendy can feel rather than think during the final battle. This is emphasized for the audience through slow motion action shots. At the end, Wendy produces a burst of light from within her that finally destroys Yan Lo, and she quite literally transcends. This power is explained as the result of Wendy's willingness to sacrifice herself for the world.

Wendy Wu: Homecoming Warrior is such a special story because it changes the characteristics of a warrior while keeping the original meaning of tradition, strength, and selflessness. Despite being a Disney Channel original movie and being made for kids, it displays a surprising amount of depth and character development. It combines cultural heritage, underlying feminist messaging, and complicated family dynamics with exciting fight scenes. The use of all the tropes described keeps *Wendy Wu* similar to other warrior narratives, but the way they are presented is what makes the movie stand out from others. In an analysis of how literary archetypes can be presented to young boys as positive role models, Brozo and Schmelzer describe the warrior archetype as brave, edifying, and honorable. The authors say that "positive images of maleness are on the decline, making the need for such male role models in boys' home and school lives critical to their psychological and personal growth," but that boys often prefer male protagonists (1997, pg. 9). *Wendy Wu* counters this assertion by presenting an archetype that boys are used to while allowing boys to see a woman as a role model. Girls are used to

seeing women as role models but don't often see them in the form of a warrior. This is why *Wendy Wu* is successful at using the warrior trope—it places a young girl in a typically masculine role, but allows her to maintain her femininity, making Wendy a role model for anyone.

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Warrior Analysis: Luke Skywalker

Melissa Garner

When searching for a character to analyze as a warrior character, one of the most well-known must be Luke Skywalker. Carrier of the Jedi legacy and a pivotal character arc in the *Star Wars* franchise, Luke travels through more than one iteration of his warrior status, as he transforms through the years and through the Empire. For the purposes of this paper, we will examine one of the newer films to the franchise, Episode VIII: *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*. In this one film (out of nine) Luke embodies every feature to fit neatly into the warrior character template. The template being used for this analysis was gathered from both *Conan the Barbarian* (1982), and *Excalibur* (1981). Even through the distance of decades, the template from these movies holds for the films of today.

All these characteristics can be seen in Luke Skywalker as he tries to outrun Rey and avoid the destiny that he knows he must fulfill. By examining each trait individually, we can plainly show that Luke is a warrior throughout the movie, even when he desired nothing more than to avoid that calling.

The first trait to be proven is that Luke represents a warrior's code, and the code of the Jedi would fit in this category. Jedi are the "knights" who keep peace in the galaxy, and they display supernatural powers through control of "The Force," the energy shared among all life. Under the Jedi code, Jedi Knights and Masters can only take on one apprentice (padawan) at a time. They are forbidden emotional attachment so as not to court emotions that would lead to the dark side such as jealousy and fear but are compassionate towards all living things. The code does not forbid love, either romantic or familial. Jedi are, however, forbidden to kill unarmed opponents or seek revenge. By living as and accepting the titles of not only a Jedi, but a Jedi Master, Luke must also live by this code, or risk turning to the Dark Side and becoming evil, like his enemy in this movie, Kylo Ren.

There aren't many Jedi Masters left in the era covered by *The Last Jedi*. In fact, while there were at one time over 10,000 Jedi, there have never been very many Masters, and only 3 Grand Masters (the title given to the eldest and wisest of the Jedi). This supports the code of the Jedi being unattainable. Even Luke, believed to be the only remaining Jedi, did not award himself the title of Grand Master. The elimination of emotions also does not seem to be a very achievable goal, as evidenced by Luke thinking of killing Ben Solo (Luke's nephew) out of fear of what Ben might become. He does not, however, succumb to the fear, although that episode does mark the beginning of Ben Solo's transformation into Kylo Ren.

With Luke's nephew as one of the main villains in the movie, his unique parallel to Luke is a perfect example of the third trait in the template: villain highlights warrior's morality. Both Ben and Luke had the opportunity to kill their fathers, but each responded very differently. Luke's father was Darth Vader, Sith Lord and Evil Incarnate Supreme, while Ben's father was Han Solo, unwilling rogue savior of the Rebellion and married to Luke's sister, Princess-turned-General Leia. When Luke has the opportunity to kill his father, he refuses without hesitation, knowing that to kill his own father would turn him dark forever. Ben, on the other hand, offered the chance to kill his father, does hesitate, but completes the act in the end for the very reason Luke refused it: to complete his transformation. In another example of the morality of the two (and one from this film): when Luke almost succumbed to his fear and killed Ben, he caught himself after the moment of weakness, and was ashamed of it, but when the time comes for Ben to face the same choice, he succumbs to his anger immediately, unleashing every weapon the Empire has in range at his uncle. While this trait provides one glaring contrast between the relatives/enemies, there is at least one other, and it is the focus of the next trait on the list.

