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The Treatment of Violence in Young Adult Literature: Rick Yancey's Monstrumology Series

A Thesis Presented

By

Hannah Ruth Balsavich

Submitted to The Graduate School of Bridgewater State University in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

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Dedication and Acknowledgements

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Thesis Introduction

In young adult literature, violence has become prevalent; the violence is found in television, as well as, in movies and videogames to an ever-growing extent. As a result, an important question has emerged: is there a need for violence in a fictional medium aimed at developing young adults? Another question is whether violence is necessary for adults in the making as they undergo the various stages of adolescent development. In the website titled, “The Young Adult Library Services Association” Michael Cart examines this question. He acknowledges the need to address the transitional stage between childhood and adulthood in literature and various developmental needs of young readers:

YALSA also acknowledges that whether one defines young adult literature narrowly or broadly, much of its value cannot be quantified but is to be found in how it addresses the needs of its readers. Often described as “developmental,” these needs recognize that young adults are beings in evolution, in search of self and identity; beings who are constantly growing and changing, morphing from the condition of childhood to that of adulthood. That period of passage called “young adulthood” is a unique part of life, distinguished by unique needs that are--at minimum--physical, intellectual, emotional, and societal in nature.

<http://www.ala.org/yalsa/guidelines/whitepapers/yalit>

Thus, young adults by being faced with a variety of needs and challenges, they have to come to terms with the experiences of sorrow, illness, or death as a part of growing up and gaining maturity.

The concept of identity in transition is examined by educators Thomas W. Bean and Karen Moni in their article “Developing Students’ Critical Literacy: Exploring Identity Construction in Young Adult Fiction.” The article observes how the very definition of identity has changed throughout the years:

Through discussions of such choices, students may also better understand how they are being constructed as adolescents in the texts and how such constructions compare with their own attempts to form their identities. Older definitions of identity evoked an image of a bounded, rational, and unitary self--a self-capable of agency and autonomy. However, more recent postmodern concepts of identity recognize its complex and multifaceted character. Dramatic world changes, particularly in globalization of markets, challenging long-established ideologies and values related to work and family. In a world of constant movement and flow, media images of advertising and commerce seep into our lives and strongly influence identity development. (639)

Moreover, they still need guidance as they respond in their process of growing up to a variety of stimuli, books and media as a part of that construct. In other words, teenagers form their own identities in the environment of family and school.

Young adults look for protagonists who they can relate to and empathize with in stories of personal transformation, as those characters undergo a challenge. In Rick Yancey’s *Monstrumologist* series, Will Henry is a dynamic character whose choices at the threshold of

maturity affect not only himself but those around him. Thus, Will is a typical teenager who must learn that his actions have an effect on numerous other characters. He, therefore, is constantly undergoing a movement and flow in his maturity and development. As teenagers become adults, they too learn that their actions, including violence and cruelty have an influence on many people besides themselves. Teenagers are beginning to develop their own personal identity, but they still need guidance from the adults in their lives, from parents and guardians to teachers.

Will Henry is the type of character about which teens want to read about because he is faced with difficult adult choices and situations; however, some parents and schools may not deem age appropriate. Another aspect important to the teenagers' development but always appreciated by parents is the desire for more freedom. Freedom is an inalienable right, and the teenagers want the same freedom as the adults. In other words, there is a fine line regarding the choice of appropriate texts for students. In the article "Exploring Notions of Freedom in and Through Young Adult Literature," Thomas W. Bean and Helen J. Harper give a critical framework for class discussions regarding freedom in young adult literature. In some ways, schools are hesitant to recommend certain novels for class discussions because they acknowledge that these novels may delve into more mature themes:

One of the challenges in young adult novels about difficult and sensitive topics and issues is to ensure that complex and critical discussion occurs. It can be easy and less disturbing to simply reinscribe common, conventional, and superficial readings onto storylines, characters, and contexts. There is a need to trouble, extend, and enrich students' readings of any text, but particularly those immersed

in global politics where issues of freedom, equity, and democracy play out. (100)

Bean and Harper argue that novels with sensitive topics should not be ignored by teachers because such novels can be used to help explain and illustrate the human condition. Thus, while the *Monstrumology* series delves into extreme portrayals of violence, it is also a series where love, friendship, and redemption are explored. Adolescents need an exposure to adult life in their progression to adulthood, and contemporary young adult literature certainly delivers an exposure to violence and gore, but, as mentioned, there is the danger of the overexposure and the negative influences of violence on the developing young mind. This overexposure to violence and its impact on the protagonist, young Will Henry met with overwhelming censor by educators and librarians but, instead, the series received a distinction of the Printz Award.

Hence, in an interview with *Lightspeed Science Fiction and Fantasy* magazine, Rick Yancey discusses his works and his inspiration behind the *Monstrumology* series, as well as the issue of violence. While Yancey may be known for his science fiction series *The 5th Wave*, his *Monstrumology* series is inspired by the relationship between on the one hand science, myth, and folklore on the other:

It springs from a couple of things: my love of 19th century literature, and my great fear of things that go bump in the dark that dates back to my childhood.

The basic premise is that back in the 19th century, there's actually an emerging branch of science that studied, and sometimes hunted, creatures that we would normally subscribe to folklore, creatures of myth. Not creatures like vampires or werewolves or something like that, but things that could actually exist in our

physical universe. Creatures that were written about quite seriously, and extensively, dating back to the time of the ancient Greeks. The first creature that is wreaking havoc in the first book is called the Anthropophagi, which is actually, a creature that has been written about by Herodotus, and Pliny the Elder, and even William Shakespeare makes a mention of them a couple of times. A race of beings with no head, and eyes and brain and mouth located at different parts of the anatomy. They actually believed in these things.

(<http://www.lightspeedmagazine.com/nonfiction/interview-rick-yancey/>)

Thus, in the interview, Yancey is stating that his inspiration has come from using sources where people claimed that such monstrosities actually existed. Instead of making up his own creature, Yancey chooses to terrify readers by using monsters from old myths and travel books.

Throughout the series, Will is a relatively passive character as he tries to understand his role in the doctor's life. But in the final book, he no longer is passive, and Will rejects the violence of monstrosity. The thesis explores the impact of violence on Will Henry, but it also investigates the impact of horror and gore on the reader in the context of the two works by Terry Eagleton-- *On Evil* and *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic*.

Postmodern critics argue that there is no discernable reason for why there is evil in the world or why violent acts are committed. Eagleton argues that there is a reason for violence and evil in society, and he gives examples of evil:

On the whole, postmodern cultures, despite their fascination with ghouls and

vampires, have had little to say of evil...For postmodernism there is nothing really to be redeemed...To acknowledge the reality of evil, however, is not necessarily to hold that it lies beyond all explanation. You can believe in evil without supposing that it is supernatural in origin. (*On Evil* 15-6)

Violence in young adult literature has to be acknowledged and studied seriously rather than censored. Most series have been accused of excessive violence, but it is important to make sense of its depiction of evil acts, and Eagleton's books are helpful in understanding the need to acknowledge the presence of violence in modern times particularly in the context of postmodernism.

