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Writing 39B

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Rhetorical Analysis Exploratory Draft

In Saki’s paranormal short story, *Gabriel-Ernest,* a property owner named Van Cheele encounters a young adolescent named Gabriel-Ernest. From his encounter with the boy, he notices some remarkable traits about him. Van Cheele notices how the boy has some animalistic traits that were both physical and behavioral. The adolescent had sharp nails with canine teeth, and when it came to his behavior he would sometimes be spontaneously erratic. When Van Cheele questions why the boy is lingering in his property, the boy provides vague answers and ominous statements, such as he is a cannibal. After their brief encounter, Van Cheele walks away with the boy’s disturbing claims of him being a cannibal. As Van Cheele walks back home, he remembers strange occurrences that took place in those woods, such as a young child disappearing miraculously. As the story goes on he learns from a fellow friend that Gabriel-Ernest is actually a werewolf. Van Cheele races back to stop another possible tragedy, hearing from his aunt that the adolescent decided to escort a young boy home. By then it was too late, both Gabriel-Ernest and the little boy, Toop, had vanished. Everyone in the town assumes that they both had drowned near a river, since there were traces of their clothes by a river bank, but Van Cheele knows what fate those two had that was lied before them.

To summarize, a man encounters a cannibalistic teen who is a werewolf, and fails to prevent a little boy falling victim to the adolescent. Throughout the short story *Gabriel-Ernest,* written by Saki, the author has strongly vocalized his message of humanity being inherently evil by nature through the symbolic imagery of a teenager transforming into a werewolf. The author created a physical manifestation of his message through the character Gabriel-Ernest. Most people associate teenagers as being naïve, which in turn creates an aura for their innocence. Saki took this concept and employed his fictional adolescent character to represent a falsehood of that belief, as it commits terrible atrocities such as cannibalism. Nobody within the story would have assumed the youthful adolescent is a werewolf that is capable of committing such maladies. Saki then uses this ideology and carries it over to the concept that all humans are civilized and good, but behind that mask of modernization lies the true nature of humans: barbaric and capable of performing great malevolence. His use of symbolism created an analogy that readers could relate to with visual imagery and sensations added throughout the plot of the story. Other examples that demonstrate the idea of the meaning of werewolf is represented through these academic books and articles which include information on lycanthropy literature and strong semblance of werewolf symbolism.

A first example of how Saki’s use of symbolism aided in his presentation of his message is the connotations that are also associated with a presence of a werewolf in literature. In Charlotte F. Otten’s book *A Lycanthropy Reader: Werewolves in Western Culture*, she discusses the role and presentation of werewolves in either literature or films and the history behind the werewolf and what it may represent in a greater whole. An example Otten points out in her book at the introduction is that, “The word werewolf is associated almost exclusively with … the criminal, and the irrational” (Pg. 1). The overall significance of these associations is that it adds on to the context Saki was trying to make in his short story of the inherent evils of mankind. By Saki having a teenage boy change into a werewolf, it creates the associations of humans having a moment of either experiencing or committing acts of malfeasances. Otten also continues with “stories like Saki’s ‘Gabriel-Ernest’ … are forays into the layers of terror underneath the gloss of civilization” (Pg. 2). Just as I anticipated, Otten also seems to concur that Saki’s employment of werewolf symbolism ties in with his message of malevolence that is trying to be suppressed by society. It is a recurring theme that has made its presence aware in this book and through Saki’s short story. Werewolf symbolism, according to Otten, is almost exclusively associated with either criminals or irrational people, which does tie in to Saki’s fictional character of Gabriel-Ernest; the boy did commit an act of cannibalism which no sane human being would ever think of. This is one example of Saki’s proficient use of symbolism in voicing his message across to the reader.