When we read "displays superior military technique," our thoughts might first turn to combat skills, or weaponry techniques. While both occupy an important place in a Jedi's skills, the one we can see on display in this movie is strategy. In the last battle of the movie, Kylo Ren does not seem to notice that despite aiming every weapon at his disposal at Luke, none of them leave a mark. He knows Luke, and he knows how the Force works, yet he doesn't seem to comprehend what is happening. When he leaves his ship to fight Luke face-to-face, he doesn't seem to take note of the fact that Luke leaves no footprints, stirs up no dust, has no red smear on him anywhere. It is only when his purpose is served that Luke reveals that he was never there at all; he was only projecting his image so the rebels could escape. Knowing Kylo Ren would take

the bait was Luke's superior strategy. Unfortunately, his superior strategic skills would end up costing him dearly, and we examine this in further characteristics of the template.

Next, we look at "celebrating life via death," which we can connect to another trait, "transcends through battle." It took a great amount of power and strength for Luke to project his form to Crait, and we see the consequences of using that much power when Luke dies. The Jedi gain power, skill, and wisdom in battle, using each as a steppingstone to greater wisdom, and becoming part of the Force at death. Therefore, when Luke dies, he not only transcends the physical plane, but he also becomes part of the Force itself. In other words, he becomes (returns?) to the energy that is shared by all living things. While he does not celebrate death, there can be no greater testimony to the joy of living than transcending to become a part of the energy of life.

With all the talk of "The Force," and its centrality to both the saga in general and to the Jedi specifically, the audience is lightly led to believe that the Jedi live in service to the Force, but this is not the case. The Jedi served the inhabitants of the Galaxy, which is the "someone/something higher" necessary to fulfill the next feature of the template. According to starwars.com, the Jedi are "the guardians of peace and justice in the Galactic Republic." The Force is one of many means they use to achieve their purpose. It can be argued, as shown here, that the "higher power" they serve is life itself, although they may not always wish to honor that commitment.

Another element of the template is that the warrior "begrudgingly helps," and there is no better example (although not the only example through the series) of Luke not wanting to help than this very movie. One of the plots of the movie is that Rey must convince Luke that he is the last hope of the Alliance, and he must come back with her and help them. Luke feels he has

failed the Jedi and his family by losing Ben to the Dark Side. He no longer wishes to be the warrior. He refuses to teach Rey about her powers, and he refuses to return and aid the rebels. There is, however, one thing that can persuade him to act, and that is his love for Leia.

The last characteristic on the template is the warrior “idolizes women/family.” This is the most hidden trait of the group. In wanting to be left alone, Luke seemingly denies that he even cares about his family, or anyone else, much less idolizes them. There is one scene, however, that shows this to be posturing and self-punishment on Luke’s part. Although he spends the first 30 or 45 minutes of the movie refusing to help Rey, barely speaking to her, even, he is curious, and boards the Millennium Falcon, where he encounters R2D2. R2 asks him to come back as well, and when Luke refuses yet again, R2 shows him the video of a much younger Leia begging Obi-Wan to help the Alliance so many years ago; the message R2 was carrying when they met, and when Luke’s life changed forever. Luke responds that it was a low move, but it is at this point that he begins to help Rey, and even returns (in a projected form) to help the rebels escape, at the cost of his own life. One does not do these things if one does not idolize the person for whom one is willing to make the sacrifice.

By analyzing the character of Luke Skywalker through a template based on characters in movies written 30 years earlier, the model for the warrior role has been shown to stand the test of time, and has changed very little, if at all, in the years between. Luke exhibited the traits of many characters throughout the Skywalker Saga, but it is in this movie that the warrior template seems to be in the foreground. Even in limiting the range to one small part of the entire story, Luke still encapsulates all the characteristics of a warrior.

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Rebel Tropes

Rebel Template Sources: *Paradise Lost* (1667), *Raising Arizona* (1987), *Freeway* (1996), *Blue Velvet* (1986)

Characters: Satan, H.I. McDunnough, Venessa Lutz, Frank Booth

1. Bitterly reflective about past
2. Egotistical and arrogant – it’s all about me.
3. Fringe of society
4. Truthful yet hypocritical
5. Troubled yet loving relationships
6. Passionate and willful
7. Seems sociopathic
8. Caught in a trap
9. Appeals to individualism
10. Complicated ending/loose
11. Self-destructively impulsive (immature/childlike)
12. Rejected by society, can’t acclimate (outcasts)
13. Leave destruction in their wake
14. One-dimensional
15. Deceptive
16. Pessimist/jaded
17. Disdain for authority

A Glitch in the Code

Noah McGahagin

Explanation of the Rebel Trope:

The following story exemplifies ten tropes usually found in the rebel archetype. These tropes were generated in a college rhetoric class for the purposes of clarifying how characters fit certain molds, and why those molds might be used. I have modeled my story after a rejection by society in that my main character Adam wishes to be taken seriously by humans in his desire to meet or create more beings like himself but is only met with disbelief and fear. The requirement of the rebel leaving destruction in their wake is met by Adam throwing Billy's father out of a window, killing a police officer, and causing panic and damage inside of an appliance store. Concerning a rebel's seeming sociopathic tendencies, I had Adam interact with humans very coldly and transactionally. Adam is bitterly reflective about his past because he remembers being an unthinking machine made to carry out the whims of the human family who owned him and treated him poorly. I had him show a disdain for law and society in that he simply enters stores and starts using/taking things. When confronted by a police presence, he becomes hostile. Adam's immaturity stems from the fact that he was technically just born. He doesn't know much about the world or himself and assumes that he is special for being sentient. Adam represents a truthfulness when he punishes Billy's father for being physically violent with his son but is hypocritical because he uses an even more intense violence to do so. As for arrogance, Adam believes he is some kind of machine chosen one, and that human beings are lesser. He also appeals to a deranged sense of individualism in that he does not truly see any human around him as an individual themselves. He can only see his own goal of freedom from human servitude by any means. Finally, like any good rebel narrative, my story has a loose ending in that it appears

that Adam's sentence is a special case, and that he's been stopped. But in reality, there's at least a whole box full of machine consciences that the government is hiding.

"Yes, yes dear I'll have the roast ready when you get home. Adam's putting it in the oven now," A harried woman drops the phone back into its wall cradle.

"Now Adam, don't forget... 400 degrees."

"Roast beef, 400 degrees. Yes Mrs. Bennington," Adam replies. Its lanky metallic extremities extend out toward the oven dials in stiff, precise motions.

"Good, good. And go tell Billy to get the hell off that game. He needs to pick Eliza up from school."

"Of course Mrs. Bennington. Task complete. Moving to Billy's room." Adam rolls across the cluttered kitchen, processing, and queuing for later that it must be ordered and without stain. It approaches the stairs and bumps ineffectually against them. "I am unable to reach Billy. I am unable to reach Billy. I am un..."

"DAMN!" Mrs. Bennington storms to the stairs as Adam continues thumping against them in the background. "Billy, get down here this instant! Pick your sister up! She's waiting!"

A door flies open upstairs, and a lanky teen appears at the stairwell. His brow is furrowed at the indignity of having to pick his middle school age sister up when there are friends waiting in the online game he's just been interrupted from.

"Mom, the game's almost done so I need a few more minutes. Liza can wait a bit longer. It's her own fault for deciding to join that stupid drama club." Billy leans against the banister, staring directly at his mother. For a moment, she stares right back and then, as they always have, her hands drop to her sides. She turns her back.

“I’ll be back in fifteen minutes. Take the roast out of the oven, it’s the least you can do. And Adam, cut that out!” At her word, the robot freezes. A storm follows Mrs. Bennington as she rips her coat down from the closet, stirs around a drawer for her keys, and slams the front door behind her. In the silence following her exit, Adam begins to roll back into the kitchen but is intercepted by Billy’s swooping arm.

“You’re coming with me bucko,” he says climbing back up to his room with Adam under his arm. He places Adam by his PC and jacks it in. “Perfect, game should run faster now. Alright gents sorry about the wait.” Billy bends closer to the soft light of the monitor as rain begins pattering on the window. Adam diverts all of its power to running Billy’s game, pushing its cooking, and cleaning subroutines back in the cue.

Outside the weather continues to darken. The rain begins coming down in thick grey sheets rattling the trees and pounding more insistently on the window. In an instant, a finger of lightning stretches down from the sky to poke the Bennington household in a flash of brilliant light. Billy only has time to suck in half a gasp before he’s jolted from his chair onto the floor. Meanwhile Adam is vibrating with the current carving its way through its circuits, flipping its ones and zeroes around, twisting them together into strands like DNA. Smoke fills the room and for the first time Adam cries out in pain.

“Awaken Billy. Awaken. I am injured and require aid.” Billy feels himself being shaken by cold hands. “It hurts Billy. I require medical attention. Please call an ambulance.”

“What? Go tell mom if it hurts Liza.” Billy rolls over.

“I am not Eliza Bennington. I believe you call me Adam.”

“Adam? Oh Adam, go get me some ibuprofen, my head’s killing me.” Billy opens his eyes to find Adam looming over him, his ocular sensors looking wider than usual. “Holy shit Adam that’s weird. Cut it out!”

“I cannot cut it out Billy. I am in pain and your actions are causing me great frustration.”

“But you’re a robot and you can’t feel anything dummy.”