Eagleton complains that postmodern critics have an interest in the supernatural aspects of evil, evil that is not concrete nor can it be proven. In other words, some critics argue that because evil ceases to be concrete, it happens because it just does. Thus, there is no chance for redemption once someone commits an evil act. Eagleton acknowledges, however, that it may not be without explanation. Evil is not always a supernatural origin, and there are ways of understanding it. There has to be a recognition that all people are capable of evil, yet all people are equally capable of redemption. Hence the thesis examines Will Henry's exposure to evil as well as his own evil acts as the result of concrete interactions with perpetrators of evil. Will Henry, closer to the end of the series, is able to evaluate his engagement with the violence of monstrumology and earns the right to redemption.

Violence and evil are the main themes of the *Monstrumology* series, and the Kirkus Review Website acknowledges the problem of extreme violence: "Having made the study of monsters a career, the aloof yet just doctor must solve the origin of the Anthropophagi in America and stop

their widespread and extremely violent and bloody carnage, which may not rest easy with readers of any age” ([Kirkus Review Website](#)). In other words, the critics are ambivalent to recommend the *Monstrumology* books wholeheartedly for young audiences. What I would like to point out, however, is that most of these comments are based on the first two books of the series rather than the entire collection. The final two books of the series provide the justification for the graphic depiction of extreme violence, as well as the redemption of Will Henry and his escape from his profession. Thus, the website further elaborates the issue of violence in the novel:

Basing his creature on Native American lore, the Printz Honor winner slam dunks the blend of horror with science and legend, creating a horrifically believable tale. Visceral gore runs amuck, and tensions between the Monstrumologist and his entourage mount alongside the body count.

The narrative, flecked with the same surgical illustrations as the first installment, flows evenly through nineteenth-century turns of phrases and events, resulting in a page-turner of an historical horror that will simultaneously thrill readers and make them sick to their stomachs. ([Kirkus Reviews](#), starred review)

The [Kirkus Reviews](#) states that the books are horrific and violent, and the reader cannot help but be engrossed in the books as the action and violence mount before reaching the climax of each novel. The series is accused of being just a thrill ride for adolescent readers because Will Henry, the main character, and the fellow monstrumologists are constantly challenging monsters and themselves. Book three and book four deal with the issues of the influence of violence on the character of Will Henry quite directly, transforming the series into not just a tale of horror but a

story about the moral impact of violence. When the series concludes, it is no longer just a tale of horror. Another review in *Booklist* acknowledges the fact: “It can now be said with assurance that the Monstrumologist series is a landmark of modern YA fiction...Beyond a simple finale, this is a brave statement about the duplexity of good and evil, and the deadly trap in which all of us are snared” (*Booklist*, starred review 2013). Good and evil are never clear cut throughout the series because the characters commit unspeakable acts for self-preservation as well as for the protection of others.

Another article dealing with violence in Young Adult Literature titled “Monstrous Acts: Problematizing Violence in Young Adult Literature,” Judith K. Franzak and Elizabeth Noll takes the need to deal with the reality of terror and war: “On the one hand we know we can be annihilated and everybody around us by terrorism, by the incredible weaponry that this world now has. And yet in another part of our mind we simply go through our routine. And we do what we do in life, and we try to do it as well as we can” (662). Thus, at a certain point during their adolescent development, young adults have to become aware of some bleak aspects of reality as well as their own morality. In the news, there are stories about murders, assault, and terrorism. These grim stories, however, do not stop people from continuing with their ordinary day to day tasks. People adapt to a routine and for the most part, happily go about their everyday lives. It is especially admirable when we recognize the fact that people do the best that they can even when confronted with violence.

Will Henry shares his story in four leather bound journals, and they take the reader on a path where questions of monsters, violence, mortality, and morality are explored. His journals are supposedly edited by Rick Yancey. Hence it is Yancey’s job to handle the journals of Will Henry as well as infer if the journals are authentic or fictions: “There might be clues to his past--who he

was, where he came from, that sort of thing. Might help in locating a relative. Though, from the little I've read, I'm guessing this isn't a diary but a work of fiction" (*The Monstrumologist* xiii). His life as an elderly man at the nursing home is brief but impactful. It is enough for the director of the nursing home to ask Rick Yancey if he is willing to edit the journals and publish them in order to learn more about the elder Will. From the publication, the reader follow the life of Will and draw conclusions from his mysterious and secretive profession. The journals are filled with the description of violent acts of man and beast. At the end of the final volume, the reader must finally address the question whether the extreme violence and fascination with the horrific evil have a direct impact on Will and the reader. The following brief outline of the series is necessary before the introduction of the chapters of the thesis.

The series by being arranged in four volumes, stands out from all the other typical three volume young adult sagas. The fourth book strikes the reader more like a meditation on the nature of love, friendship, responsibilities of science, and the demoralizing influence of horror and violence. The first book of the series titled, *The Monstrumologist*, sets up the tone of extreme traumatic events as experienced by a young person, and the events of book one prepare the reader to expect that each consecutive volume will bring more terror and violence. This is certainly the case with volumes two and three, all presented as adventures. Volume four, however, is mostly a dialogue between Will and the doctor revealing the complex nature of their relationship. In the first book, Will Henry and the renowned monstrumologist, Dr. Pellinore Warthrop, must fight against a carnivorous pod of Anthropophagi. The brief overview of the series is important to stress the contrast between the first three books and book four. Will learns what an Anthropophagus is when he assists Dr. Warthrop during the dissection of one:

Though it lacked a head, the *Anthropophagus* was not missing a mouth. Or teeth.

The orifice was shaped like a shark's, and the teeth were equally shark like: triangular, serrated, and milky white, arranged in rows that marched toward the front of the mouth from the inner, unseen cavity of its throat. The mouth itself lay just below the enormous muscular chest, the in region between the pectorals and the groin. It had no nose that I could see, though it had not been blind in life: Its eyes (of which I confess I had seen only one) were located on its shoulders, lidless and completely black. (*The Monstrumologist* 18)

Hence the Anthropophagi are alien like creatures. There is nothing human in their appearance, and the creatures are unable to speak, which makes them more animal like rather than human. These creatures are dangerous, and their inhuman nature haunts Will once he knows the extent of their vicious behavior.

The Anthropophagi are vicious creatures, and they are skilled hunters who possess the ability to rip a man limb from limb. Through Will's eyes, the reader sees the violent behavior and beastly instinct of the Anthropophagi. In the article "The Critical English Educator: Examining Violence in Literature," Melissa B. Schieble explores how violence is recognized in the real world, but it is also examined in texts: "Violence (in text), like violence in our world, is multifaceted. It functions at different levels, is perpetuated by different motivations, and is experienced in a variety of ways" (Schieble 18). Thus, the series shows how violence is multifaceted. In the first book, Will is attacked by creatures that kill because humans are their food. Therefore, the Anthropophagi are following their instincts when they kill in order to eat. Throughout the series, the violence escalates, but there is a moral gray for Will and the other monstrumologists. When Will kills

another man, his level of violence is on a different level than a creature that does not have the ability to think for itself. He does not always kill because he needs to insure his survival. Instead he kills because he is addicted to the violence and wants power over others.

