

Public Abstract

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Graduation Term:SP 2010

Department:French

Degree:PhD

Title:The Ogre as Lycomorph

This dissertation introduces, defines and applies to French literary analysis a term of my own invention: lycomorphism. This is a literary phenomenon by which an essentially human figure is characterized as wolfish via the application of lupine characteristics. In order to demonstrate this concept, I analyze in depth the ogre figure in seventeenth century French literature. In order to contextualize the ogre as a lycomorph, I first scour the French literary canon along with historical Witchcraft Trial documentations in order to document the portrayal of wolves from the Middle Ages to the seventeenth century. After recording the predominant lupine characteristics, I then examine the ogre portrayals in French literature of the seventeenth century to see which of these established lupine traits are shared by the ogres. Additionally, I compare and contrast the French ogre with his/her temporal and geographical predecessors, examining the ogre origins and evolutions to its debut in the French canon in 1697. By demonstrating the lycomorphism in ogres, I hope to demonstrate that the ogre offers a manifestation of the French seventeenth century shift in attitudes regarding the primary adversary of mankind. Whereas the wolf was the prevalent antagonist of man from the medieval period to the mid-seventeenth century, in the late seventeenth century fairy tales, the primary threat to man comes from a bestial hybrid of man and beast, an ogre. This shift in the depiction of literary adversaries corresponds to historical factors of the day, including the rise of Jansenism, and a growing body of female authors who tend to use ogres rather than villains as the principal threat to man in their literary accounts. Additionally in their works, the ogre, by virtue of his close resemblance to man, is exploited to allegorize social, rather than moral issues, the traditional function of the big, bad wolf.