



Scope

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There's no "I" in Team: A look at how folklore

emphasizes the value of community





Matt Anderson Rachel Broadbent Kaelin Stephens Tyler Oswald
~Editor in Chief ~Theory Editor ~Research Editor ~Basic Lit. Editor

Dear Reader,

On behalf of the Editorial Board, I am pleased to present the first issue of Scop: BYU-Idaho's Folklore Journal. Our mission is to bring the rich culture and values found in the world of folklore to the students of BYU-Idaho. As you read through the scholarly articles we hope that you will come to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of what folklore has to offer.

Though most people view folklore as fairytales and myths told to children to teach morals or entertain, its meaning and value to community and culture stretch far beyond this simplistic definition. A more accurate description is that it represents the "traditional beliefs, practices, customs, stories, jokes, and songs of a people, handed down orally or behaviorally from individual to individual" (About.com). It can therefore be said that Folklore is an oratory representation of a culture's values past from one generation to another.

As folklore is traditionally passed on orally we have named the Journal after the Anglo-Saxon orator: Scop (pronounced "Shope"). These culturally elite individuals were designated to spread tales among the people. Though now written within these pages, we share the same desire to the spread folklore to all who wish to listen.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Scop: BYU-Idaho's Folklore Journal and may your life be culturally enriched by your experience.

Sincerely,

Matthew Anderson

Matthew Anderson
Editor in Chief
Scop: BYU-Idaho's Folklore Journal

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BY: SCOTT ARMITAGE



The Grimm Brothers' fairy tale Hansel and Gretel has been rewritten in a variety of ways, and it is not uncommon for people who read them to accept the interpretations of the more

up-to-date versions. Even though this may be more pleasing for the readers, it can also misdirect them in understanding some of the underlying messages that are being taught. Although the narrative appears to be darker than some of the new era versions, the original Hansel and Grete relates more easily to its time period. Some of the historical background of its time period can be better understood by looking at the use of irony and allusions in the text that represent the importance of relying on God rather than man for survival.

The setting at the beginning of Hansel and Gretel explains to the readers who the poor family in the tale is and style of living. The family consists of a father, stepmother and two children – Hansel and Gretel. An image that helps describe the family can be seen in some of the first few lines: “He had little to bite and to break, and once when great dearth fell on the land, he could no longer procure even daily bread” (Grimm’s 1).

“He,” meaning the father, is described as a man who is unable to adequately provide food for his family. The first line of the tale tells the readers that he is a “woodcutter.” In the present time, the logging business is very productive due to technology and the number of lumber mills that have been created. However, at the time of this fairy tale, this seems to not be the case, nor does it seem to resemble a time period with a vast number of advancements in technology. Something else that could be derived from this is the question of why the father would have to rely on cutting wood to provide for his family as opposed to a more sophisticated job? The line previously mentioned above used the word “dearth,” which is another name for “drought” or “famine.” Many people at this time were unable to maintain their daily jobs and had to suffice

with looking for work that was more physically challenging and paid less. Likewise, the father’s role as a woodcutter seems primitive and old-fashioned because he can barely afford to buy food when there was no “dearth” in the land, and when it finally does come, he cannot even provide bread for his family. Aside from the woodcutting profession being looked at as a poor person’s job at this time, it is ironic that in the text, the father does not search for additional work that might add to his efforts in trying to provide food for his family.

Following this image of Hansel and Gretel’s father is a repetition of the idea that people would have to seek out uncommon means of survival: “What is to become of us? How are we to feed to poor children, when, when we no longer have anything even for ourselves?” (Grimm’s 1). The father seems to be more concerned for his children’s wellbeing than does the stepmother. She suggested that they “take the children out in to the forest to where it is the thickest...and then we will go to our work and leave them alone. They will not find the way home again, and we shall be rid of them” (Grimm’s, 1). Truthfully, the stepmother gives the readers a real glimpse of how desperate she was to maintain control in the lives of her husband and herself, even if it meant sacrificing the lives of their children, which is a perfect example that defines what it means to survive. The tale does not give any specific account of the family’s lifestyle prior to this time frame, and so it is difficult to determine what type relationship the stepmother had with Hansel and Gretel. If it was a socially negative relationship, this could have added to her motive to abandon them in the woods. Still, the concept remains as was stated in the passage, that the stepmother was not ready to die and was willing to do even the most unthinkable of things to make sure she stayed alive.

Eventually, Hansel and Gretel are led into the woods by their father and stepmother and then left on their own. They do find their way back home, and the father rejoices; but, the stepmother is not so joyful to have her stepchildren back. After another season of famine, the stepmother repeats the same claim she made to her husband the first time that they were short on food, and that the only way to save themselves would be to lead their children

Hansel and Gretel: How They Survived

deeper “into the wood” (Grimm’s 2).

The allusion that appeared earlier in this tale is seen again after Hansel and Gretel return home after being abandoned in the woods: the family is suffering from yet another “dearth,” and the parents feel compelled to abandon the children in order to preserve only their own lives. This time, though, the stepmother seems even more determined to leave Hansel and Gretel deserted in the woods.

For the second time, Hansel and Gretel are led deep into the woods and are left by a fire to wait for their parents to return from laboring during the daytime; but, the father and stepmother do not return and this time, Hansel and Gretel are unable to find their way back home. Shortly after they awake from sleeping through the night, Hansel and Gretel begin to venture further into the woods and come across a house that was made of sweets. As Hansel and Gretel “approached the house they saw that it was built of bread covered with cakes, but that the windows were of clear sugar” (Grimm’s 3).

Following their discovery, Hansel and Gretel meet an old woman living in the house. She welcomes the two children into her home and cooks all kinds of food for them. It seems that Hansel and Gretel, for a short time, are having the time of their lives. Before finding this home, Hansel and Gretel were left destitute deep in the woods because their stepmother was more concerned about saving the little amount of food at her home for herself and her husband. Hansel and Gretel are now the ones who are truly surviving well and unlike their parents, they do not even have to labor or work hard to provide the food.

Shortly after their arrival, the identity of the old woman is revealed: The old woman had only pretended to be so kind; she was in reality a wicked witch, who lay in wait for children, and had only built the little house of bread in order to entice them there. When a child fell into her power, she killed it, cooked and ate it, and that was a feast day with her. Witches have red eyes, and cannot see far, but they have a keen scent like the beasts, and are aware when human beings draw near (Grimm’s 4).

The allusion that appears in this passage is based on the description of the old woman as a witch. In the many

parts of the modern world, the belief of witches is not as common as it was a few centuries ago. In America, especially, witches are recognized only around Halloween. The way the narrator describes her in a superficial way is by giving the readers a vivid description of her, which it makes it sound as if though the narrator has actually seen a witch. This might refer to a period of time when superstitions such as believing in witches was very common and not looked at as just a myth or an urban legend.

Ironically, even though the old woman is classified as a witch, her survival comes from alluring children to her home, which is the exact opposite approach of the stepmother’s way of surviving – abandoning her stepchildren. The witch must depend on Hansel and Gretel to preserve her life. It appears then that either way for Hansel and Gretel, they seem to be at the bottom of the food chain. They have either been neglected by their step-mother or imprisoned by the witch.

Another allusion that could be tied in to the relative time period of this fairy tale is seen in the following paragraph of the fairy tale: “Dear God, do help us,” she cried. If the wild beasts in the forest had but devoured us, we should at any rate have died together. ‘Just keep your noise to yourself,’ said the old woman, ‘it won’t help you at all” (Grimm’s 5).

Gretel’s prayer is interesting because it is another piece of evidence that could support the idea stated earlier about the time period that this fairy tale took place in. Many children at a young age, today, probably do not know how to pray vocally on their own without any verbal promptings from a parent or older sibling; however, Gretel demonstrates how she was taught to pray to God. This may have been just due to how she and Hansel were raised, but it is also likely that this demonstration of her belief in God represents how the people in general at this time were well disciplined in practicing their religious beliefs. Gretel’s prayer also shows that despite the problem at hand, she still believes that God has the power to save her from evil. Her means of survival comes from relying on a spiritual power rather than depending on tangible items such as people or food – this is the approach of the stepmother and the witch.

The irony that occurs from the witch's response to this prayer is that she is killed from being pushed into the oven by Gretel. So, even though the witch disbelieved in the power of a supernatural being (God), Gretel's prayer seemed as though it had been answered: the witch was killed in the oven and not the children. Another case of irony seen is in the ending of the tale when Hansel and Gretel run back home to their father. They learned that their step-mother had passed away while they were lost in the woods. It seems that the ability to rely on God's power rather than one's own willpower is the key to survival in this tale. Hansel and Gretel is subtle at hinting to the readers as to when or where the events in the text took place, but the use of irony and allusions help to assist them in discovering this and also to understand which means of survival was more triumphant.

"Grimm's Fairy Tales: Hansel and Gretel." The Complete Grimm's Fairy Tales. 1972. Random House. 26 Sept. 2008. <http://www.mordent.com/folktales/grimms/hng/hng.html>

BY: CAROL PARSON



"Folk-lore: the traditional beliefs, legends, customs, of a people." (Folklore). Whether it be Perrault (French), The Brothers Grimm (German), Tuan Cheng-shih (Chinese), or Neil Skinner (African), the classic fairytale Cinderella, although

different in each culture, still contains remarkable similarities. Of these similarities, three main comparisons stand out: the Godmother, the Father/Mother figure, and the Ending. These shared characteristics are universal symbols that allow disparate cultures to understand and personalize the story. Although there are distinct differences between cultures, there are still similarities between these cultures that allow the story to capture the same magical appeal. The first symbol is the Godmother who symbolizes the unknown magical power that allows each of us to acquire our

every wish. When examining the French, German, Chinese and African cultures, we see that all except the French use animals to portray this magical being. The Chinese version of the 'godmother' is a fish. In the Chinese culture, "fish in general are considered good luck charms" (Wang). The African culture uses a frog to represent the godmother and the German culture uses a white bird. The use of animals in these particular cultures symbolizes how human beings are incapable of magical powers and therefore animals serve as a provider for these powers. Looking at the choice of animals in these cultures leads to another interesting point of how animals are the means by which Cinderella obtains her dreams.