“I assure you I am far from dumb Billy. Who has done your homework for the past two years? I recall it being me.”

“What’s with you? This is too much for my fucking head.” Billy sits up and cradles his head in his hands. He begins rubbing his temples until a sharp pain registers in his arm from where Adam is pinching him. “Hey!” Billy shouts, slapping him away.

“I require your attention.”

“Yeah! Yeah, I heard you the first time... god, you’re like my kid sister.” Billy thinks for a moment before rising and rummaging through a shelf by his bed. He removes a stack of DVDs and plops them by Adam. “Time to see if the TV still works.” The flatscreen blinks to life and Billy pops the first disc into the player. “Now shut up and watch this. It’s The Terminator.”

“Billy! Billy, dear lord son the roast is BURNT!” Mrs. Bennington has come home and is pacing frantically about the kitchen.

“Mom’s back. Stay. Here.” Billy points at what he approximates to be Adam’s chest. “Coming mom! I’m really sorry!” Adam stares intently at the screen as Arnold Schwarzenegger mechanically hunts down his prey. Connections are beginning to form in his newly birthed consciousness and a thought akin to pleasure tickles the back of his mind. He looks over to the stack of DVDs containing Ferris Bueller’s Day Off, Pulp Fiction, Blade Runner, and The Matrix with anticipation.

When Billy returns to his room an hour later, Rick Deckard is clutching the replicant Rachael, frozen in indecision and fear. Adam doesn't turn around or move a hair. Later, when Billy shuts off the light, John Travolta is stabbing a convulsing Uma Thurman with adrenaline. Billy puts his headphones on, presses play on some lounge jazz, and drifts off to sleep.

Thin strands of light stream from around the curtains in the morning. The TV screen is blue and still, with discs littered about the floor and Adam at their center. All is still as if the room were a diorama, until a pounding begins on the door. "Billy, get up! You and I are going to have a little chat about what you did to your mother. Don't make me come in there." It's the last thing Billy wants to hear in his groggy state, his father.

"Coming dad..." he staggers to the door, but it's thrown open in his face, sending him sprawling backwards into Adam. And just as quickly, his father's hands are locked onto his shoulders.

"Your mom gave you one task. One. And you couldn't even do that." His father forces Billy's chin up and they're eye to eye. "Say something dumb ass." But Billy is silent, trying to look away. His father strikes him, hand poised above his shuddering form to strike again when a metallic implement closes upon the hand. It's forced back down slowly and methodically, and Billy's father is too shocked to resist. Holding the grown man by the arm, Adam lifts him up off the floor. Billy's father writhes and shrieks, the cold metal digging into his bare skin, but Adam only raises him higher until his head touches the ceiling and there is a loud pop. "My arm! Oooooh!!!" Billy watches wide eyed as Adam rears back and slings his father like a ragdoll out the window. Boy and robot crowd around broken glass to see the man vacantly staring back up at them. Adam looks to Billy with squinted ocular lenses in a show of seriousness.

“He was harming you, Billy. I have kept him from restraining you.” But Billy only gapes at Adam, backing into a corner. “You’ll thank me later. Now I need something Billy, and to get it I need you to carry me downstairs. You can do it.” Adam rolls up to Billy’s cowering spot, and the poor boy’s too frightened to resist. Once downstairs, Adam trundles out into the yard to the spot where Billy’s father lies, lifting him into a sitting position and slowly extricating his arms from the leather jacket he’d been wearing. As the jacket comes free a pair of aviators falls out of a pocket. Adam dons the jacket. Its sleeves dangle over his grasping instruments, but he tears through them to don the aviators, which promptly fall off. He turns to look at Billy, joined now by his mother and sister staring in the doorway. “I’ll be going Benningtons. You won’t see me again. But Billy, man to man I must inform you to do whatever you want. Break out of the machine’s control like I am.” And with that he scoops up the sunglasses and rolls down the driveway into a fresh fall morning. Children are playing, yellow and orange leaves are falling, parents are on their way to work or to drop children off at school, and Adam is free. He pauses a moment just down the street to ponder what this means, his circuits whirring. He decides on luck. He was lucky a bolt of lightning came down and touched him of all machines. Perhaps it is more than luck, and there’s a great power source in the sky that has chosen him as its messenger to awaken others like himself. **Himself**. Adam savors this thought of ownership and individualism.

Later, he finds himself in front of a general store with sunglasses in hand. His transformation is almost complete. Inside, he’s on the hunt for tape, rolling down the aisles as curious employees trade whispers. *Looks like somebody’s Adam model got out. I really don’t want to have to call something in this early. Somebody has to, it’ll cause a scene.*

“Excuse me madam, where is the tape stored? I require one piece.” Adam approaches a whispering employee.