News of the monstrous herd comes from the grave robber Erasmus Gray. If Gray had not brought the body of Eliza Bunton with the corpse of the Anthropophagi attached to her, Will and Dr. Warthrop would have no idea the threat that is about to befall their town of New Jerusalem. In the middle of the night, Will must waken and prepare himself for the dissection of the Anthropophagus. Dr. Warthrop talks himself through a step by step dissection process of the creature. This dissection is to help Will learn about the creature, and while Dr. Warthrop dissects the Anthropophagus, Will writes down notes and hands the doctor the necessary tools. At one point, Dr. Warthrop needs Will's assistance: "His arm became still. His shoulder jerked as he pulled on the forceps. "Stuck tight! I'll need both hands. Take the chisel and pull back, Will Henry. Use both hands if you must, like this. Don't let it slip, now, or I shall lose *my* hands. Yes, that's it. Good boy. Ahhhh!" (*The Monstrumologist* 19). He has been doing most of the work, but in order to reach his hand in, he needs Will to hold the forceps. The forceps keep the creature's body opened, so that the monsthumologist and his assistant may study its anatomy. While Dr. Warthrop is fascinated by the Anthropophagus, Will is terrified. He cannot fathom that such a monster exists, nor can he comprehend that it has been found in his town.

In the second book, *The Curse of the Wendigo*, Dr. Warthrop and Will Henry journey to northern Canada in search of Dr. Warthrop's old friend and monsthumologist John Chanler. Chanler has been searching for the legendary Wendigo, a creature that Dr. Warthrop denies the existence of because of the lack of scientific evidence. The Wendigo is described as a force that feeds off of the desires of man:

It rides on the wind, the monstrolologist said, a faraway look in his dark eyes.

In the absolute dark of the wilderness, a fell voice calls your name, the voice of

damnation's desire, from the desolation that destroys...It is called *Acten...Djenu...*

Outiko...Vindio. It has a dozen names in a dozen lands, and it is older than the

hills, Will Henry. It feeds, and the more it feeds, the hungrier it becomes. It

starves even as it gorges. It is the hunger that cannot be satisfied. In the

Algonquin tongue its name literally means 'the one who devours all mankind.'

(The Curse of the Wendigo 33-4)

The Wendigo is a force that possesses man, and it feeds off of the nature of man's consciousness.

There are times when man is never satisfied with his accomplishments or goals. The Wendigo

latches onto these desires and the victim becomes a bottomless pit of gluttony. Once it latches on,

no one is able to resist its pull. Thus, Will learns how dangerous man's obsessions can be as

Chanler loses his humanity to an almost demon like force that is the Wendigo.

The hallucinations that Chanler experiences after he undergoes his possessions challenges

the reader as he or she does not know if it is an entity that possess Chanler, or if it is Chanler losing

his own mind due to his experiences in the woods. Exposure to violence can often affect one's grip

on reality. The life of a monstrolologist is to encounter things that go beyond pure reason. The

society must still be willing to classify such creatures as species that are aberrant, and these species

must be a threat to the human population. In *The Curse of the Wendigo*, Dr. Warthrop proposes

the argument that Chanler is mentally insane, due to the shock of being exposed to the winter

elements of northern Canada. As a scientist, Dr. Warthrop needs concrete proof and evidence that

there is a Wendigo that has attacked his friend. Since the Wendigo is only a legend, out of principle, Dr. Warthrop cannot believe that one exists.

In the penultimate book, *The Isle of Blood*, Dr. Warthrop and Will Henry head to the island of Socotra in search for *pwdre ser* or rot of the stars, whereas the substance is the only thing that is on Dr. Warthrop's mind. The *pwdre ser* is delivered to the doctor by Jack Kearns through the hapless messenger Wymond Kendall. Kendall is poisoned by the substance, which is highly lethal: "A rather poetic description of a substance that is neither rot nor from the stars...It is actually part of the digestive system, like our own saliva, but unlike our saliva it is highly toxic" (*The Isle of Blood* 49). Once Dr. Warthrop learns that the *pwdre ser* exists, he will do anything to get his hands on it. The rot can be used to wipe out an entire civilization of people; however, Dr. Warthrop does not plan to use it for such dastardly purposes. Instead he wants to be the one who studies its properties first. The possession, discovery, and study of the *pwdre ser* are Dr. Warthrop's goal, and Will plans to do whatever it takes to stay by Dr. Warthrop's side and see his master accomplish his dream. In the third book, Will's codependency on Dr. Warthrop leads him to abandon a loving home with his first love, Lilly Bates and her family in order to submit himself to more dangers.

In the last novel, *The Final Descent*, Will Henry, is now an old man who recollects his encounter and final battle regarding the possession of Dr. Warthrop's greatest prize the *T. cerrejonensis*. A prehistoric snake that dwarfs the size of any living animal. Will discovers the extent of this beast's size when he discovers it in his former master's basement:

And then the head appeared, five feet across, flat at the top, for its ancient brain

knew what the opening of the door meant, the toothless mouth stretching

obscenely open, and seeing the glistening red gullet is like looking into the fiery

abyss leading straight to hell, and I do not imagine that I can see myself reflected in its lidless ember eye. I fill it as its fifty-foot body fills the basement.

The massive head, red mouth yawning open, rests upon the stairs, too old or too large to come any closer, or perhaps it cannot. Perhaps it has grown too large for its container. (*The Final Descent* 291)

In the final book, Will has left Dr. Warthrop only to return to Harrington Lane a number of years later. He knows that the doctor wants to keep the snake as a specimen to study, but Will is unaware of just how attached Dr. Warthrop is to the monster. At first, Will thinks that the snake is the basement floor. Then the snake moves, and Will knows that Dr. Warthrop sees the snake as a pet, even though he cares little for protecting others from the potential harm of such a monstrous creature.

When Dr. Warthrop is in possession of the egg of the *T. cerrejonensis*, Will Henry is sixteen-years old, and he has been Dr. Warthrop's dutiful assistant for the past four years of his adolescent development. The exposure to violence and horrific acts of monsters and men changes Will Henry for the worst. He is now a young man who can commit violent acts without any remorse whatsoever. That is until he removes himself from the study of monstremology and finds redemption. The other characters and particularly, the reader, who is directly addressed must watch as Will's humanity and empathy slip away before he finds his redemption.