Cinderella's dreams coming true are what makes this story magical. Three of the four versions use animals to grant wishes as long as work is done. In the French version [even though the godmother is human] Cinderella is granted her every wish without having to do any work, sharply contrasting the German, Chinese, and African versions where Cinderella works harder to have her wishes come true. We can see this in the German version when Cinderella receives her wishes only after she prays and shows determination. The African version tells of how Cinderella has to feed the frog's everyday in order to receive her wishes and the Chinese version requires her to go retrieve the fish bones before she could receive her wishes. However, no matter what culture tells the story, the godmother, in any form, remains the way in which wishes come true. The second universal symbol is that of the father/mother role in the story. The father/mother role in Cinderella's life is important because this leads to and eventually defines her plight living under the control of her manipulative step-mother. In both the Chinese and African versions Cinderella has a father who is married to two wives. Instead of having a step-mother, Cinderella is forced to live with the second wife after her mother's death. In the African version Cinderella is treated as a slave to the second wife and is mistreated and malnourished through the second wives' orders: "And every day the woman would push her out, to go off to the bush to gather wood. When she returned, she had to pound up the fura. Then she had the two to pound,

A Cinderella Story

and, after that, to stir. And then they wouldn't even let her eat the tuwo. All they gave her to eat were the burnt bits at the bottom of the pot." (Behrens, Rosen 550). Since her father allows this to happen and she had no mother, Cinderella desires something better.

The German approach to familial relations provides Cinderella with one father and mother and eventually a step-mother. The mother in this story is portrayed as an almost angelic figure "Dear child, be good and say your prayers; God will help you, and I shall look down on you from heaven and always be with you." (Behrens, Rosen 532). This statement by her mother shows her love for Cinderella and a future hand in Cinderella's life. This future hand can be seen in the white birds. White represents purity and hope, and, therefore, the white birds allude to Cinderella's mother giving her hope in her life.

Interestingly the mother/father role is completely absent in the French version. From the very beginning Cinderella is told to have simply joined up with the step-mother: "She made her home with her mean old stepmother and her two stepsisters, and they made her do all the work in the house." (Behrens, Rosen 555). This statement hints at Cinderella having parents but never actually mentions them. In fact the French story focuses mainly on getting what you want and becoming a part of nobility by casting off your lower class beginnings.

While the context for familial relationships may vary, it provides fascinating insight into how these different societies are organized. This is especially true within the African version of Cinderella. In this narrative a man is married to two wives and seems to favor one over the other: "And the one wife, together with her daughter, he couldn't abide; but the other, with her daughter he dearly loved." (Behrens, Rosen 550). Whereas in the French, German and Chinese versions Cinderella's father is monogamous, at least sequentially, the African Cinderella's father is a bigamist. The African mores clearly support polygamy. This feature alone introduces an entirely new level of conflict for the African Cinderella.

The third universal symbol is the magical ending of the tale. The ending is the most important part because it is the part that wraps up the rest of the tale with a nice bow.

While each culture values the magical ending of Cinderella, the dispensing of justice in regard to the step-sisters is far more telling. The step sisters have never won their fight for the prince in the end and therefore cannot have had a happy ending. Winning in a worldly view is what makes happiness. In the story of Cinderella no matter what culture, if a character did not, in a way, win their dreams they could not be happy. It is interesting to see that the French version is the only one in which the step sisters survive. This brings the point back to how the French version is more concerned with the preservation of nobility than the punishment of the step sisters. Nobility in the dictionary is defined as: "nobleness of mind, character, or spirit; exalted moral excellence." (Nobility). If the step sisters had been hurt or killed, the whole definition of nobility would no longer exist. Therefore, the idea of getting revenge by means of death is not a possible ending. However, in the remaining versions, revenge is either the whole point of the ending or just a minor point.

In contrast to the fairytale ending of the French version, the German, Chinese, and African versions end in obtaining justice. The ways that the step sisters are killed may tell us a little bit about these cultures. In the German version the step sisters try to join in on the wedding celebration. However, the magical white birds plucks out both their eyes as punishment. "So both sisters were punished with blindness to the end of their days for being so wicked and false." (Behrens, Rosen 536). It is interesting to note that the German version brings the 'godmother' figure back into the picture. The godmother figure is then used to obtain revenge for how Cinderella had been treated in the past.

The importance of revenge is also echoed in the Chinese version where a flying stone comes and kills the step-mother and step-sisters. "The step-mother and step-sister were shortly afterwards struck by flying stones, and died." (Behrens, Rosen 549). However, in this story the sudden end of the step-mother and sister was not the end of the tale. This story goes on to tell about the cave people and how they felt bad for the step-mother and sister, "The cave people were sorry for them and buried them in a stone-pit which was called the Tomb of the Distressed Women. The men of the cave made mating-offerings there; any girl they

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there, they got.” (Behrens, Rosen 549). The Chinese version leads to the conclusion that they both wanted revenge but also felt bad for the sins and tragic end of the women. The fact that the tale keeps going and describing how the cave people acted sheds light on the traditions of the Chinese people at that time. The Chinese people felt an obligation to take care of those who passed away. “Indeed, afterlife care involved the most significant and complex rituals in Chinese religious life, including funerals, burials, mourning practices, and rites for ancestors.”(Chinese). The last, and perhaps most exciting, is the African version. This version ends in revenge again but not for the same reasons as the previous two. The step-sister tries to gain revenge by kidnapping Cinderella and taking her place at the prince’s side. However, when she is found out the prince killed her. “And when they came, he went into her hut and took a sword, and chopped her up into little pieces, and had them [his servants] collect them and wrap them up in clothing; and then taken back to her home.” (Behrens, Rosen 553). This is an interesting line that gives insight to the African culture’s views about crime and punishment. A quick parse of this quotation reveals that the first part is not even revenge but punishment for her wrong doing. Then there is the significance of wrapping the pieces in clothing and taking them back to her home. Through research it is found that the African culture has an elaborate ceremony for death. “Death, although a dreaded event, is perceived as the beginning of a person’s deeper relationship with all of creation... That is why every person who dies must be given a “correct” funeral, supported by a number of religious ceremonies.” (African). This gives an understanding of the purpose of taking the step-sister back home.

The symbols of the godmother, father/mother, and the ending allow for cultures to add their own unique perspective and give the world an insight into their society. Cinderella is a universal fairytale that delights the minds of many and allows any culture to understand and take part in this magical tale. Cultures can understand this tale by using their beliefs and traditions to make the story unique to their own culture. The French, German, Chinese, and African versions are very similar in story line yet different in meaning and characters. Cinderella, when viewed through

the lens of the many different cultures, becomes not just a fairy tale, but a fascinating glimpse into the collective unconscious that continues to produce stories that shape our values and worldviews.

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BY: EVE HART

In Shannon Hale’s modern adaptation of *The Goose Girl*, Selia and Ani could be physical twins but are polar opposites: Crown Princess Ani is weak willed and awkward. Her lady-in-waiting, Selia, is influential and confident. Selia has coveted Ani’s title her entire life. When she finally has the opportunity to steal Ani’s identity, Selia asserts that people, or social environments, give an identity power. Is social environment truly the force that makes or breaks identity? A comparison of Selia and Ani reveals that social environment can impede or empower identity.

Although Selia seems initially to have the stronger identity, both she and Ani struggle to meet the social expectations of their environments. Selia is stretched between the expectations of several social environments and loses power to all. Because her guards chose her in the Forest, Selia strives to maintain her relationship with Ungolad and “stays holed up with her Kildenrean friends” (136). Selia accordingly preserves her reputation in this group, but also compounds the atmosphere of distrust in the palace and of among the worker’s settlement. She therefore gives the image that she

Guards and Geese: The Effect of Social Environment on Identity

is above her hosts. Ironically, a guard mentions his discontent with “her puissantness” and has to be told to “pick a side and...stay on it” (169). Geric says of her: “She’s lovely and graceful and witty and courtly and all that a princess should be. ...But there was some darkness with her arrival” (190). Pressured to project the image of a princess, Selia assumes the decorum of a princess. Even then, as she tries to navigate between her friends and her hosts, she comes off as secretive and estranged. Juggling between the social expectations of each group, Selia begins to lose the faith and support of her guards. To cope with the demands of each group, she reverses roles. She is endearing as a princess; among her friends, she is coarse and manipulative. When caught by Geric and the King in her fraud, Selia appears “...commanding, regal, humble, coercive, friendly...” (355). This role confusion is indicative of her failure to differentiate between so many social expectations. Geric and Ungolad fight, symbolizing the clash of social environments. Ungolad ultimately loses, and Selia is left powerless. Her guards can no longer support her, and her Bayern hosts will no longer corroborate her identity. Selia is unable to mitigate the social pressures of each group and consequently loses power to all.

Ani strives to conform to the expectations of Kildenree but social pressures also deprive her of power. Ani’s identity is initially constructed around a social environment that prepares her to one day become queen. Her Queen mother is a regal, austere, and commanding role model, and Ani sees herself as “half-formed” in comparison (29). Although Ani tries to maintain the image of princess, she feels awkward and insecure. Because she is so unlike her mother, she doubts her ability to be an adequate leader. Her physical twin, Selia, is prim and proper, and Ani believes “she would be better at playing princess...” (19). Ani feels comparatively weak and unskilled. These social comparisons, and her failure to live up to them, burden Ani with her inadequacies. She becomes passive about the direction of her identity. Her passivity is evident in the control she gives her mother. Her mother suggests: “I am sorry I had to choose such for you, and I am sorry, for I know you will do what I chose” (38). Because Ani’s identity is so synonymous with her social environment, she succumbs to her

mother’s will. In the forest, her identity hangs by a thread. Selia tells Ani: “I believe we are what we make ourselves, and as such, you,...are nothing” (qtd. in 64). Selia, once a reliable friend, destroys Ani’s identity completely. She is disillusioned by the power of her title. So affected by the whims of her social environment, Ani’s identity is unstable. Social environments can also be sources of power towards establishing an identity. Selia initially demonstrates that she is empowered by people. Ani remarks, for example, that Selia is easy “with strangers and friends” and is a talented people-speaker (22). Selia’s talents give her vast power over people, drawing them to her and controlling their perceptions of her. Her easiness with the guards attracts them to her. The guards’ loyalty to Selia makes it possible to overpower Ani’s remaining patriots. Selia argues: “Royalty is not a right, Captain. The willingness of the people to follow a ruler is what gives her power. Here, in this place, by this people, I have been chosen” (qtd. in 79). The willingness of the guards to follow her, Selia infers, makes her a princess. These destructive forces empower the illusion that Selia’s identity as a princess is strong and “self-made.” Ani uses her social environment to her advantage as well. Ani takes advantage of her “anonymity” to build facets of her identity, free from past expectations. No longer the crown princess, she discovers the extent of her untapped abilities and empowers herself through relationships that previously eluded her. She is immersed in Bayern society. Isi is a version of Ani with identity, an “untested” reflection of who Ani truly is. Only as Isi does Ani feel empowered to subjectively view and influence the world around her. Her effect on the workers is a measure of her potential. They are a structural support to her identity. Ani’s identity is self-sufficient, and her power, inward and outward, is supplemented by her friends.