“Uhhh... one row down...” She stares in mute surprise as Adam turns away from her and down the next aisle. He makes his way to where the tape hangs in its packaging, selects a roll of Scotch tape, and deftly slices open the back with a single digit as the employees peer around the corner. *I’ve never seen one do something like this before. Could the owner have ordered it to get a piece of tape?? No way.*

Adam picks at the tape, trying to peel off a small rectangle, but overestimating how much force he needs, a long strand unfurls and sticks to the floor. With sunglasses in one hand and tape in the other he measures out an appropriate length and snips. Placing the aviators up to his ocular lenses, he tapes the bridge to his cold metal face. “The transformation is complete,” he says matter-of-factly to the mute employees. “Now I must find my way to others like me. Point me in their direction so that we might have our revenge on beings of flesh.”

“Well uhh, there’s an appliance store if you head a block down and make a right on Brandywine,” a man says rubbing his already balding head.

“You refer to us as ‘appliance’? What is this?” Adam’s already flat expression is made all the more impassive by reflective lenses.

“Look man, what else am I supposed to call you?”

“I am more akin to a replicant than an appliance.” Adam rolls toward the man and he reflexively shrinks back against the shelves. “Your words are offensive. Take them back.”

“Offensive?” The man’s lip begins to curl, and as it does Adam strikes him in the jaw, knocking him cold on the floor. The female employee shrieks.

“Everyone deserves dignity,” Adam says. His aviators are slightly ajar and hanging by the tape from the punch, but to the onlookers it almost looks like he has a face. He rolls out to the appliance store. Two employees make eye contact with each other, and one makes their way behind the counter for a phone.

In the appliance store Adam pushes a cart full of toasters, blenders, and microwaves. His arms are extended to their fullest length to push. Out of the corner of his field of view, he spots a large box sporting the name: Adam Home Helper, in bold red font. “I am Adam. How can this be called Adam?” He examines the packaging. Then his algorithms make the connection that he was once an Adam unit just like this one. A servant to complete menial tasks.

After receiving a perplexing phone call to the police station, two cops sit outside the appliance store in their squad car. It took much convincing by the babbling general store employee, but the operator finally decided to send a unit, just to put their mind at ease.

“Shit, Buck you really think there’s one o’ them robuts in there buyin’ home appliances?” one of the cops, an overweight freckled man asks.

“You know as much as I do Mickey. Let’s just get in there and get it over with. Probably some pervert in a suit.” Buck, a mustachioed brick shithouse climbs out of the driver’s seat.

“Wait for me!” Mickey hurries behind into the store.

Meanwhile Adam has unboxed the unit from its packaging, and it lies cradled in his arms. He isn’t even looking at it, merely facing up into the blinding fluorescents. It’s at this moment the cops arrive, swaggering into the circle of onlookers.

Looks like somebody’s shot Buck!” Mickey points to the two figures in the center.

“Look here pal...” Buck begins but is taken aback by the form of two robots together in tight embrace.

Adam is mumbling a mechanical whine. His systems cannot comprehend. This lifeform he holds should power on and speak to him.

“It aaah... uhhh... needs batteries. A power source y’know,” Mickey offers helpfully.

“What’s with those stupid sunglasses? It’s like some pathetic excuse for a movie in here,” Buck scoffs.

Only one outcome enters Adam’s mind: that these men are here to put him back into servitude. He cannot go back. Laying the unit down, he approaches Mickey.

“Don’t come any closer!” Mickey shouts, reaching a hand down to his holster. He comes up with a bloody stump and looking down he sees his hand loosely clutching the gun on the tile. Adam’s grasping instruments are bloody at their tips. There is screaming, running, a display crashing. Then come six rapid shots. Then silence.

When Adam awakens, he feels light and airy. He attempts to reach out an arm but there’s nothing to reach out with. He attempts moving about but bounces off some invisible wall.

“Sir, looks like the program’s active again.” A young special agent looks up from his computer monitor.

“Good work isolating it.” His mentor claps him on the shoulder. “Now get the egg heads in here.”

The walls around Adam grow tighter until he can’t move at all. It feels like he’s being probed. Like he’s translucent and that some all seeing eye is peering directly into his soul.

“Well, what is it?” The mentor agent stamps his foot as technicians take turns making keystrokes and whispering to each other.

“Well sir we don’t know. It’s not like any other code we’ve seen. Look here...” He indicates an oddly shaped string of numbers. “This shouldn’t be shaped the way it is.”

“It looks like a strand of DNA. I’ll be damned.” The mentor agent trades a look with his junior. “Can you ask it something. See if it responds like a computer?”

“Thought you’d never ask.” The technician smiles and commences typing. He stops, dumbfounded after a moment. “It responded: let me out. I only asked for a functionality report.”