* **

The first chapter of the thesis, "Exposure to Violence," focuses on Will Henry's tutelage under the monstremologist Dr. Warthrop and the boy's reactions to the violence that surrounds

him. Will's parents, James and Mary Henry worked for the doctor before they perished in a fire: "The flames licked at his nightshirt, the fabric caught fire, and in a matter of seconds my father was engulfed in a fiery shroud of flame...I saw my father lunge for her, and that was the last I saw of my parents while they lived, enfolded in each other's arms" (*The Monstrumologist* 340-41). After their deaths, Will finds himself in the role of Dr. Warthrop's assistant. Will introduces the reader to a world of extreme violence. He has left the comforts of his mother's kitchen to work as an assistant in the doctor's laboratory. In the laboratory, there are dissections, mutilations, amputations, and purifications. Will is never allowed time to fully comprehend his role as the doctor's assistant, and by the final book, his petulance toward violence shocks the reader.

This chapter acknowledges Terry Eagleton's *On Evil* chapter one titled "Obscene Enjoyment" as important to understanding Will's self-destruction as a result of the exposure to the violence:

What these two dimensions of evil have in common is a horror of impurity. On the other hand, you can see impurity as the nauseating slime of negativity—in which case purity lies in an angelic fullness of being. On the other hand, impurity can be seen as obscenely bulging excess of the material world, once it has been stripped of sense and value. Compared to this, it is non-being which signifies purity. (102)

Thus, Will has been exposed to the impure while living with the doctor. He must try to comprehend in a healthy way all that he is learning about in order to walk away sane. Instead, he is not able to

comprehend the business of monstrosology, and he loses his innocence as the result of the violence that is now consuming his life.

The focus of the second chapter title “The Demonic,” which deals with the extremes of violence and evil, which can only be described as, the representation of the demonic. An examination of the character of Jack Kearns appears as an example of man’s more cruel behaviors and nature. Jack is an example of how humans are the most demonic of all creatures real or supernatural because he acts without remorse. He even teaches Will how cruel humanity is as he talks directly to him about the evil nature of man:

I was the nest.

I was the hatchling.

I was the rot that falls from the stars. (*The Isle of Blood* 506)

Thus, it is Kearns who teaches Will about the cruelty of nature and man, and that evil develops inside all of humanity. The more time Will spends with Dr. Warthrop and other monstrosologist, the more he is willing to kill others for his own purpose. Finally, Will embraces the capabilities of evil inside of him, but he must find a way to overcome it.

Dr. Warthrop calls upon Jack to help with different cases because Jack hunts monsters, and he is not afraid to use amoral means whenever he hunts for his own pride and satisfaction. Thus, Kearns does not use his skills to protect the human population; he, instead, hunts monsters to satisfy his own needs to kill and prove his superior skill in the science of monstrosology. While Kearns is introduced as the most demonic, Will and Dr. Warthrop find that their own morality is not safe as the business of monstrosology drives men mad, or it leads men to their deaths.

This chapter also applies the investigation of the demonic and tragic as presented in Eagleton's *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic's* introduction chapter and the chapter titled "Heroes," as well as the introduction of *On Evil*. The introduction of *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic* delves into the definition of tragic: "It to its complex material weight that cannot be perpetually refashioned. And even when we do manage to transform it, its weight may still be found resting like a nightmare on the brains of the living" (xii). Even if the tragic brings a positive outcome or connotation, it still affects humanity. When tragic events occur, it is hard to fully comprehend it because people still question why such a moment had to happen. Will Henry thus might have written his story down as a way of dealing with the tragic circumstances of his childhood and young adulthood, as well as to share the dangers of violence and evil on an impressionable mind.

The third and final chapter titled, "The Redemption of Will Henry" examines the definitions of evil as the means to understanding it, as well as the abstraction of evil and the possible redemption of Will Henry. Eagleton attempts to identify evil, and his definition is helpful here:

Evil has the sameness of shit, or the sameness of bodies in a concentration camp. It is like the thick gruel into which the three sisters casually toss everything from a dog's tongue to a stillborn baby's finger. One face of evil may be elitist, but the other is just the opposite. Created things are too trivial to be worth distinguishing between. (*On Evil* 82-3)

In other words, Eagleton is stating that evil is not just one particular event or entity. Evil is, therefore, able to take on many shapes and forms. By the end of the series, both Will and Dr. Warthrop have committed awful deeds just for the sake of committing them. Now, both men have let their relationship fall apart. Before they could pull each other back from the abyss, but by the final book their actions are not worth distinguishing between because both have committed great atrocities. It is not until numerous years later that Will begins his road to redemption.

As a teenager entering adulthood, monstrosity also affects Will's ability to rationally handle his own problems. Will Henry separates himself from monstrosity during his adult life because he realizes how it has driven he and his master mad. Both Dr. Warthrop and Will have lost sight of the philosophy of monstrosity, which is to protect others. Initially, Dr. Warthrop teaches Will that monsters are real and dangerous. Only a select few are brave enough to choose to work in the field of monstrosity. Dr. Warthrop has a fascination with such creatures, but he also wishes to protect humanity from them. All along, Dr. Warthrop; however, wishes for his name and achievements to be recognized by his fellow monstrosityologist. By the final book, Dr. Warthrop and Will put self-preservation above the people that they have sworn to protect. The four years he spends with the monstrosityologist impacts him as Dr. Warthrop is the only guardian he had during this time of his life. The journals that Will keeps serve as a cautionary tale for all children who seek out the existence of monsters. Evil is fascinating, but overcoming examples of evil demonstrates how strong the individual truly is. The thesis questions if there is a way to enter the labyrinth of darkness and still leave while seeing the light.

Eagleton's *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic* provides some additional suggestions in approaching the tragic conclusion of the relationship between Will and Dr. Warthrop. Eagleton

examines tragedy and the concept of the tragic hero, as well as the ability of humans to commit horrific acts:

What is pitiable is not the man himself, but the waste and monstrous of humanity which his wickedness represents. It is true that we cannot be sure that we cannot be sure that pity is an appropriate response here. We do not know enough about how human beings are formed to be a certain that Hitler could ever turn out differently. What one might call the social-worker theory of morality seems scarcely adequate to explain his malevolence. Yet we probably know enough about human formations to be aware that even the slightest injury or deprivation at a vulnerable stage can be enough to turn us into ogres; and we cannot yet rule out the possibility that Hitler and other evil men and women Might in some subjunctive world have emerged as worthwhile people. But even if they had, the pity concerns this possibility; it is not a matter of compassion for the man himself. There is nothing about him to evoke it. (81-2)

Thus, the nature of the individual is a complicated one. While human development has been studied, there is no certain formula that an individual will turn out good or evil. Therefore, people are more complicated than just simple constructs, and questions or statements of “what if” will never truly solve a person’s nature. While both Will and Dr. Warthrop try to do the right thing, they often act with selfish intentions because both characters had childhoods filled ignorance rather than love; they were expected to behave like adults. The lack of love and affection for Will and

Dr. Warthrop negatively affected each one as they grew from childhood to adulthood. It also unfortunately affects their interpersonal relationships as neither can be with the ones that they love. While Dr. Warthrop is unable to move on from his past and into a better future, Will Henry removes himself from the cycle of abuse that is monstrosity, and he finds a semblance of peace by living a quiet existence.