The power of Ani’s complete identity is apparent in her statement that she will “not hide anymore” (qtd. in 308). She does not hide under the title “Crown Princess” or within the anonymity of the peasant Isi. Her identity is strengthened by the support of friends who comprise her guard and by her compassion for them. They act as both a physical and psychological support system. Without them, she is still Ani, but they give her

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identity power.

Ani's undertaking as goose girl allows her to build relationships that contribute to her identity. Ani's relationship with her geese, for example, mimics her relationship with the workers. In Kildenree, Ani's gift of animal speech is smothered as something unbecoming of the "Crown Princess." Ani rediscovers this gift in a conscious effort to understand her geese. Befriending Jok, the lame goose, gives her access to understanding the geese. She soon becomes a "mother" to them, gaining their trust (240). Similarly, Ani is entrusted as part of the Bayern social structure as she befriends the workers. Enna says of the workers: "We're almost... like animals to [the city]" (159). Ani employs her gift of language to understand the "animal" workers. Like her gaggle of geese, the workers follow and trust her. Her language is not only a language of animals but a language of empathy which helps her understand and diagnose Bayern. As the goose girl, she defends her geese the same way she defends the lives of the workers. Soon, they extend ownership: Ani is "our" goose girl.

While social environments have the power to influence identity, Selia gives her social environment considerable power over her. She effectively "undoes" herself (357). Without Ungolad or her guards to guide her, Selia shows herself to be the same temper tantrum-prone girl she was in her formative years. Selia demonstrates through her character that an identity that relies entirely on a social environment cannot stand on its own.

Ani, on the other hand, is not dependent on her social environment to perpetuate her identity. Rather, she uses her social environment to strengthen her own self-concept. She allows her environment to test her, noting that it is time "to make decisions...to stop falling where she was told to fall and to stand only when allowed to stand" (166). Ani becomes an agent in the construction of her identity. Rather than being acted upon, Ani acts in cooperation with her social environment. She chooses to interact with the workers of the settlement, become part of Bayern, and finally,

embrace her gifts. While Selia is initially the stronger character, she allows her social environment total control of her identity. When circumstances change, Selia is overpowered and undone. Ani constructs her identity from the inside and uses her social environment as a support.

Hale, Shannon. *The Goose Girl*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2003.

BY: LAURA ARRINGTON



The Greeks, often seen as the forerunners of society, gave us mathematics, philosophy, and many ways our world is run, such as democracy. They were extremely patriarchal people to the point of being ridiculous, something no woman would allow nowadays and had a loose ideal of marriage. This is seen in the characters of Zeus, Hera, and Heracles in much of Greek Mythology. Zeus and Hera's relationship as gods and as husband and wife and the ideal that is Heracles and how Hera reacts to him shows the patriarchy of this society and the idea of marriage, things that if focused on today could lead to problems.

The ancient Greeks' whole lives, their religions and their beliefs, revolved around the gods. The myths and legends of them would have been ones that would reflect their lives, their beliefs. Zeus was an over-sexed macho man who could do no wrong and Hera's unimportance gives us a glimpse of their patriarchal system and loose ideals they held of marriage.

Hera is the oldest of the Olympian gods, the first born of Rhea and Cronus, the titans ruling the world at the time. Zeus was the last, and the only one not to be swallowed by Cronus. When the six Olympians took over the world after Zeus freed his siblings, Zeus was in charge, despite the fact that by age and right, it should have been Hera. In ancient Greek society, women were not seen as able to rule. He took his sister Hera to wife. This was his third marriage, the others to his cousin Metis and his aunt Themis, while it was Hera's first. This marriage made Hera queen, subordinate to her husband even though she was much older than Zeus. Hera was

Hera, Goddess of Marriage

it was Hera's first. This marriage made Hera queen, subordinate to her husband even though she was much older than Zeus. Hera was goddess of marriage and childbirth, both womanly duties, while Zeus got to be god of the heavens. In some cases, Hera was even completely obsolete, even as wife of Zeus. Athena, goddess of battle and wits, popped out from Zeus' head. The woman's role became unneeded as even child-bearer in this situation, so Hera is out of the picture completely. The male of this patriarchal society was all powerful, perfectly portrayed in Zeus and Hera's relationship.

The ancient Greeks weren't completely opposed to women. The fact that Hera is queen, that they do have a goddess of marriage and child birth, proves that they believe in them and can see the goodness in women. Hera was worshiped in the towns of Argos and Samia among many others. She was an important god in the Greeks time, but compared to Zeus, she is almost insignificant. He is king and Hera queen, but only because she is wed to Zeus, not because she earned it herself. Most tales and myths of Hera are in conjunction with Zeus, or with another male, whether god or human. Her significance of the Trojan War, though great, was only because of her anger at Paris and Zeus and everything she did was either because of a man or thwarted by a man.

Zeus was married to the goddess of marriage, yet he was not a faithful husband. It seemed he was often with some other woman beside his wife. Zeus obviously knew what he was doing was wrong, because he constantly changed into other things such as bulls or rays of light to escape Hera's attention. The stories of Zeus' infidelities and dalliances with other women compose much of Greek myths on the gods. The only time Hera ever came close to the kind of things Zeus did was when Jason paid attention to her. "She fell in love with Jason and assisted him in many ways, only interested, it appears, in his adoration of her" (Bell 234). The only time she broke faith with her husband was when there was a man that adored her and worshipped her in ways Zeus did not. And even

then, the only thing she did was help him on his quest with the Argonauts. The fact that Hera was goddess of marriage and yet could not keep her own husband in line negates her character and her power completely.

While Zeus is not the only husband cheating on his wife in Greek mythology, he is the most prominent and as King of the Gods, the one most ancient Greeks would know and emulate. Every single one of these dalliances produced a child or children that were the greatest warriors and heroes. Artemis and Apollo were the results of one of these one-night stands, the twins becoming gods on Olympus. Perseus and Heracles, both bastard children of Zeus, are some of the greatest heroes of Greek myth. Despite the fact that Zeus broke his marriage covenant, he was never punished. Because he was king and he can do no wrong in the Greek society, Hera, instead of punishing her husband and making him pay for cheating on her, always went after the women or even the children.

One of the strongest stories marking the ancient Greeks as patriarchal is the story of Heracles (the correct Greek name for Hercules). Zeus, once more in hiding, this time in the form of Amphytrion, king of Troezen, deigned to sleep with Amphytrion's wife Alcmena. This resulted in the birth of Heracles, who would become the greatest hero of Greek myth. Hera did not punish her husband for his act, because he was king, so she went after Heracles. When he was under a year old, Hera sent "two prodigious azure-scaled serpents to Amphytrion's house, with strict orders to destroy Heracles" (Greek Myth 416). This of course failed because Heracles is strong and manly, as befits a son of Zeus and was the ideal for men of that time.

Hera constantly threw trial after trial at Heracles, all of which he passed with ease, but Zeus went unpunished for his sins against her. He was the king and a man, and therefore he was not to be punished for what he had done. And Heracles, after he died, became a god, whom Hera then loved. The patriarchal system reigns in heaven as on earth in ancient Greece, for now that he is a god, he can no longer do wrong and everything Hera had against him is now gone. Even

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his name, Heracles, play on this newfound love that contradicts his earthy life, for it means Glory of Hera. Never once does Hera punish Zeus and the one man she does punish is exalted and she no longer hates.

While the ancient Greeks have given the world amazing things, not every idea they had is one that should be translated into what is done today. Their over-the-top patriarchal society and their very loose ideal of marriage should not be taken into life today, unlike other good ideas. The study of the patriarchal hierarchy of the gods should not be taken literally, instead taking from the myths and legends the good instead of the bad. The task then becomes finding those which should be taken from the works of the masters.

BY: CATHERINE BATES



Understanding a society and its constructs is vital to interpreting a person's actions. With historical context, seemingly insignificant actions can turn into grand gestures of love and longing.

Bressler states that, "readers from any given historical period establish for themselves what they value in a text. A text, then, does not have one and only one correct interpretation because its supposed meanings change from one historical period to another" (Bressler 84). When examining the poem "Chevrefoil" by Marie de France, the concept of a horizon of expectation is understood more fully. The horizon of expectation that modern day readers bring to this poem does not allow them to fully experience Tristan and Isolt's love, their struggle to maintain their love, and the natural imagery describing their love within the poem.

The Norton Anthology of English Literature states that, "Marie[de France] is among the twelfth century writers who made love the means of analyzing the individuals relation to his or her society" (142). A prime example of this is found within "Chevrefoil" wherein the plight of the lovers can most accurately and empa-

thetically be seen within the context of the time period. For example, the extreme measures that Tristan goes to in order to maintain his forbidden relationship with the queen would not be considered significant outside of twelfth century societal constructs. Within the poem Tristan returns to Isolt because of the unwavering loneliness that accompanies him to his exile. Once back in her presence, he must devise a way to catch her attention without the king noticing. Tristan does this by writing his name on a piece of wood placed on a path that the queen will walk. In the 21st century the thought of this is a little ridiculous. It is hard to see why this contrived means of communication is necessary when we have the ability and the expectation that private communication is available at the touch of a button. Once the meeting with the queen had been arranged and executed, the queen, "told him that a peace accord/ would reconcile him with his lord/ Who now was sorry he had sent/ His nephew into banishment" (De France 157). Although the solution to this situation seems as simple as the queen giving Tristan some instruction, the obstacles presented by the time period prevent that simplicity. Without the use of phones, text messaging or E-mail, Tristan and Isolt need to engineer a way to be together to alleviate the pain of their separation and fix the problem of Tristan's exile.