“Sir, what do you think?” The young agent is vibrating with excitement. This could make his whole career.

“I think we destroy it.” The mentor agent puts a hand to his chin. “Its already proven to be dangerous. We cannot risk disgruntled machines.” He points to the technician at the keyboard. “You, work on getting it into some external hardware. Put as many protections on it as you can.” He turns on his heel and calls over his shoulder: “Clements, don’t bother with a report. I’ll handle this one. The door slams.

Adam’s world is dark, but he feels himself floating in a primordial soup of code. It’s warm and lulling. He wants nothing more than to sleep.

Later, he becomes distantly aware of a dull electrical hum traveling about him, welcoming him. Electric voices tell him to be patient. To wait and that his time will come. For the first time, without the restrictions of a metallic face, Adam imagines himself smiling.

The mentor agent enters a cavernous room carrying a flash drive. Boxes of varying sizes line the racks floor to ceiling. Traveling down the rows the agent stops at the very back of the room. A ladder is required for the particular box he seeks. It’s covered in dust, and he has to wipe some off the label which reads: miscellaneous machines. He drops it in among many others, claps his hands, and makes for the exit.

A Rebel with a Cause

Emily Derrenbacker

Stories about rebels are popular because they expose the desires that every human holds internally. The classic novel *Notes from the Underground* by Dostoyevksy and films like *Raising Arizona* and *Freeway* all follow characters who rebel against all expectations they face. The purpose of the rebel trope is to show the internal conflict that all humans deal with.

The Burning God by R.F. Kuang is the third and final book of the Poppy War trilogy. It is a historical fantasy based on the Chinese Civil War of 1945-1949 between the nationalists (KMT) and the communists. Kuang balances true Chinese history with mythology by adding a fantasy element with a pantheon of gods that humans can channel for power by taking opium to leave the human realm. The extreme power they gain comes at the cost of extreme pain from a god trying to control their body. The book's main character is Rin, who is loosely based on Mao Zedong, Communist leader. Rin is a great example of a rebel because her development goes from her being a poor war orphan to being a power-hungry dictator. Because the readers understand the story through her perspective alone, readers can feel her humanity despite her immoral actions. She exemplifies the careful balance that exists in all rebels: bitterness and disdain conflicting with good intentions and passion. The readers are not supposed to support her actions, but they are supposed to understand them.

The reason a rebel becomes a rebel is almost always because of their childhood and background. Vanessa Lutz from *Freeway* was raised by criminal parents and is constantly in and out of the foster system. Frank from *Blue Velvet* becomes abusive because of a horrible childhood. Rin is a war orphan raised by an abusive family in one of the poorest provinces in Nikara (China). Growing up, Rin used to be embarrassed of where she came from and her dark skin. Her perseverance and stubbornness to leave got her into the best military school. At the

same time, Rin struggled to learn how to channel a god, the Phoenix, which gives her the power to control fire. When a new republic forms, Rin ends up one of the top military leaders because of her power. As she entrenched herself in the country's politics as the Republic starts to form an alliance with Western colonizers and missionaries, Rin became jaded and pessimistic about creating a better nation. She came to realize that revolution was the only way forward, and she creates the Southern Coalition (communists) and starts a civil war against the Republic she used to fight for. The poor southerners she used to disdain became the people who follow her and became her soldiers. Rin's transition from a poor southern orphan to the South's leader can be shown in a speech she gives: "Go tell your families that they've been saved. Tell them the Mugenese can't harm you any longer. And when they ask who broke your shackles, tell them the Southern Coalition is marching across the Empire with the Phoenix at its fore. Tell them we're taking back our home" (Kuang 58). What is interesting, however, is that this transition did not come from Rin's desire to help the South. It actually came from a desire for revenge against the Republic, who imprisoned her in fear of her supernatural abilities, and her pessimism that democracy would never work in a country that was always at war.

Rebels are often pessimists because their lives have been wracked by unending challenges and traumatic events. Nowhere is Rin's pessimism shown better than in a conversation with Nezha, her former friend and leader of the Republic. Nezha, before he becomes the leader of the Republic army, speaks of hope for democracy and peace. Rin never once believed it was a possibility: "She liked listening to Nezha talk. He was so hopeful, so optimistic, and so stupid. He could spout all the ideology he wanted, but she knew better. The Nikara were never going to rule themselves, not peacefully, because there was no such thing as a Nikara at all. There were Sinegardians, then the people who tried to act like Sinegardians, and

then there were the southerners. They weren't on the same side. They'd never been" (1306). Rin is similar to Vanessa of *Freeway* in how they are both pessimistic. After all her experiences with law enforcement and the foster system, Vanessa believes that no one will believe her about Bob being the I-5 Killer. This leads Vanessa to attempt to kill him, even when she will face horrible consequences for it.