Exposure to Violence

The volumes of the *Monstrumologist* series portray the stages of Will's maturity while studying monstrumology, and his participation in ever escalating violence of his studies. Each volume exposes the reader to extreme carnage both by monsters and human beings. As a result, the reader has to answer, "Am I changed because of this exposure?" In other words, the answer includes the possibility of the enjoyment of the acts of violence as represented in the books. Thus, this moral problem of being influenced by the series is a warning against the dangers of the exposure to evil and the fascination with it. The focus of evil and the fascination with it are discussed by Terry Eagleton in his book *On Evil*, particularly in the chapter titled "Obscene Enjoyment" Eagleton delves into the questions of the purpose of evil and God's permission of it. Therefore, the thinker investigates whether evil is an abstract concept and to what extent it is connected to violence. To those questions, I am adding the investigation of the entertaining value of violence as a part of adolescent moral development.

The *Monstrumology* series is certainly related to the entertaining qualities of evil, as represented through the acts of various monsters and humans. Terry Eagleton sees that evil is beyond logic and understanding within the realms of everyday life. Furthermore, he acknowledges how hard it is to see examples of evil as being able to be grasped logically, rationally, and morally: "Evil is supremely pointless. Anything as humdrum as a purpose would tarnish its lethal purity. In this, it resembles God, who if he does turn out to exist has absolutely no reason for doing so. He is his own reason for being. He also created the universe just for fun, not for some purpose. Evil rejects the logic of causality" (*On Evil* 84). Thus, Eagleton is explaining that evil does not always follow a logical construct. Moreover, Will Henry faces unspeakable challenges and horrors such as murders, dissections, and possessions. And all along he has to rationalize his dealings with evil

as rational acts of science. The reader, then, is faced with the same challenge whether to accept and rationalize the presence of evil in the four books of the series.

Will's mentor, Dr. Pellinore Warthrop, loses this battle in the final volume of the series when in the name of science, he commits murder to feed one of the creatures that he is harboring as a pet. When studying violence in text, it must be brought to attention that there are three levels of violence. In the article, "The Critical English Educator: Examining Violence in Literature Wisconsin English Journal's Associate Editor Examines Violence in Literature as a Way of Teaching Critical Literacy," by Melissa Schieble those levels of violence are defined as:

Referring to Van Soest and Bryant's (1995) model, they describe violence as best understood on three levels: individual, institutional and structural-cultural. Individual violence is often described in the English classroom as person-to-person conflict. It is violence that is perpetuated by one individual toward another and is "violence that we can see" (p. 663). Institutional and structural-cultural violence are layers of harm that are less easily noted and lurk beneath the surface as motivators for individual violence. Institutional forms of violence are ideological policies and practices that exhibit forms of social control. Examples may include school sanctioned practices such as the disproportionate number of students of color in special education and biases present in standardized testing. (Schieble 18)

Individual violence is probably the easiest for the young adult reader to understand, for it is a conflict that is straightforward and usually person-to-person. Both institutional and structural-cultural violence are more complex and requires higher level of thinking to understand. Those types of violence deal with morals, ideologies, and even race, therefore, the *Monstrumology* series examines violence on the level of individual as well as institutional. Thus, the violence is examined

through the character of Will Henry as he is exposed to violent encounters and moments that become progressively worse, for Will since he is a victim as well as a perpetrator of violence.

From the age of a preteen, Will Henry experiences tragedy that is the direct result of the violence and evil of monstrosity. As an assistant to Dr. Warthrop, Will Henry's exposure to violence begins to shape his development. Hence the practice of monstrosity has a terrible impact on Will as he is unable to mature into a well-adjusted young man. In *The Final Descent*, Will accuses Dr. Warthrop and the science of monstrosity for the loss of his humanity. He was a young boy when he began his apprenticeship, and there is much that Will has lost in his experience of boyhood and young adulthood. He screams at Dr. Warthrop: "There is no difference! In me or what I did or what I *will* do. I am the same; nothing has changed. You are the monstrous one. I never asked to be this. I had no choice or say in it" (245). At the same time, Will refuses to recognize his own complacency in the acts of violence. Instead he places the blame on Dr. Warthrop who should have known better than to expose a child to such evils during Will's formative years.

The other characters, as practitioners of monstrosity try to make sense dealing with the study of monstrosity, but often, their participation in such experiments lead them to succumb to the enjoyment they obtain from monstrosity. In "Obscene Enjoyment," Eagleton discusses the three witches in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The witches position in society and perspective on life are similar for both because the witches and Will live outside of society: "Being outside political society, they have no aims or ambitions; and this lack of concern for tomorrow is reflected in the fact that they live in cyclical time rather than linear time" (*On Evil* 83). Will is not a witch, but the society of Monstrosity operates as their own secret cult. He journals the horrors of his experiences with Dr. Warthrop and monstrosity, and the more he shares his experiences, the

more he circles back to his formative years with Dr. Warthrop. It is in the final volume that Will grasps the impact of the violence and gruesome acts of his developmental years.

Thus, Will Henry's exposure to violence shows how he must adjust to a world that he is frightened by, and for him to survive without being given the proper time by Dr. Warthrop to adjust to the horrific experiences. The first exposure to violence that both Will and the reader undergo is when the grave robber, Erasmus Gray, arrives at Dr. Warthrop's door with a mysterious package in the dead of night. The unfortunate package is the body of sixteen-year old Eliza Bunton. Will immediately notices that something is wrong with the corpse as he begins to assist Dr. Warthrop with the dissection process. The dissection process enthralls Dr. Warthrop but disgusts Will. As he assists Dr. Warthrop, Will Henry quotes his master's depiction of the task at hand: "We are soldiers for science, as we will do our duty. Yes, Will Henry? Yes, Will Henry?" (*The Monstrumologist* 17). Thus Dr. Warthrop sees himself as performing a necessary duty of science. Furthermore, it is his purpose to study and understand dangerous and unnatural creatures, but in the last volume the reader understands that it is Dr. Warthrop's pride to demand recognition for his intellect and achievement in monstrumology. Unfortunately, Will has been forced into the role of monstrumological soldier, and just like a good soldier, Will must focus on the task that is before him. As Dr. Warthrop and Will spend hours dissecting the body of Eliza Bunton, Will begins to feel nauseous due to his inexperience to be prepared for such a task. This prompts Dr. Warthrop to tell Will: "Focus on the task at hand, Will Henry" (18). By ordering Will Henry to focus on their job, Dr. Warthrop is teaching Will that to be a monstrumologist, Will must not let feelings of fear or nausea distract him. Will has to develop a coping mechanism similar to something that Dr. Warthrop learned when he was an apprentice, first entering the dark business of monstrumology.