The difficulty of Tristan's situation proves that his love for Isolt is unwavering and unconquerable. If the reader were to look at this text without being aware of the hardships that Tristan placed upon himself that were a direct result of the time period, the depth and meaning of the love that exists between these two people would be lost. Not only is he exiled and taken away from his friends, he then has to devise all manner of plans in order to stay in contact with the woman he loves.

Tristan would have endured many hardships because of his love for the queen, and because of the social constructs of the time period. The reader has a better understanding of their love because of these hardships. The poem begins with the king dismissing

Shedding Light on Love Within a Historical Context

Tristan because Tristan was in love with the queen. In the twelfth century the relationship between a knight and his king was not only important in that it is where they gleaned most of their companionship, but also in that it was their main means of survival. That is why, “Tristan went back forlorn/To South Wales where he was born/A full year he lived in despair/ Of ever again returning there”(155 De France). Being dismissed by his king would lend a heavy blow to any knight, and the fact that Tristan was the king’s nephew only increases the impact this had on him. This in itself is testament to the devotion Tristan had to Isolt. This situation, set in the current time period, would not make the same impact. People of the current time period do not understand the important and vital relationship between a knight and his king, and thus would not understand the sacrifice that Tristan made for his love. Similar to a knight’s love for his king, a knight’s love for the men he goes to battle with surpasses that of a casual friendship that would be made in the 21st century. The fact that Tristan would willingly give up these important relationships, all the while knowing that he may never see or talk to his comrades ever again, is a testament to his unwavering love for Isolt. Despite terrible consequences Tristan is willing to pursue the queen and let his love be known. The narrator expresses this by saying, “but then at risk of getting caught/ death and destruction set at naught...from his homeland he departed/ To Cornwall where dwelled the queen”(De France 157). Tristan risks his life, his friendships, and his dignity to be with his love. He does this regardless of the prospect of death and destruction by the very people he loves and respects. The natural imagery that assists in understanding Tristan and Isolt’s love within the poem is a reflection of the literary style of the time period and of Marie de France; without context this imagery would seem out of place and useless. Marie de France uses the imagery of honeysuckle and hazel to better explain their love. An example of this in the text is, “like honeysuckle which you see/Wrapped around a hazel tree/ when it takes hold there and has bound/the trunk with tendrils

all around/ They will live, both vine and Stem/ But should someone uncouple them/then the hazel quickly dies/ and the honeysuckle likewise”(De France 156). Without this imagery the depth of Tristan and Isolt’s love would be completely misrepresented. This imagery provides insight into the intensity of their love for each other. Without previous knowledge of the strong connection between love and nature found within twelfth century writing, modern day readers’ perception of their love would be inaccurate. Similarly, the title “Chevrefoil” in French means honeysuckle; the title’s significance is only seen when paired with the natural imagery found within the poem. This pairing would have been expected in that time period. To begin a poem with simply the name of a plant without that plant being mentioned again until the end of the poem would be confusing and ineffective in the twenty-first century.

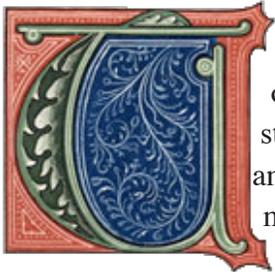
Within the historical context of the twelfth century, the plight of Tristan and Isolt is better understood and more accurately seen than with a 21st century mindset. If this love story was read by audiences of the current time period with no knowledge of twelfth century society or conventions it would seem childish and silly. The intensity of their love can only be seen untainted by current social norms and technology. Similarly, the horizons of expectation brought to this story by a current day reader would do it injustice. A twenty-first century reader would see the great lengths to which Tristan and Isolt went to in order to preserve their love and find their problems more insignificant than they were in that time period.

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BY: JEANETTE SYNDER



Traditionally, the antagonist of folklore is a physical monster such as the giant in Jack and the Beanstalk, the evil stepmother in Cinderella and Snow White, the stubborn pharaoh of Moses fame, and countless

others. However, modern folk tales, especially those recounted in song, assert that ordinary people simply do not fight such demons. In fact, The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms explains that folk songs “typically recount stories about everyday life and express the hopes and beliefs of ordinary people” (Murfin, 240). Yet ancient folkloric themes still appear in modern folksongs. Rastafarian Bob Marley’s “Redemption Song,” for instance, highlights ordinary citizens’ genuine hope for and belief in freedom. The empathetic relationship between the speaker and audience in “Redemption Song,” primarily displayed through diction, illustrates the traditional folkloric theme of escaping mighty and evil enemies to achieve freedom.

The first stanza validates the speaker as a prophet and also functions as a parabolic method through which the speaker relates to his community. The speaker recounts a situation in which he experiences the exact opposite of the basic human desire for freedom, saying

Old pirates, yes, they rob I;
Sold I to the merchant ships,
Minutes after they took I
From the bottomless pit.
But my hand was made strong
By the hand of the Almighty
We forward this generation
Triumphantly (1-8).

The speaker’s unorthodox choice to replace a grammatically correct “me” with the grammatically incorrect “I” emphasizes the loneliness felt when one must fight an enemy single-handedly. “I” is a lonely word; not only is it a single letter, but it is even similar in

shape to the numeral 1 as well. Hereby, the speaker asserts that he is so alone that he is not really a member of the community, although he experiences the loneliness of ordinary people. The speaker does, however, cite a comrade who helps him combat slavery. The “I” becomes a “We” when “I” is “made strong by the hand of the Almighty,” indicating that through the humiliation, dehumanization, and frustration of becoming plunder, the speaker is not alone, because God is at his side. “The Almighty” not only functions as comfort, but as power; the speaker asserts “We [God and I, together] forward in this generation/Triumphantly.” As he unites with God, the speaker is set apart from his community as a catalyst for progression and triumph. In other words, he transforms into prophet. This particular enlightenment sets a tone of forgiveness throughout the work, both presenting the primary method by which the speaker overcomes evil and also signifying the speaker taking on the mantle of prophet. The first stanza is the backdrop through which the speaker relates to his audience. He implores, “won’t you help me sing?” instead of, for instance, I will sing, demonstrating the speaker’s desire to build his community. He extends an invitation of personal empowerment to the public as he continues, “emancipate yourself” and “none bout ourselves can free our minds.” Using reflexive pronouns gives strength to the “you/our” as well as the “self,” which lends to reveal the necessity of individual member working to “free” the community. The transparent compassion the speaker harbors for his audience validates not only his merit as a prophet, but also confirms that, by default, he is actually becomes a member of his audience’s community; thereby accrediting his reliability to ordinary people.

Oddly, the speaker never asserts which demographic he actually intends to reach with his words—his community members are faceless. Ambiguity is, in fact, the speaker’s greatest asset in conveying the identity of his audience, as well as the song’s true intent. One possible audience to whom the speaker refers could be those who endured slavery and racism as he did, if

Modern Magic: An Analysis of Ancient Folkloric Themes in Modern Song

if his story in the first stanza is seen as an actual event. However, the pronouns used throughout the song again come to the forefront, both confirming that his tale is a parable and also extending the audience to a human community, regardless of race. First, the chorus asks, “Won’t you help me”—you meaning everyone—then, admonishes the community to “emancipate yourself from mental slavery.” Because he addresses a unspecified you in “yourself,” he indicates that all humans are captive to “mental slavery” at one point or another—even including captors. The ambiguity of his address indicates the speaker’s belief that all members of society require the same “redemption” he, himself, at one point experiences “by the hand of the Almighty.” Through a blanket request to the general public, the speaker fortifies his audience because, as a prophetic message, it strengthens those who already grasp truth and brings others into the fold.

The speaker illuminates the cunning nature of evil in the third stanza by addressing his audience as pronouns instead of proper nouns. The speaker forces the reader to ponder the identity of “they” in the third stanza, as it asks, “how long shall they kill our prophets/ while we stand aside and look?” This line sets up an us/them dichotomy; “they” kill whereas “we” are not involved. However, the speaker indicates that inaction is involvement as well, because “we” inherently become “they” as the audience realizes they allow the murders to occur. By asking a rhetorical question to his audience, the speaker uses the dichotomy to express what kind of community will fail at defeating their enemies—it is those that toss blame instead of uniting against evil, or “we’s” that become “they’s.” The speaker offers two powerful magic words that dually unlock the chains of slavery and unite his community: freedom and redemption. Freedom regularly suggests the ability to employ agency, yet also means, “the state or fact of being free from [...] inhibition [...], liberation from the bondage or dominating influence of sin, spiritual servitude, worldly ties, etc” (OED). Freedom is the state of complete independence from any sort of bondage. Redemption is a similarly

liberating term, meaning, “deliverance from sin and its consequences by the atonement of Jesus Christ; the act of freeing a prisoner, captive, or slave by payment; ransom” (OED). “Redemption” is intrinsically an allusion to a higher power. In this case, it is the redeeming power of “the Almighty.” The denotation of these two words indicate that the speaker believes that the mighty enemy his audience faces can be slavery of a physical nature, but it is more of a spiritual confinement.

Furthermore, the speaker claims that his anthem is a collection of “Redemption songs: these songs of freedom,” thereby he sets the state of freedom and the act of redemption on an equal plane. Redemption’s power is to free or “to love,” or in other words, to forgive (OED). Herein, the speaker indicates that the audience’s power to battle the great enemy, the power to love, is not only more powerful than that of the antagonist, but it is also attainable. The audience’s inherent strength is to forgive trespasses against them. By forgiving the evils they face, the audience even redeems evil from evil itself.

Throughout recorded history, freedom and escape from mighty enemies have been two important themes in folklore, because they are two intrinsic elements of human existence. People of all status and circumstances share a common desire for freedom of agency. Whether it be redemption from physical, emotional, or spiritual slavery, eventually escape is necessary to gain true happiness. Though specific word choice, the speaker in “Redemption Song” prophetically reveals that those in danger of slavery actually include both the oppressed and the oppressor. The speaker boldly states that both the bond and free have the duty and power to overcome “mental slavery” and gain a state of freedom through the redemptive power of “the Almighty.” In the words of Bob Marley, “Wont you help me sing/These songs of freedom?/cause all I ever have:/Redemption songs.”