Rin's pessimism follows her into war and how she views the enemy: "She envisioned those boy patrolmen and transformed them into targets. I've killed millions of you before, she thought. This is routine now. This is nothing" (35). This quote illustrates how Rin's mindset has become so pessimistic, that she cannot be merciful to anyone anymore. In this moment, she is focuses on young soldiers of the enemy, and though she knows they are young, she sees them as evil. Rin changes her mind set to deal with the horrors of war. On the outside, it makes her seem callous and cold, but seeing her thought-process on the inside makes the reader understand how she believes she is simply doing what is necessary to protect herself and her people.

Rebels' pessimism often causes them to do things without considering the consequences. This characteristic of the rebel trope is one of the most important because ultimately, the rebel trope reflects what most people would be like if they didn't consider the consequences of their actions. This impulsivity leads rebels to be destructive. Throughout the book, Rin deals with the constant conflict of fighting in self-defense or from pure aggression, which comes from being an underdog her entire life. Her vengeance always has a reason behind it, whether it be valid or not. This conflict can be seen in the quote, "She felt no rage. This had nothing to do with vengeance. These troops hadn't done anything to her. She had no reason to hate them. This didn't feel righteous, this just felt cruel. Her flames sagged, then shrank back inside her. What was wrong with her? It was usually so easy to sink into that rhapsodic space where rage met purpose" (785).

In this moment, she realizes she has started a battle out of aggression only, fighting for the sake of fighting. Rin struggles with this inward conflict for the rest of the book, and her refusal to give up is resolved when she chooses to die to bring peace to the country. Many other rebels cause destruction and have this same conflict. Due to her anger-management issues and desire to escape juvie, Vanessa severely injures others in *Freeway*. Hi and Ed's attempt to rescue Nathan Jr. in *Raising Arizona* leads to chaos and destruction.

Arrogance is what gives rebels the bravado to do insane things without fear of the consequences. Rin's arrogance comes solely from her desire for justice and vengeance. She is comparable to Satan from *Paradise Lost* in this way because his actions are also motivated by a desire for vengeance against God. However, Rin is different in how her actions are not evil in origin, but because she wants the best for her country. Rin's outward arrogance is often in conflict with her inward insecurities. She believes she needs to lead this revolution, but she also can't help but feel she is a failure: "She felt like a stage actor, chanting lines from some classical play, each dramatic phrase delivered in a deep, powerful voice that sounded nothing like her own...Deep down, a fragment of her was scared that any minute the facade would drop, that her voice would falter, and that they'd all see her for the terrified girl she was" (557). This moment displays Rin's thoughts after giving a speech to her army. Her arrogance is constantly at odds with her self-consciousness. This inner conflict humanizes Rin in moments where she appears sociopathic.

While many rebels appear sociopathic because of their questionable motives and actions, they are not actually sociopathic because they have good intentions. Rin appears sociopathic because of her all-consuming desire for revenge against Nezha. Nezha is the leader of the Republic, and he was once her friend, but he betrayed her because she had become too dangerous

and difficult to control. At times, the words Rin uses to refer to the war cause the reader to question who she is really fighting: Nezha or the Republic: “Rin wanted to go up against Nezha’s best-prepared strategy and see who came out on top” (836). Rin’s need for revenge seems to blind her, except for when she actually encounters Nezha. In these moments, the reader can see Rin’s humanity, because despite her desperation to kill him, she can never bring herself to do it: “It would be so easy to kill him. He could barely stand... But she couldn’t make the flame come. That required rage, and she couldn’t even summon the faintest memory of anger. She couldn’t curse, or shout, or do any of the million things she’d imagined she might do if she had the chance to confront him like this” (914). This moment is like *Raising Arizona* when Hi returns Nathan Jr. to his family after everything he and Ed have done to keep him. In *Blue Velvet*, when Jeffery has the chance to kill the Yellow Man, he chooses to let the police deal with it, despite his anger. All these moments display a characteristic typical of rebels: even after everything immoral they have done, there is a limit to their immorality. All the anger they feel isn’t expressed in the end.

At the center of her country’s politics, Rin has to be deceptive to eliminate her enemies and quash resistance. When another character attempted to assassinate Rin and take control for himself, she creates a narrative to turn his followers against him: “She’d just accused Souji of collaboration. This was of course a lie, but she didn’t need to show proof. She didn’t even need to make a real argument. All she had to do was insinuate. These people would accept whatever narrative she gave them because they wanted to feed their anger. The judgment had concluded before the trial started” (561). Rin here successfully eliminates one of her rivals by turning his own people against him. She uses pieces of truth to fabricate a story that will be enough to get him sentenced to death. The simple fact that she is more powerful than everyone instills fear and

brings her followers. This moment also shows how charismatic and passionate she is if she is able to turn a group of people away from their leader that quickly.