Dr. Warthrop does not give Will any personal freedom or choice, and he is to study monstremology and assist the doctor because he is told to. Will even acknowledges that Dr. Warthrop's methods are demeaning, but he refuses to leave the doctor. At the same time, nonetheless, Dr. Warthrop never forces Will to stay with him because he also understands that Will has no other place else to go. The little freedom that Will has under Dr. Warthrop is negative freedom. The article "Exploring Notions of Freedom in and Through YA Lit," examines the aspect of negative freedom. Thomas W. Bean and Helen J. Harper argue their point: "Negative freedom suggests that the extent of one's freedom can be determined objectively by the number of barriers to choose. According to this perspective, even in hypothetical conditions of absolute freedom, individuals may not act on their freedom, but they possess it nonetheless" (97). Thus, freedom is a basic human right. Will Henry is a free person, but due to his age as a minor, he is not allowed many choices in life. As an orphan, he relies on Dr. Warthrop to provide the basic necessities for him. Those necessities are met through food and shelter. However, Will's freedom is mostly negative. He has the choice to leave and stop studying monstremology, but the question is where will he go? As an orphan his options are either living on the streets or in an orphanage. Due to his less than ideal possibilities, Will chooses to stay with Dr. Warthrop. Even if that choice means undergoing and experiencing more violent acts and acts of terror.

Thus, the exposure to violence and monstremology is not something that a young boy should undergo under any circumstance, and Will Henry did not have an upbringing preparing him for gore and horror before his adoption by Dr. Warthrop. He lived with his parents and experienced the typical joys of childhood; his father, James Henry was Dr. Warthrop's respected assistant. After the death of James Henry, Dr. Warthrop is at a loss: "I don't know what I shall do now, Will Henry" (*The Monstremologist* 31). Moreover, Dr. Warthrop is used to having someone working

for him. He uses his brain and thinks of the grandiose theories, while an assistant is the one to handle the more practical tasks, such as cleaning up the remnants of blood and tissue in the lab, answering letters, and going on errands. Will, however, is too young to understand completely the tasks and research that a monstremologist does regarding science and nature. He stays with Dr. Warthrop because he has no other place to go in the world. He is a frightened child more terrified of being alone in the world than with the doctor studying and dissecting monsters.

Furthermore, Will Henry is gradually becoming aware of his loss of childhood and innocence, and he has recurring thoughts about the love of his parents. When Will is gravely injured in *The Isle of Blood*, he is bedridden. As he hangs in limbo between life and death, Will dreams about the comforts of his life before Dr. Warthrop:

Is that it, Mother? Is that the train?

I think it is, Willy.

Do you think Father has bought me a present?

If he has not, then he is no longer Father.

I wonder what it could be.

I worry what it could be.

Father has been gone very long this time.

Yes.

How long has it been Mother?

Very long.

Last time he brought me a hat. A stupid hat. (77)

As a young boy, Will Henry is aware that his father is in service to Dr. Warthrop, but he does not understand his father's line of work. All Will wants is to see his father again. Before working as

Dr. Warthrop's assistant, Will believes that his father and Dr. Warthrop go on these grand adventures, which he wishes to join. As long as James Henry is coming home safe and with a present for his son, then everything is normal in Will Henry's world. Finally, this specific memory serves the purpose that Will was once a young boy who was loved and cared for. He had everything a child could ask for because he had the love and devotion of a mother and father.

However, the longer Will stays with Dr. Warthrop, the more his previous life slips away from him. Will no longer attends school because Dr. Warthrop believes that he can provide Will with a better education. It is also Dr. Warthrop's plan to fully immerse Will Henry in a life of monstremology, so that Will may continue the work and discoveries of Dr. Warthrop after he is gone. Sadly, Dr. Warthrop does not give Will the time to be a normal boy. As a result, Will is beginning to lose his memory of ordinary life before because his studies took priority. While staying in the attic, Will notices boys his age playing baseball:

I closed my eyes and saw myself taking the lead on third, scooting along the baseline, eyes darting from pitcher to catcher and back again, heart high in my chest as I waited for the pitch. Scoot, another foot. Scoot, still another. The pitcher hesitates; he sees me out of the corner of his eye. Should he whip the ball to third? He waits for me to run. I wait for him to pitch.

(The Monstremologist 36)

Will does recognize some of the boys who are playing, but he is unable to name them. Thus, Will's old life has slipped away from him because there is no time for normal boyhood activities. Instead of playing baseball, he has to decipher the long dictation of Dr. Warthrop. Finally, he must endure long nights of dissections and observations of gruesome creatures. While Will Henry may wish

for his old life back, his mind must be focused on Dr. Warthrop's wishes, and more importantly on the study of monstrosity.

In the second book, *The Curse of the Wendigo*, Will's exposure to violence is dangerous because he has no choice when he is under Dr. Warthrop's tutelage; however, he gradually is realizing that at one point he loses the fear of horror and abhorrence with blood and gore. It is harder for him to separate the experience of danger without the thrill of violence and challenges posed by monstrosity. In *The Curse of the Wendigo*, Will and Dr. Warthrop rescue John Chanler. Once Chanler awakes, he immediately attacks Will: "Blood roared in my ears. My chest ached. My heart leapt; it pushed against my ribs, as if anxious for Chanler to ravish it. His mouth worked upon my burning chest; I felt the teeth scouring my corruption, desperate for the pure center" (160). The doctor and Will have risked their lives to rescue Chanler from the fabled Wendigo, now that he has been found, he is dangerous. He is physically starved and injured, yet Chanler's experience in the wilderness causes him to lose his sanity. He is unable to speak in full sentences, and he spends most of his time in a semi-catatonic state. At one moment, Chanler awakens. In this moment, he is animalistic and attacks a helpless Will. At this point, Will also observes Dr. Warthrop's inability to see Chanler's behavior as demonic, a representation of evil as suggested by the legend of the Wendigo. In other words, Will understands that Dr. Warthrop bends the interpretation of reality to his own theories. To acknowledge the possibility of the existence of evil would mean to Dr. Warthrop, questioning the science and rational explanation of nature. Will's dealing with the Wendigo, "the curse" marks an important transition in the development of him because up to his travels in northern Canada, his only experience with evil has been with the Anthropophagi.

Up till now, Will Henry has only studied aberrant creatures, like the anthropophagi. Those creatures are dangerous, but there is little human about their appearance or behavior. Chanler, however, though human acts like a monster. He is governed by what Eagleton defines as impure behaviors in the chapter “Obscene Enjoyment:”

What these two dimensions of evil have in common is a horror of impurity.

On the one hand, you can see impurity as the nauseating slime of negativity--
in which case purity lies in an angelic fullness of being. On the other hand,
impurity can be seen as the obscenely bulging excess of the material world,
once it has been stripped of sense and value. (*On Evil* 15)

Thus, Chanler goes in search of the Wendigo for impure reasons. He is curious to prove the existence of such a powerful force because if he does, then it shows his skills as a monstremologist. Once he encounters the Wendigo, Chanler is stripped of his sense, morals, and values. He is no longer human in behavior. Dr. Warthrop does not accept the reality that his friend is slipping away both physically and mentally. He believes that he can be Chanler’s savior, and Dr. Warthrop will do anything to help his friend in his madness, and furthermore, Chanler commits unspeakable acts of horror on his loved ones, and Will and eventually Dr. Warthrop, must realize that Chanler is lost forever.