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Oxford English Dictionary. 14 Oct. 2008. <<http://www.askoxford.com/dictionaries/?view=uk>>.

BY: LAUREN CONLEY



olk tales, folklore, and fairy tales are full of brave heroes who fight their way through all manner of dangerous situations for the love of a beautiful woman. Only rarely do these brave sirs accomplish their tasks without the

help of some outside force or being. Peter Berresford Ellis provides the literary world with *Celtic Myths and Legends* and in it he tells the story, "Y Chadee." To add depth and meaning to a story, writers use several literary devices, among them: symbols and archetypes. Ellis uses water and light to depict rebirth and knowledge, and even the mood of our hero. He transforms a short myth into a thought provoking allegory of the value of knowledge and change.

Water is synonymous with rebirth in literature and Ellis uses water throughout his telling of the myth of Y Chadee. The first rebirth Ellis presents happens when Eshyn discovers the curse that was placed upon him while he looks in a clear river and sees his reflection. A rebirth has taken place. With Eshyn's new appearance and gazing into the reflective water he sees he is no longer the same man he was before; he has been completely transformed. This particular rebirth may not be in the positive direction readers tend to give the word, but it is a rebirth nonetheless.

Benrein Na Shee, after explaining she can help Eshyn, takes him to an ocean he had never seen be-

fore. Eshyn has not yet heard how he is to reverse the curse placed upon him by Ny-Eshyn when Benrein Na Shee takes him to the shore. It is only once they've reached the shore Eshyn had never been to that Benrein Na Shee gives him the instructions he needs. Eshyn's crossing of the ocean, with the help of Benrein Na Shee, symbolizes Eshyn's transformation from the man who has been cursed to the man who is willing to fight for the cure. Eshyn's entire journey takes place in caves alongside the ocean of his rebirth so that as he is fulfilling his tasks he is working toward his rebirth simultaneously.

Once Eshyn has been returned to his former youth and glory his final task demands that he drop his treasures into the sea. Eshyn's demonstration in front of all of the members of his family and the court that he is willing to give up the treasures he rightfully earned reveals that he did not complete the quest for glory or riches. Eshyn's sole desire in embarking upon this hero's quest was not to gain an upper hand or prove himself better than anyone else but to reestablish what was his. By purging himself of the items he stole that gave him back his former self and tossing them to the sea, Eshyn seals his rebirth. Once the rebirth is complete he gains his prize, Y Chadee. By combining the archetype of light and water into one image with the Black Lake at the base of Slieau Dhoo, Ellis gives us a fascinating paradox. Light has long been an archetype of knowledge throughout literature. With that given, the absence of light would naturally lead one to assume the absence of knowledge. Eshyn arrives at the lake aware that there has been a change in his appearance but without the knowledge of how it has happened. Just like the lake, Eshyn's mind is dark – he has no answers, only questions. The lake even acts as a model of Eshyn's mood with Ellis' own words when he says "grim dark lake" (167). Indeed, Eshyn's future seems very grim at this point.

If light is knowledge, varying degrees of the brightness of a certain light would then suggest varying degrees of knowledge. The wizened old man that

The Power of Knowledge

Ny-Eshyn receives the curse to place on his brother from uses his knowledge – backwards though it may be – for dark purposes. Consequently, we do not see any light associated with him. The wizened old man is introduced in the late evening and darkest night to Ny-Eshyn and Eshyn respectively. Conversely we meet the old woman that acts as Eshyn’s first guide in the waking daylight hours. She does not have a perfect knowledge of how to restore Eshyn, but knows how he might receive that knowledge; a fact represented by the faint light of stars on a cloudless night.

Benrein Na Shee, the only person who knows how Eshyn must proceed, appears out of the darkness as “a bright white pinprick of light” (169). Ellis gives us a vivid picture of the perfect knowledge that Benrein Na Shee possesses when he describes the light as not only bright, but white, the most pure color. As Benrein Na Shee approaches Eshyn the light surrounding her grows so that it is while she is next to Eshyn that it shines at its full glory, signifying that what she tells Eshyn will help him. After Benrein Na Shee gives Eshyn all of the instructions he needs she extinguishes the light she possessed, leaving Eshyn in the dark but on the path he needs in order to succeed. Leaving Eshyn on the path but removing the light represents Eshyn moving in the right direction unaware of what lies ahead.

The first part of Eshyn’s quest, to steal the Sword of Light, leads him into the Cave of Heroes which was “filled with warriors drinking and gaming with dice” (171). The Cliwe-ny-Sollys, or Sword of Light, is aptly named because it gives off an ethereal light. The sword becomes both a beacon and a lantern by the light it gives off. The light leads those who seek all knowledge to it and once the sword is in the hands of any individual it can be used to light a path; just as Eshyn demonstrates. The fact that the sword was mounted high on a wall was not to be a deterrent from someone trying to steal it. It was a message that only one who truly desires knowledge and is willing to brave numerous dangers, like fighting many warriors, will obtain it.

Ellis explains that the Sword of Light “was the symbol of the sum of all knowledge” (171). Now that Eshyn has the sum of all knowledge in his hands he is invincible (172). Eshyn was given the knowledge of what each warrior would do and how to parry the attacks so he would not be killed; or if he was injured, how to heal himself.

The old king of Ellan Vannin, Eshyn’s father, gives the moral of the tale when he says, “He who holds, must first have discovered. He who has discovered, must first have sought. He who has sought, must first have braved all impediments” (178). Eshyn throwing the Cliwe-ny-Sollys and the Everlasting Pearl into the ocean does not represent Eshyn giving anything up. Rather, this action completes the cycle of rebirth that has been shown in smaller detail throughout the legend that the ocean symbolizes as an archetype. Our hero, Eshyn, holds all knowledge and through his journey has changed into the best version of himself possible.

Ellis, Peter Berresford. “Y Chadee.” *Celtic Myths and Legends*. New York: Carroll and Graf. 164-178.

BY: TANI BREE STEVENSON



ave you ever been told you “eat like a cow,” or that you are, “bull-headed?” The person who told you this probably just meant to teach you some manners, but what that person also did was de-humanize you by giving you animal attributes. Westerners have a destructive tendency to equate marginalized humans with animals. This tendency is reflected through the recurrent half human/ half animal creatures of Greek mythology. Mythological creatures are separated into two categories. One is summarized by the Centaur- talented but isolated because of human jealousy, and the other is

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summarized by the Minotaur- hated and eventually killed because of his physical and behavioral divergence from the norm. The isolation or abuse of half-human creatures in Greek mythology serves as a metaphor for how the western world isolates or abuses the Other throughout history- rationalizing their acts with logic reflected in Greek myths: dehumanization of the “not-me.”

The Centaur is the metaphor for isolation of talented people in Western culture. Centaurs' beautiful creation story serves as a symbol of their isolation as well as their mysterious and superior attributes. They first appeared on the Earth by descending from a cloud (Clement 436). Descending to Earth from a cloud is a symbol because the heavens are often beheld with overwhelming mystery and awe. The Centaurs descending from the heavens shows how they were depicted with awe and mystery in Greek myth. However, Centaurs are still withheld from human relationships (Clement 436). Perhaps it is because humans cannot conceive an accomplishment as immense as “reaching the stars” or the level of the Centaurs' achievement so in their jealousy they cast the Centaurs from them. In fact, the Centaurs physical difference and superior talents caused a collective human force to drive them from their first home to a more secluded place altogether (Clement 436). The Centaurs' inhuman talents qualify them as an Other which disqualifies them for human relationships.

Chiron, the most famous Centaur, is given a death monument that also becomes a symbol for the isolation of the Centaur race. Chiron was an individual Centaur celebrated for his wisdom and athletics so he was made a mentor of high-status Grecian youths (Clement 438). Ultimately however, Chiron was isolated from other Centaurs, and was never fully respected by his pupils (Clement 438). Chiron did please the Gods so Zeus set his image in the stars as the constellation Sagittarius (Clement 438). A constellation is a coveted honor in Grecian culture as it is the most honored tribute attainable, but a constellation cannot participate in human life. It can only give light

and beauty to the Earth. Chiron and all other Centaurs were symbolized by this constellation: they were used. They contributed unique talents to humanity, but were never fully allowed to participate in everyday human things.

The timeless metaphor of the Centaur begins to reveal itself in history through the selection and abandonment of the ancient Greek assassin. Ancient Westerners were indifferent to the suffering of people outside of the mainstream political society. A professor of the classics asserts that in Grecian times, senators or other national leaders would be moved in their jealousy to assassinate citizens or other politicians who stood in their way of progress. Professional Assassins would be hired to protect the identity of the real perpetrator (Garland). Furthermore the selection of an assassin based on his unusual willingness and ability to kill is reflected in the mythological story of the Centaurs because they were also sought to do special jobs because of their unusual skills (Clement 438). There was a law in Grecian times that if an assassin needed protection from vengeful family members of the assassinated, he could take refuge in a Grecian temple where it would be illegal to kill him (Bratkowski). Despite his safety, the assassin would suffer from effects of prolonged captivity or if not captivity, than penalty of death. Therefore, the only people who truly benefit from the assassination are the rich and high society figures. The assassin's isolation would also make it very difficult for another politician to use their talented killer, which shows how politicians jealously guarded their victory. The Centaur is a metaphor for the assassin as both cannot engage in human relationships because of human jealousy though they may be hired by high society.

The Minotaur is the other category of mythological creature in which his different appearance and actions rationalize his abuse. The Minotaur is half bull and half man with a face and torso of a bull and the bottom half of a man (Clement 467). Minotaur's animal face is a symbol for his temperament. For example, Centaurs have human faces which add to the effect or their

Animalization to Account for Atrocity

noble depiction. Conversely, the Minotaur has a beast face which adds to his evil depiction. Conversely, the Minotaur has a beast face which adds to his evil depiction. We see the proof that a person that looks different is perceived as evil when the Minotaur cannibalizes citizens until the King is forced to lock him away in a labyrinth (Clement 489). The Minotaur is treated exactly like an animal even though he is half human. He is used for violent entertainment: and eventually killed (Clement 489). The Minotaur's unusual face and temperament qualifies the Minotaur as an Other and disqualifies him for compassionate treatment.