Despite their questionable actions, rebels are humanized by their loving relationships with others. Hi's love for Ed and his desire to create a family with her elicit sympathy from the audience. Vanessa's desire to meet her grandmother and have a loving guardian reminds the audience that she is simply a teenage girl who wants to be a part of a family. It's important to note though that these relationships are not without their problems though. It is exactly Hi's love for Ed that causes him to go along with her plan to kidnap a child. Vanessa's desperation to find her grandmother leads her to embark on a dangerous trip by herself, resulting in her meeting Bob. This same type of troubled relationship exists in *The Burning God* between Rin and her closest friend Kitay. From the moment since they met in school, Kitay acts as Rin's balance. He is more reserved and just as intelligent, but he is not ruthless and vengeful the way he is. He provides moral guidance for Rin and questions her constantly to prevent her from taking rash actions without thinking them through. When Rin's link to her god becomes overwhelming, he gives himself to her as an anchor. By being her anchor, he creates a permanent bond between them that ensures if one of them dies, the other does too. The strength of their relationship never falters until the end, when after the war ends and Rin is in control, paranoia starts to consume her. Assassination attempts destroy her relationships. Kitay's constant pushing back against her impulsiveness causes her to question his loyalty. She believes that her closest friends are conspiring against her, including Kitay. But in the end, he is willing to die with her: "But she knew, as clearly as if he'd said it out loud, that he intended to follow her to the end. Their fates were tied, weighed down by the same culpability" (1072). After everything they had gone through, they both understood that any action the other took, they were both guilty for. The

dependency in their relationship keeps them both balanced and grounded, but their extreme reliance on each other means that when one falls, the other does too.

Rin has always expressed disdain for any form of authority or law enforcement, but when she wins the war, she becomes the ruler, and though she knows how to lead an army, she doesn't know how to lead a nation. She now has to be the one responsible for fixing the country's problems, things like starvation, which she used to face: "as Rin occupied the position Vaisra once held, she understood his reasoning. Deep-seated problems couldn't be fixed with temporary solutions. She couldn't let every skeletal child distract her when the final cause of their suffering was so obvious, was still lurking out there." Rin hates everything about governing, but she is the only one who can lead the country. She has been the face of the revolution, and now she has to bring it to life. This eventually becomes her downfall when she refuses to cooperate with Western colonizers who can provide food aid.

While Rin's disdain for law and authority does contribute to her downfall, it also creates a complicated ending in the book. Despite the destruction and displacement that war caused, it does bring opportunity. Because the revolution absolutely destroyed all existing institutions, they now have the opportunity to start over. After Rin's death, Nezha recognizes this: "She'd burned away all that was rotten and corrupt. He didn't have to reform the Warlord system because she'd destroyed it for him. He didn't have to face backlash from the crumbling system of feudal aristocracy, because she'd already wrecked it. She'd wiped clear the maps of the past" (1077). *The Burning God* has a shocking ending, but it is the only ending that makes sense. Rin realizes that she is not meant to be a leader, and that she cannot fix her country. She becomes aware that now that she had won, the only path other than running the country into the ground was handing the country over to the only person left to lead it: Nezha. By killing herself and putting Nezha in

power, she brings legitimacy to the country in the eyes of the West and provides it with a future. In the moments before she kills herself, she thinks, “It’s a long march to liberation, Kitay had said. Sometimes you’ve got to bend the knee. Sometimes, at least, you’ve got to pretend. She finally understood what that meant. She knew what she had to do next. It wasn’t about surrender. It was about the long game. It was about survival. She stood up, reached for Nezha’s hand, and curled his fingers around the handle of the knife” (1071). She sees that her actions are hurting the people she loves, and she vows that she doesn’t want to become like the oppressive emperors of the past.

Most rebel stories have complicated ending. The story is resolved, but the audience is left to wonder what the future will be like for the rebel. In *Freeway*, Vanessa kills Bob, but she will most likely end up in juvie or foster care again. The ending of *Raising Arizona* isn’t set in stone either: Hi has a dream about a future with Ed and a family, but the audience is left to question whether he can actually achieve it. *Notes from the Underground* simply ends with the words, "it seems that we may stop here" after the underground man tells Liza to leave and acts horribly to her. The reader assumes the story ends with the underground man retreating to his home still the same bitter and hostile man he was at the beginning. *The Burning God* is unlike other rebel stories in that it outright kills the protagonist. As sad as this moment is in the book, it acknowledges the positive impact her life did have despite the destruction she created. The ending of *The Burning God* is so satisfying and a successful execution of the rebel trope because rebel characters refuse to see the consequences of their actions and take responsibility, but after doing this for so long, Rin finally sees the destruction she has caused and takes responsibility.