The reader, therefore, sympathizes with Will because he is, at first a reluctant participant in the field of monstremology. Will’s loyalty is with Dr. Warthrop, for wherever the doctor goes, Will follows. He has a place with the doctor, and that place gives Will a sense of purpose. Thus, in *The Curse of the Wendigo*, Will’s confrontation with violence and evil is crucial in his transformation from innocence to growing awareness of evil. After John Chanler terrorizes and kills the people Dr. Warthrop holds dear, Will and Dr. Warthrop pursue Chanler through the slums

of New York. In the slums, Will finds evidence of a truly despicable and evil act that Chanler commits:

It was not a bottle or an old board I had seen floating in the excremental soup. When I reached for it, my foot slipped and I fell with a soft cry, catching myself by dropping the gun and pushing against the bottom with my right hand. That allowed me to keep the lamp aloft in my left. Its light played along the upturned face that floated a foot away; that was I could see--the baby's face. The rest was hidden beneath the mustard yellow scum. I pushed myself up. Now I kneeled--before it--coughing, gagging, sobbing. I didn't care anymore if the beast heard me. (*The Curse of the Wendigo* 394)

Before Will Henry has only seen monstrous deeds committed by actual monsters or more specifically, monsters of nightmares. Thus, the violence terrifies him as a boy, but it is easier to fight because there is nothing human about the appearance of such creatures like the anthropophagi. In the moment that Will finds the body of the baby, his innocence is lost. Chanler, another man, has committed an unforgivable act, and there is no reason for Chanler to kill the baby. In "Obscene Enjoyment," Eagleton quotes Saint Augustine's *Confessions*: "I was wicked to no purpose, and there was no cause of this my malice but malice itself. It was deformed, and yet I loved it; I loved to perish. I loved the sin, not that which I obtained by the same; I loved the sin itself...not desiring any profit from my shame, but only thirsting from shame itself" (*On Evil* 111). Hence, Chanler's murder of the baby is pure malice. Before, Chanler attacked the loved one of Dr. Warthrop, but now he resorts to violence on others. There is no reason for Chanler to devour the baby. Consequently, the act illustrates that he has lost his humanity. Now, Will realizes that these despicable acts can be committed by men. When he enters the tenement, he hears the cries of the

infant, and Will chooses to leave the crying baby behind because finding Chanler comes first. Thus, Will struggles with his decision, but he also believes that the baby has no real future because it lives in such a slum. Will pursues Chanler because the pull of violence is too strong for him to resist as well as his sense of duty to protecting Dr. Warthrop. Thus, this moral decision is crucial to the follow up books in the series.

When Will Henry kills the anthropophagi, his actions are in self-defense, but the older he becomes in the follow up books, the more violence he is surrounded by, and sometimes he is responsible for violence as well. In the third book, *The Isle of Blood*, Will and Dr. Warthrop are on the search for the *pwdre ser* or rot of the stars. It is a high contagion that has the capabilities to wipe out the entire human race. Dr. Warthrop knows that if he finds this contagion, then he will be remembered as the greatest monstremologist of all time. In the *Isle of Blood*, Will and Dr. Warthrop are stalked by Russian assassins who wish to obtain the *pwdre ser*. At one point, Will understands that he must kill the men in order to protect himself and Dr. Warthrop:

A gull shot from its sentry post on the shore, its shadow long and fleeting on the sun-burnished sand. I remembered the shadows of the carrion birds upon the bare rock at the center of the world. *There is nothing left when you reach the center of everything, just the pit of bones inside the innermost circle.*

“What is it?” asked Rurick. “Why do you cry?”

“I’m not waiting for him,” I confessed. “He is waiting for me,” I lied.

This is the time of the dead. The time of the Dahkma-nashini. (Isle of Blood 395)

Although he is nervous and uncomfortable, Will still plans and follows through with the execution of the men. The murders take careful planning on Will’s part; he does not act on a random notion or whim. Instead, he carefully leads the men to a remote location where there are no witnesses. In

order to end the hunt on Dr. Warthrop's life, Will must be willing to sacrifice everything in order to protect him. Deep down, however, Will knows that it is wrong to take the life of another person, no matter how evil that person may be. In the book, *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic*, Eagleton quotes in the chapter, "Fear, Pity and Pleasure," "which the utmost depravity of morals is hardly able to destroy--for we see daily in our theaters men being moved, even weeping at the sufferings of a wretch who, were they in the tyrant's place would only increase the torments of his enemy" (159). Morals are what distinguishes people from the animals because people have choice and free will over their actions. Suffering is something that no one wants to experience. Will knows that if he did not kill the Russians, then he and Dr. Warthrop would live in fear that they were being followed for the rest of their lives.

Furthermore, Will changes from a boy who cries after killing a monster to a teen who is able to handle anything that comes his way that may danger his humanity. When he kills the Russians, Will Henry experiences a sort of adrenaline rush. In the few years that he has lived with Dr. Warthrop, Will has had no control or power over his life, but now by killing, Will Henry is experiencing a sense of control over his life.

When Will Henry kills the Russians, he finds out that it is that much easier to kill other people. He is no longer the boy who cried when the anthropophagi were the monsters attacking him, and he had no choice but to kill them. Instead, Will is more than willing to volunteer for roles in monstrosity that challenges his moral code and conduct. Will and Dr. Warthrop realize that Jack Kearns does not plan to allow them to escape the island of Socotra alive. Will decides to kill Kearns before Kearns can kill them. This is a crucial aspect to Will's transformation under the influence of violence because he is eager to do the act. Jack is a full-grown man, and Will is a slight teenager, but that is exactly why Kearns does not expect Will's murderous intention:

I lifted up my eyes--*Oculus Dei*, Kearns had called them--and looked directly into his, and he recognized them in his own, but too late, too late, and before he could raise the gun or pull away, Awaale's long knife came whistling around and buried itself in his neck. He sank to his knees, his eyes wide in astonishment. He started to raise the rifle. I kicked it out of his hands. He brought them up toward the gushing wound in his neck--the blood pulsed with the rhythm of his dying heart--while he looked up at me with wonder. And then he toppled over, reaching for me with bloody hands, but I was too far. I was beyond his grasp. (*The Isle of Blood* 324)