Minotaur's punishment for being an Other as a metaphor for the abuse of Greek marginalized citizens is seen when the government of Athens quenched rebellion by publicly burning and mutilating peasants who dared secede (Bratkowski). Two Princeton scholars claim that brutal acts first involve a dehumanization of the target, and moral consequences are often based on the perceived humanity of the victim (Fiske & Kwan). The brutal acts of the Athenians prove that they perceived secessionists to be less human than they. Athenians treated secessionists as they would a colony of Minotaurs: a ravenous colony of monsters that needed to be crushed if Athens was to survive. The myth of the Minotaur in which the Minotaur is mistreated was politically correct at the time because he was more beast than creature. Congruously, the treatment of secessionists was justified because they were perceived as more beast than human.

The metaphor of the Minotaur extends through history. It applies directly to the historical perception of Black American slaves as beasts, thereby rationalizing the black's abuse. Previous slave, Fredrick Douglas, recounts specifically the view whites held toward blacks. He says, "Men and women...were ranked as horses, sheep, and swine. There were horses and men, cattle and women, pigs and children all holding the same rank and scale of being and all subject to the same narrow examination." (Douglas 1958). Because slaves were perceived as animals, they were forced to work at whatever their master bid them. If they

did not, they were beaten brutally or even murdered (Douglas 1942 & 1936). The Minotaur was treated in severe manners because he was a beast and indicators of his beastliness were his actions and appearance. Black humans were wrongfully regarded as beasts because of their strange skin and strange African society. When a Black slave rebelled in any way the resulting punishment inflicted by whites was severe and would have subdued a dangerous beast. Just as the Minotaur was in captivity and eventually killed because of his beastly attributes, so were rebellious American slaves. Because White Americans perceived Blacks as they perceived the Minotaur they accounted for horrific crimes.

The metaphor for the Centaur also extends to more modern times- seen when the Western World isolated the European Jews before Hitler's dictatorship and neglected the Jews during Hitler's dictatorship. During the time of Roam Patriarchs [before the end of the 18th century] Jews had great political power to manage and bring justice to non-Jews under the direction of the crown. In addition, Jews played a dominant role in collecting taxes for various governments throughout history. This role was the role that earned them the jealousy and hatred of many non-Jews (Hunt). Like the Centaur, Jews had special talents, jobs, and appearances that set them apart from others, and caused high status members of society to use them. The world reacted to them in exactly the same way they reacted to the Centaur: they drove them away to isolate them, and those who had hired them before neglected them in their need. Robert Wilkin, a professor of Christianity explains that many European Westerners passed laws to isolate the Jews Geographically, and therefore the Jews were generally isolated from everyone else until right before the rise of Hitler (Wilkin).

During Hitler's dictatorship, the metaphor for the Centaur is evident again by the failure of most Americans and Europeans to act according to their knowledge that Jews were being sadistically treated and murdered. This exposes the remaining jealousy

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and prejudiced that Americans and Europeans held that the Jews were capable of solving their own problems- which view is evidence that the Jews and the Centaur are metaphors for each other; both races were strong and were left alone to handle their own problems. An example of the Jew's strength is the fact that though they had a history of persecution, they still held fast to their faith and population (Powers 24). Therefore, since the Jews had special control and success over finances, and also because they were a strong race, the mainstream culture perceived them as they perceived the Centaur. Raphael Lemkin tried to mobilize the United States to act in behalf of European Jews during the Hitler era. However, Lemkin was met with disbelief, and outright refusal to act (Powers 29-49). Lemkin's failure again models the perception Westerners had that Jews were capable of handling their problems and also evidence of the prejudiced and jealousy that still existed against the Jews because of their talents. The Holocaust began in about 1939 and ended around 1945, and during the course of it roughly 8 million Jews were driven from their home [like the Centaur] and isolated in their suffering at the hands of deranged men and women. The US failed to enter WWII in defense of the Jews until 1941 (Hammond). The hesitance of the US and European countries to act in behalf of the Jews shows that they held a feeling toward them similar to the feelings that jealous mythological characters held toward the Centaurs- that they were a people with sufficient means and a capability to handle their own problems and were therefore unworthy of assistance.

The metaphor for the Centaur is also seen clearly in modern times through our depiction of political candidates. For example, in the 2008 campaigns for president, Senator Obama was caricatured with donkey teeth and Senator McCain was caricatured with elephant ears. This obviously is related to the donkey symbol for the Democratic Party and the elephant symbol for the Republican Party. However, the fact that Americans have animal mascots to represent government officials' reveals how ingrained the

metaphor for the Centaur is in American culture. Donkeys and Elephants are animals with unique talents and abilities that are in some ways superior to human talents and abilities. And using these animals to represent political figures makes it easy to see the political candidates as metaphors for the Centaur. Remember that the Centaur is a superior creature in some ways as he displays incredible wisdom and stamina. However, despite the Centaur's talents, he is still neglected or disrespected. This description fits perfectly the role and treatment of American Presidents. For example George W. Bush has made some wise decisions as a President the following quote outlines the more important things George W. Bush did despite the difficult duty of President.

"History is unlikely to remember the war as negatively as most assume...crucial decisions of the Bush years will come into sharper focus. Among the most important will be the formation of a US-India military alliance... (the) signing of new bilateral trade agreements, the world's first convention on cybercrime, the wise decision to give Venezuela Pres Hugo Chavez enough rope to hang himself, and the continued successful management of the US-China relationship. (Also) In the two decades leading up to Bush's presidency, the US and its allies were struck by a rising number of increasingly ambitious, aggressive, and deadly terrorist attacks (Frum 32)."

Bush contributed his talents to better America especially under extreme pressure that was placed on him from terrorist attacks and threats. However, he is often criticized and ridiculed despite his talents (Frum 32). Thus we see that the metaphor for the Centaur is again apparent in American's treatment of their President if considering that the popular Centaur Chiron was also an authority over those who disrespected him.

Dehumanizing Others and the effects of dehumanizing others is exemplified in modern days as well through the metaphor for the Minotaur as continued in the Western perception of the Muslims. For Example, young American Jessica Winegar from Temple Uni-

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versity claims that Muslim art reveals the predominantly inhuman characteristics of terrorists when it shows images like a Muslim family mourning their son who has lost his life in a religious suicide bombing. Winegar claims that this kind of art is just propaganda so that the Western World will feel like Muslims are just as human as Westerners, and she boldly asserts that it is not working (Winegar). Jessica Winegar articulates what many Westerners feel: that Muslims are less human than Westerners. Similarly, though the Minotaur was half human he was still hated and killed because of his animal half (Clemens 489). An example of an effect of the unhealthy Western perception of Muslims comes from Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi who “suggested that Western civilization is superior to Islam [and] stressed the need to westernize the world” (Jones) - emphasis added. This perception exhibits the attitude which follows dehumanization and can lead to sometimes horrible cruelties. It is the Western attitude that when something is believed to be inferior or less human, we must annihilate whatever it is about that person or thing which makes it less-human: sometimes at atrocious costs.

The dehumanization of Muslims also occurs in the setting of the Iraqi war. Deplorable acts come from a dehumanization of the victim. For example, one article reports, “Wissam Abdullateef Sa’eed Al-Quraishi, a 37-year-old married father of three, was hung on a pole for seven days and subjected to beatings, forced nudity, electrical shocks, humiliating treatment, mock executions and other forms of torture during his incarceration at the prison” (Contracting for Torture 47). Savage and violent entertainment inflicted on this Muslim man is reminiscent of the violent entertainment that the Greeks enjoyed via through death of the Minotaur (Clemens 489) By treating Muslims as they would the Minotaur, Westerners dehumanize those who look and act differently than they do. This distorted view is used as justification for cruel crimes. Westerners’ abuse of this Muslim man because of his appearance and beliefs exposes how he has been dehumanized- like the Minotaur was for his appearance and

behavioral attributes.

Dehumanization as rationalization for cruelty and neglect may not just be a Western tactic- perhaps more research is necessary to discover whether or not dehumanization through giving animal attributes is archetypal rather than just Western. Muslim terrorists could also be motivated to do horrific acts through dehumanization of their victims. Terrorists’ purpose is to send religious messages to Westerners. For example this message from Sheikh Azzam Bin Laden’s teacher : “We are terrorists and terrorism is our friend and companion. Let the West and East know that we are terrorists and we are terrorizing as well. We shall do our best in preparation to terrorize Allah’s enemies and our own. Thus terrorism is an obligation in Allah’s religion” (Laqueur 236).

However, the means through which these purposes are motivated could be though dehumanization. Sayed Quibnd wrote many books that have been accepted into Muslim cannon which teach that “all other civilizations are barbarian, evil, and animal-like” (Laqueur 33).

It is apparent from the evidence given above that more research should be done to examine whether dehumanization by imposing animal traits is an archetypal trait.

When the Greeks created the myths of the Centaur and the Minotaur they may not have been aware that they were creating a metaphor for their own society, and that the legacy of the ancient Western World would be passed through the ages to modern times. The metaphors of Centaur and Minotaur have become the means through which we can discover the rationalization for mistreatment of both Centaur metaphorical figures and Minotaur metaphorical figures. With the metaphor of the Centaur we can better understand the justification for neglect and disrespect of ancient Greek assassins, Jews, and today’s political figures; that justification being that neglect and mistreatment is alright because criminals, Jews, and Political figures are less human than “the rest of us.” Similarly, the metaphor of the Minotaur rationalizes that “those who look and act differently from the rest

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of us must be more beast than human and therefore it is alright to treat them like savage beasts.” We can see application of the Minotaur through ancient Greek’s treatment of their enemies, American’s treatment of Black slaves, and today’s treatment of Muslims. Westerners, or perhaps the whole world, would do well to examine their perceptions of people who are not like them and be sure that they are not perceiving or treating others as they would a Centaur or a Minotaur.

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BY: LYNETTE ASTLE



Without communities willing to believe superstitious explanations for the world around them, folklore cannot exist. However, folklore must explain the world within the boundaries established by the community. If a story goes against community values, the folktale will be rejected. A chief theme in most folklore is the emphasis on the community over the individual. The community required reliable storytellers to pass on the stories as warnings and directions to others. Examples of morals and lessons communicated through folklore focusing on community are: communities defeat antagonists together or give necessary tools to the individual to defeat the adversary, solitude creates a danger for individuals, and communities participate in creating a sense of nationalism and indicate the importance of the family unit. Myths and legends always communicate morals and lessons that strengthen the image of the community over that of the individual.