A second example of how Saki’s use of symbolism helped in his presentation of his message is analyzation of a werewolf in literature from a psychological standpoint. In Ujamal Kothari’s academic journal *A Psychoanalytic Journal for the Arts and Sciences*,he deliberates about how animals, either mythological or anthropological, signify some symbol of Freudian Psychology of a certain behavior or attribute of the Id. In Freudian Psychology, there is the Id, Ego, and Superego. The Ego represents the traits or behaviors of the human itself. The Superego represents the traits and behaviors society wants the humans to possess, and the Id is a representation of the animalistic and barbaric traits and behaviors of humans. In Kothari’s academic journal, he deduces that, “Stories of wolf-man and werewolf are a symbolic use of a destructive wild animal for destructive Id impulses,” (Pg. 159). The importance that is signified here is that, from a Freudian Psychological standpoint, werewolves have been associated with barbaric and animalistic behavior being lashed out uncontrollably. If this principle is applied to Saki’s short story, then the fictional character Gabriel-Ernest would be viewed as an uncontrollable and uncivilized animal with out of control feral impulses wreaking havoc. This further contributes and develops Saki’s message in his short story that was utilized in his use of symbolism.

A third example of how Saki’s use of symbolism assisted in his presentation of his message is of an analyzation of the embodied identity of werewolves in werewolf films of the 1980s. In J. Koetsier and C. Forceville’s academic article “The Embodied Identity in Werewolf films of the 1980s,”they discuss about how werewolf representation could mean a plethora of traits, but depending on the context of each film it signifies a specific trait indecisively. An example is that Koetsier and Forceville were analyzing a film called The Howling, in which they reached a conclusion that “werewolves” are just human beings that have very little to no restraint of their impulses (Pg. 8). The overall significance of this analyzation is that the plot of the film with the werewolves is like the plot of Gabriel-Ernest. In the film, a man who is a werewolf had assaulted a woman, letting his animalistic desires run rampant, and in *Gabriel-Ernest* the teenage boy Gabriel had a craving for human flesh, which led him to committing cannibalism. This principle in the movie scenario is practically synonymous to *Gabriel-Ernest*, as both characters demonstrated a lack of self-restraint. What makes this trait so important is that it opens up to the idea that werewolves are humans that only act to serve their own needs that may be deviant in nature. This carries over to Saki’s short story of humans being evil in nature, as it demonstrates man’s lack of self-restraint which is synonymous to evil.

The last example of how Saki’s use of symbolism supported his presentation of his idea is of how werewolves are depicted throughout literature and what kind of stories contain elements of lycanthropy. In Brian J. Frost’s book *The Essential Guide to Werewolf Literature*, he discusses how werewolves fall into literature and how people may perceive werewolves or werewolf literature and what it stands for. An example the author makes is of the famous personality novel known as “The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.” Though it doesn’t contain any werewolves, it does contain the elements to be a lycanthropy story. Like a werewolf, the main character Dr. Jekyll has experienced random transformations involving an alter ego appear from his subconscious; this alter ego is referred to as Mr. Hyde. While Jekyll is Hyde, he goes around creating and committing horrible atrocities that range from abuse to murder. At the end of the novel summarization, the author implies that most people view this personality novel as a representation of the “monster” inside us that is waiting to break loose and wreak havoc,, which turns out to be a message of the story (Pgs. 72-74). The significance of this book is that it demonstrates the parallels of Saki’s short story and other lycanthropy literature, and how readers perceive and interpret the messages of stories that contain werewolves. Frost insinuates in “The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde” that by having a fictional character that struggles with his inner evil, it had helped with clarity of the novel’s message by creating relatable experiences that readers could draw upon. Saki utilized this same exact technique in his short story through the character Gabriel-Ernest. Both stories contained a werewolf of some sorts that had helped form and clarify the author’s intended message. This book supports how Saki’s use of symbolism had molded and solidified his memo.

In conclusion, Saki had proclaimed his message quite effectively with his use of symbolism by having his fictional character Gabriel-Ernest be a werewolf. Through Gabriel-Ernest, Saki provided his message with a physical manifestation that readers could perceive and interpret. Saki’s use of symbolism had also created a stronger meaning and depth to his message, as readers are now able to associate his message to a character in a story that will provide clarification. The symbol of Gabriel-Ernest, an adolescent that is a werewolf, also creates an analogy that readers could relate to, with visual imagery and vivid details that solidifies the entirety of his message. Overall, Saki’s use of symbolism as a rhetorical device had strengthened his short story’s message which made its presence known to the audience.

Works Cited Page

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