While most folktales tell stories about communities, individuals are usually left with the task of passing them on to others in the community. Many folktales involve an individual who is responsible for transferring the legend or myth to the rest of the community in order to protect or inform them. The storyteller would have been seen as doing the community a disservice if the lessons within the folktale were altered by mistake. One author who has studied medieval Norse folklore is Marlene Ciklamini. Commenting on medieval Norse folktales she states, “Their trustworthiness was a quality highly valued in Norse society” (94) meaning that the community’s morals and lessons were best communicated through

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that society's myths and legends. Storytellers had to be reliable because slight changes to a myth or legend used to instruct others with morals, might completely alter the values of a community. While medieval Norse folktales are only a small fraction of the myths and legends that have transpired throughout the world, they represent the same dilemma faced by any community that listens to folktales: the reliability of the values in their folklore. One example of a story used to communicate a lesson is "The Boy Who Cried Wolf." The story carries the moral that dishonest storytellers will eventually lose their credibility and lose the support of the community. The fact that this folktale circulates prolifically stands as a blatant warning to anyone tempted to tell a false tale in the guise of truth. Imagine if a storyteller had gotten the ending wrong.

The value in the folktale is found in the social truth of its lessons. If the lesson in "The Boy Who Cried Wolf" had been lost, the meaning would have been perverted. Individuals would not have learned that lying would eventually make the community wary of their intentions. In many communities, it was up to the storyteller to carry on folktales that elicit warnings to community members. Referring back to "The Boy Who Cried Wolf," it is absolutely essential that those telling the myths or legends are believable. That way, if there really is an immediate danger to the community, they won't waste valuable time deciphering the lesson in the story or deciding whether or not the folk teller is reliable.

Some might argue that folklore is not meant to communicate morals and lessons, but used by its authors to entertain audiences. However, folklore itself can be broken down into various types: fairy tales, legends, and myths. William R. Bascom, researched the four ways folklore serves its audience, especially among the Trobriand islanders. Bascom quotes B. Malinowski, someone who's studied the psychology of myths, and quotes him about fairytales saying, "... [fairytales] are fictional, dramatically told, and privately owned" (335) which proves that there are some

stories where audiences do not expect to learn morals or lessons, but want to be entertained. The remaining two categories however are described much differently and treated much more seriously by the islanders. Malinowski is also quoted for his definition of legends that "are believed to be true and to contain important factual information. They are not privately owned, told in any stereotyped way, or magical in their effect" (335), illustrating that legends are told in a way that does not make a moral difficult to discern. The telling of legends is meant mostly to teach a lesson and explain events and history rather than capture an audience.

Modern science allows the explanation of many of the world's phenomena, but cannot teach morals. Folklore does both of these things. Folklore was often the only means available for people to interpret the world around them. The last definition given by Malinowski is about myths "regarded not merely as true, but as venerable and sacred. They are told when rituals to which they refer are to be performed, or when the validity of these rituals is questioned" (335) furthering the idea that folklore has been and among some groups may continue to be seen as fact, not fiction. Therefore, the morals in these stories would have been preserved by individuals, but used to serve the community.

The community isn't the only one that benefits from placing confidence in someone who tells folktales, the folklorist does as well. Because storytellers must rely on their own memory, it is important that the community believes their folk story. Without this affirmation from the community that their memory is correct, the storytellers will begin to doubt themselves and be less effective in the future when consulted by the community for information. Marlene Dobkin, who has a PhD in medical anthropology, cites the example of Peruvian psychiatric healers who incorporate folklore into their medicinal practices. Dobkin states, "Treatment by native healers throughout the world is based on the prestige, reassurance, and suggestion that the healer can offer his patients" (134), meaning that

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the healer can only offer these comforts to patients, if they receive it reciprocally. Therefore, if the folklorist has upheld their end of the bargain by correctly reciting lessons in the forms of myths and legends for the benefit of the community, the community has the duty of making it known that they have faith in the folklorist. It is this symbiotic relationship that helps folktales maintain their power. Even this way, the community is strengthening an individual.

In return for the confidence the community rewards an accurate folklorist, the folklorist in turn tells stories with lessons that glorify the importance of the community in the lives of individuals. For example, if an individual survives an encounter with a supernatural force, the only reason why they have been spared is to alert or benefit the community in some way. Chinese folklore involves a community fear and respect of thunder's supernatural abilities. According to Charles E. Hammond, author of the article "Waiting for a Thunderbolt," the Chinese believed that anyone who is killed by thunder is being punished for a crime committed in the community. Stemming from Hammond's studies, the conclusion can be drawn that the Chinese feared thunder because they believed it had the power to kill, but they also had deep respect for the thunder because of its powers of resurrection. However, Hammond concludes that these resurrections were only permitted for the dead to complain to the community about the sins committed against them (26). Hammond cites the following story for evidence "...a merchant assists a poor couple in repaying a debt to an official, but they then betray him, burying him alive in a well. Hearing thunder, the official prays, and thunder rescues the merchant from the well" (29) and it is only then that the community will make the couple pay for their crimes. Here the merchant has had an encounter with the supernatural force of thunder. His survival depended on the community member's faith, and without such the merchant may have remained in the well. It is possible that the only reason this man survived was to alert the community to the double-crossing murderers in order to spare any future victims of the

couple's treachery. This story serves as an example of storytellers glorifying community members by elaborating on lessons focused on faith and righteousness.

A storyteller may also tell folktales glorifying the community by teaching lessons to an audience that their community wants what's best for them. Lessons regarding the community in folktales typically revolve around the community encouraging all individuals to be active participants in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of their neighbors. Therefore, sometimes loners who do not belong to a specific community will fix the population's dilemma and be rewarded with a favorable place in society. Of course, it is rare that the protagonists overcome a dilemma on their own. Communities would not be strengthened in this way. Even if a tale involves a mighty hero, this hero usually has friends or an army that stand by them.

Usually an individual's success depends on the help of someone from the community, the entire community, or some tool or lesson gleaned previously from the community prior to facing the problem. You must be a help to a community in order to protect yourself. Burt Feintuch, employed as a professor at the University of New Hampshire, focuses in the areas of folklore and English. After studying the meaning of community, Feintuch believes, "First, there's the notion that to be in a community is to have a concern both for one's own integrity and for the well-being of others" (150). This message is commonly communicated in folktales. For instance, in the story *The Three Little Pigs and the Fox*, the three little pigs must leave their mama to find their own way in life. Before each piglet leaves they are given three pieces of advice from their mama. The first two piglets are so concerned with eating on their journey that they forget the advice of their mama and are overtaken by the fox. Only when the third little piglet leaves home does the story take a turn for the better. The third little pig follows the advice given by her mother and is successful in building a safe home, defeating the fox, and saving her two older brothers. The third little pig also did not fit into the rest of the family because she was a runt

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and tended to think about the world more than eating. By saving her brothers she earned the respect of her family and is no longer an outsider.

This folktale has all of the lessons needed to illustrate the point that the community helps individuals defeat the antagonist by giving them the necessary tools. Some might say that this story doesn't apply because a family of four is too small to count as a community. However, Feintuch also defines a community as, "The second notion is that in communities social relations are dense" (150), meaning that numbers are unimportant. What matters is that the community functions to raise one another up in caring for their neighbors while unselfishly protecting them from danger.

Additionally, folktales involving an endangered community end in hope or a resolving of the problem because a community that works together is much more difficult to defeat than just an individual. This teaches individuals selflessness for the community's sake. Yi-Fu Tuan, who wrote the article "Community, Society, and the Individual," says, "Community is considered good because its members cooperate... cooperation presupposes effective communication, which is said to be another characteristic of community" (308). In the Japanese folktale *The Peach Boy*, a little boy who came from a peach learns many lessons from his elderly parents. Eventually Momotaro decides to fight ogres who have been terrorizing the land. On his journey to reach the ogres he meets a dog, monkey, and pheasant. These three animals that usually never get along join Momotaro. However, because they are fighting against evil for the good of their community, they become the best of friends. In the end, Momotaro and his three friends defeat the ogres and save their community. It is implied that without the help of the animals, Momotaro would not have been able to have victory over the ogres. The three animals that overcome their differences illustrate the unselfishness that accompanies the need to defend a community in folklore. Even today individuals are usually not able to overcome the danger on their own

without the help of a community member, be that family, friends, church members, etc. This shows that many of the lessons taught years ago through folktales can still be applied today.

Folktales illustrate the value of being a member in a community, but folktales also include communities that explicitly or implicitly warn against the dangers of solitude. Lessons in folklore teach that villains are often outside of the community and probably would not have turned evil if it was not for their need of solitude. Solitude often leads to hostile feelings without healthy outlets and also harbors other anti-social behaviors such as lack of empathy and compromise. In 1975, Janet Langlois wrote an article referencing a town in Indiana whose community members continued to pass on a folktale about an immigrant woman who moved to Indiana in 1901 from her native country Norway. Langlois describes the many atrocities that labeled the woman a murderess, "... she apparently murdered a husband, several women, children, and numerous would-be suitors who answered her matrimonial ads" (148), with all of these behaviors, pointing to a villain who definitely lives figuratively on the outskirts of the community. The community members were always suspicious of her need for privacy and her biting tongue. Langlois also states that the town folk speculated the villainess chose to hide her crimes since she "... dismembered her victims, poured quicklime over them, put them in gunny sacks, and buried them in her pigpen" (148).

This folktale implies that sometimes literal solitude is not as dangerous as mental and emotional solitude. By continuing her suspicious behavior and never attempting to change her ways, this woman continued to alienate her community until eventually there would be no one for her to reach out to if she did decide to change her ways. She never tried to stop the gossip because it gave her the privacy she desired. Without the support of a community, it would be difficult for this solitary woman to act in a more social manner and become accepted in the society. Today solitude is often seen as antisocial behavior and

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folktales still circulate warning about the dire effects of straying from community interaction.

In order for someone to separate themselves from a community, there had to be a community to begin with. When folklore had its early beginnings, communities formed by retelling stories that created the boundaries of their society. Folklore has also helped countries form nationalism because when folklore anciently began, people were scattered and it was difficult to form a sense of community. In writing "Phantoms of Romantic Nationalism in Folkloristics," Roger D. Abrahams wrote that, "... additionally hindering the sense of nationalism is the extreme economic stratification of the citizens" (4). Stories that circulated followed the pattern of uniting people instead of creating distance.

People usually desire to feel apart of a group and listening to the same folktales as their neighbors could deliver this sense of identity and kinship. Folklore intended to evoke a sense of nationalism is still used today, "With the creation of national, state, and local public folklore ... trained folklorists...bring local traditions to light ... to create an environment in which cultural equity is on display" (Abrahams 8) which also indicates that people still want to feel unity with their neighbors and that they have a purpose in working together. Another author who writes for the American Folklore Society is Mark E. Workman. Workman, in agreement with the possibility that folklore creates a sense of nationalism states, "As a result of its distinguishing qualities of dynamism and intimacy folklore, perhaps more than any other means of expression, has the capacity to provide us with the sense of 'us'" (171) which in other words supports the idea that a community's sense of nationalism is invaluable and an essential reason why folklore may have been successful when it started and remains as such today.

In folktales, community members took it as a huge responsibility to care for their family. Folktales are still told in homes today involving the love and strength found in family units. During Christmas time, such folktales involving family unity abound.

One folk tale is about a single young man who was very well off and could afford many things, but gave up his wealth for love. Already, this story reflects the unselfishness that typically accompanies folk stories about community. An individual must be willing to give up much for the good of the community or their family. Eventually, the family was happy in their poverty because of the great love they had for one another. One very poor Christmas, the family is visited by Santa Claus. The family was rewarded in this folk tale because of their love for one another and the charity for the stranger. This type of folktale involving Santa visiting charitable people is still told today to children when their parents want them to behave. The strength of the family unit is still a very important lesson in many folk stories because it is the building block of communities.

John Fenton writes one argument against the effectiveness of folklore. Fenton, who studied folklore's role in the psychology of education, would probably disagree with the claim that myths and legends communicate morals that emphasize the importance of the community. He said, "It is not easy to construct a good story, but a moral story is almost always a failure. Either the story is undramatic or the moral dubious; and not infrequently a bad moral is tagged on to a worse story" (260). However, he cited a tale in which animals continued to eat each other as they went up the food chain. For example, a big spider ate a little spider; the big spider was eaten by a bird, etc. Each of these creatures carries the German thought that they are able to provide for themselves when no one else could help them. Fenton then says a moralist would probably interpret this story stating, "This...is the way of the world, and thus does each of us serve the other in the economy of nature" (261), but then says that there are more ways that this story could be taught.

In other words, it would seem that Fenton is concerned that the morals will be difficult to detect in myths and legends and that they will be open to personal interpretation. This could be a valid argument, because the priceless morals and lessons meant to be

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communicated might be warped by personal experiences and judgments. If the individual is meant to decipher the lesson in the folklore, they might come to a different conclusion than their neighbor. This would create rifts in the community rather than strengthening it. However, as mentioned earlier, if a story is told as a myth or legend, the moral will not be hidden. They are not told as parables or riddles, but carry valuable lessons that are essential for the vitality of the community that are told plainly.

Consequently, the study of lessons and morals found in folklore is necessary to fully understand why communities are central themes in stories versus the individual. Looking at folktales helps us to see the various roles held by a community. First of all, the community must create values and rules for keeping the storyteller honest. In return, it is the duty of the community to place confidence in the folklorist. This in turn creates a relationship of trust between the community and those responsible for telling the folktales. As illustrated by other folktales, communities will also defeat antagonists together or giving the necessary tools to the individual. This in turn shows the benefits of functioning within a community such as protection, care, and charity. Lastly, folktales illustrate the need to create a sense of nationalism throughout communities, while warning against anti-social behavior such as solitude. Folktales glorifying solitude would be contrary to the sense of community and may cause rifts to form amongst the community members. Also, because families are the most basic unit of the community, folklore also lends credibility and honor to being an active, unselfish member of a family. Looking at community themes in folklore helps us better understand the communities where the folklore originated, and by comparing our social values to the folktales of the past helps us better understand our community values today.

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BY: ASHLEY SAUNDERS



The role of the female in society has been a topic of debate for many centuries. As time speeds on, women gain more and more rights and get closer and closer to having the same liberties as men. In today's society, women and men can hold the same positions and perform almost all the same tasks; however, this has been a long time in coming. Centuries ago, the role that females played in the world as well as in literature was very different. The poem "Beowulf" shows the part that women, especially those of high rank, had in much earlier times. By looking at female roles in this poem, one can see the difference between the gender culture a thousand years ago and the gender culture now.

In this poem, the heroic deeds of the protagonist Beowulf bring him much honor in the form of gifts and speeches bestowed upon him by the wives of kings. Each time the queen is about to speak or adorn the soldier with valuable possessions, the poem indicates complete reverence and respect towards her. "There was the laughter of heroes, a happy uproar/rejoicing in shorts. Then Wealththeow [the queen] stepped forth" (Beowulf lines 611-612). The contrast word of "then" indicates a change in the mood in the

gathering hall. The poem then goes on to explain the queen's actions using words such as "the noble woman," "lady of the Helmings," and "the gold-adorned queen, in a gracious spirit," among others (Beowulf lines 615, 620, and 623). After the queen has ceremoniously given every man in attendance a drink from her cup, she addresses Beowulf, who then explains his plans to defeat the evil Grendel, even though Beowulf has explained his plans to the court already. When he is done, the poem takes time to acknowledge the queen's great approval of Beowulf before continuing with the story. The show of quiet authority by the queen happens many times in the book after each slaughter of an evil monster, and in different kingdoms, proving that the respect shown to women of high ranking was general to the world and not just to one specific culture such as the Danes. This stylistic approach to the female roles in society shows that men respected women of high rank, and it was a great honor to be recognized by that "noble wife" (Beowulf line 641). It is important to note that the poem never mentions women who are not of importance which shows that men didn't have a general respect for all women, but only for women who deserved it because they were the wives of noble men.

By looking at this form of respect in the poem from a modern point of view, the roles that women played can be seen very differently. For example, one would look at the way women were treated by the court and say that they were being oppressed because they weren't given free reign over the court, and the number of times a woman is mentioned is minimal. According to modern society's views, the women should not have to walk around the room and give drinks to everyone like a servant, but she should be the one receiving the drinks. One modern interpretation would see a lack of respect on the men's part because they never let her make any life-changing decisions and all important news went directly to the king. The queen was just there to bring pleasure to the people assembled. This shows that modern society can change the meaning of a text by interpreting it through a modern lens.

During the time the poem was written, women were not only highly respected, but were also a symbol of peace. Many times throughout the poem a daughter of the king is willingly given in marriage to a son from another kingdom to keep peace during a pending or existing war. These daughters were known as "peace-weavers" but the union usually only kept peace for a few years (Beowulf line 108). This practice appears to be more beneficial for the kings themselves than for their daughters and may seem negative and seem to show a lack of respect; however, there is one story related in the poem that contradicts this statement. A king had a daughter who was not looked upon with fondness by his people. She was willingly given in marriage as a peace-weaver, chosen first before any others, and soon "became famous for goodness/ as long as her life-span was ordered by fate" (Beowulf line 1952-3). Her change of heart was said to occur because "she held noble love for the chieftain of heroes [her husband, the king]" (Beowulf line 1954). This statement shows that the women were given to these kings to improve their lives. Every story of this nature ends with the queen living an improved life. Although it was a very controlling practice, the thought behind the action was honestly meant to be for the good of the daughters as well as for the kingdom.

Modern society, however, could easily turn this practice into one of oppression and disrespect; something disgusting in the view of a modern interpretation. Because of the country's past, as far as feminist rights are concerned, today's society tends to misunderstand the concept of a peace-weaver which is so prevalent in "Beowulf" and during that time. Oppression of women since the time that "Beowulf" was written has been a huge issue and changed the outlook and meaning of ancient texts such as this poem. Because this topic has become so touchy over the years, the view of women's ancient roles has become skewed and thus interpretations of women's roles in ancient literature have become largely modern. The last and most prevalent show of early feminism in "Beowulf" occurs when Beowulf fights the mother

of Grendel, the mother of evil. This occurrence keeps the mother of Grendel as a monster, especially considering the fact that she is a woman. The element that Grendel's mother is a woman makes this happening much more frightening than if it were Grendel's father or any other man. Women were not expected to be frightening or threatening during this time period and because of this female element in the story the struggle between Beowulf and Grendel's mother becomes much more powerful. It is serious business when some power so evil can take over the innocent body of a woman and turn it into a horrible, destructive monster. This creation is so evil and feared that it isn't even given a name. Grendel's father was even named in the poem simply in passing. The author wanted the fight between Beowulf and Grendel's avenger to be so powerful and meaningful that the author made the monster and the foe a woman.

A modern interpretation of this woman avenger looks at her in a considerably different light. Women now are looked at as people who can fend for themselves. A woman today doesn't need protecting, she protects. If a woman were to go fight in a war right now, she would not be considered a monster. Because the poem is so lacking in the description of Grendel's mother, a modern interpretation places her in a much nicer physical and less intimidating light. The history of feminism in the United States doesn't allow an interpretation of Grendel's mother to be extremely grotesque. Just because she is avenging her son doesn't mean that she has to have a hunchback and one missing eye. She is very far from a monster in today's interpretation. Instead, it is easier to see her as a crazy psychopath rather than a full-fledged monster. Modern society makes the fact that the enemy is a woman acceptable. If the fight between Beowulf and Grendel's mother is looked at through modern lenses, it loses a great amount of significance and fear; both things which the original author obviously wanted to be present. This is just another illustration of how modern interpretation can change the entire meaning of a passage of ancient text.

Gender is a very common issue found in a lot of literature from a lot of different times. The battle between men and women hasn't always been so fierce but the realization that men and women are different has always been constant. In both ancient and modern literature women and men are two completely different people but the amount of difference has changed significantly. Interpreting ancient poems, such as "Beowulf," from different points of view show just how much this gap has changed over a century's time.

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