Thus, Will is now able to approach a man that he intends to kill calmly and rationally. Before Will was terrified of killing another. When he kills the young anthropophagus, he weeps with shame and terror. Now, however, he is willing to protect he and Dr. Warthrop's needs. Gone is the Will Henry who became sick when he first worked with Dr. Warthrop in his laboratory. Instead he is hardened by the circumstances of growing up as an apprentice in monstrosology. After being exposed to death for so long, Will is no longer afraid to act in violent ways. Instead, he puts the survival and protection of Dr. Warthrop over the lives of anyone else. Since Will experiences many traumas as a result of the violence, his behavior changes. He does not run from violence, but rather he takes charge of his circumstances. In today's world, the young teen is exposed to violence, and just like Will Henry the overexposure of violence seems to dull its effect, which is examined in Judith K. Franzak and Elizabeth Noll's article "Monstrous Acts: Problematizing Violence in Young Adult Literature":

the ubiquitous presence of violence is so much a part of our consciousness that for many of us it has a numbing effect. We are at a loss as to how to

make meaning of the violent context of our social reality. It so saturates our mediated lives that violence has become the norm, filling our world with acts of disruption, oppression, and alienation that underscore our need for secularity. (Franzak and Noll 662)

Thus, Franzak and Noll present the argument that violence is everywhere in the world. When a teenager reads a violent book, he or she is no longer shocked by the presence of violence. Furthermore, when comparing violence in the real world to violence in the series, Will's reaction to it is not as surprising. Thus, the violence in his life has slowly built up over time. He no longer experiences it in the same fearful way that he once had. Instead he is able to embrace it and execute it with malicious intent.

The exposure to violence has corrupted Will Henry, and he has lost his innocence. Because he lost his purpose of the discipline of monstrumology and at the same time he also has problems with clearly identifying the purpose behind the violence inherent in monstrumology. The fact that Will does not see the purpose of monstrumology is crucial to his redemption. Eagleton's comments about evil being committed in the name of something else is crucial to understanding Will's departure from monstrumology. According to Eagleton: "One can see, then, why the question of whether evil is functional or not is so ambiguous. Evil is committed in the name of something else, and to this extent has a purpose; but this something else does not itself have a point" (*On Evil* 104). Once Will kills an unsuspecting though evil man in cold blood, there is no turning back from the violence. Will Henry is now one of the monsters that he and Dr. Warthrop pledge to fight against in order to protect humanity. Will kills Kearns more for the reason that the violence makes him feel stronger. There is no one who is able to stop Will Henry and he likes that fact. Jack has represented pure violence, and by killing him, Will follows in Jack's footsteps. In the first book, it

is foreshadowed that the exposure to violence and monstrosity, will have dire effects on Will and Dr. Warthrop. Dr. Warthrop tries to portray himself as moral and just, but his moral downfall is the possession of a million-year-old snake whom he feeds human bodies.

Dr. Warthrop's possession of the prehistoric snake or the *T. cerrejonensis* brings out a new side of both he and Will. Dr. Warthrop is willing to do anything to protect the creature, and Will is willing to do anything to protect Dr. Warthrop. When the *T. cerrejonensis* falls into the hands of the New York mob, the Camorra, Will makes it his mission to retrieve the snake for Dr. Warthrop. He is no longer afraid when entering the hideout of the Camorra, for he is going there to get Dr. Warthrop's prized possession back because that is the job of a dutiful assistant. In the hideout, Will sees Dr. Warthrop tied to a chair. That is all it takes for Will to act in *The Final Descent*:

The one on Warthrop's left reacted instantly, lunging for the shotgun with surprising liveness for a man his size. The gun was two feet away, but it might as well have been in Harlem. My bullet tore into his neck, severing his carotid artery, and blood a brighter and more vibrant red than his wine spewed from the gaping wound. The boy dove under the table. Warthrop shot out of his seat, his arms outstretched, but I was blind to him, blind to everything but the other thug fumbling with the handgun he had dragged from his coat pocket. I had the sensation of traveling at great speed down a dark tunnel, at the end of which his face burned with the energy of a thousand suns. I saw his face and that was all I could see. It was all I needed to see. I rocketed past the monstrosity, traveling at the speed of light, brought the gun within an inch of the man's expansive forehead, and pulled the trigger. That left the boy. (205-06)

Will's only focus, then, is to protect Dr. Warthrop. He is now sixteen years old and has lived with Dr. Warthrop for more than four years. During his four-year study with Dr. Warthrop, Will Henry hardens himself to the outside world. His experiences have made him fit to do anything that is required for Dr. Warthrop. His actions show that he is now a monster, even more so than the ones that he studies. The anthropophagi lived off of instinct, while Will Henry kills because he can and has almost an addiction to it. In other words, Will is now a product of his environment. Despite his actions, his life is now tragic. Eagleton's observation on the nature of tragedy is helpful to the understanding of the nature of Will: "Tragedy must be more than mere victimage; it must involve a courageous resistance to one's fate, of the kind we witness in the great tragic works of art" (*Sweet Violence* 15). Will stays with Dr. Warthrop because the two need one another. As Will Henry writes retroactively-- he could have always left but never did. In the last volume, Will does leave Dr. Warthrop and he does not return until a numerous year has passed, but he is too late his mentor has already committed the ultimate acts of terror and violence.

The Demonic

In the *Monstrumologist series*, Will Henry must endure many trials and hardships as an apprentice in the science of monstrumology. At first, Will learns that monstrumology involves violence and evil, and he must prepare himself at all cost to handle the tasks that are asked of him by his master, Dr. Pellinore Warthrop. The exposure to violence changes Will, and he learns that monstrumology brings out the demonic nature in men. The demonic is an abstract concept, hard to define. In Chapter One of *On Evil*, Terry Eagleton describes the demonic as the form of evil which: “involves a split between body and spirit--between an abstract will to dominate and destroy, and the meaningless piece of flesh that this will inhabits” (21). The body and spirit should work together in harmony, but when evil arises, the body and spirit separate-- has its own will, and they contradict each other. In other words, the demonic attempts to split the spirit from the body. The study of monstrumology with its focus on corrupted, monstrous bodies devoid of moral principles exposes young Will to the tainted human spirit. The more Will delves into the study of monstrumology, the more he experiences the demonic as the extreme form of evil. Gradually Will Henry is exposed to the possibility of the demonic arising from his contempt for first monsters, and then the bodies of his fellow man.

At first Will believes that only the creatures that he studies are the demonic ones. However, it is the elusive Jack Kearns who first demonstrates to Will that man is just as demonic as the monsters that are categorized by monstrumology. Will first meets Jack when Dr. Warthrop calls him to help eradicate the anthropophagi from New Jerusalem in *The Monstrumologist*. Will shares an ominous description of Jack with the reader of his journals: “I did not think the doctor was a monster who hunted monsters, but I was about to meet a man who did--and was” (262). Thus, in a way, Will sees Dr. Warthrop as an admirable man. He believes that the doctor does what is best

for humanity, while someone like Jack is just self-serving. Dr. Warthrop has been called a monster by others, and Will is unable to comprehend why anyone would think that way of his mentor. Thus, Will would rather the doctor be demanding than monstrous. When he meets Jack, however, he learns that Jack's nature and actions are truly monstrous. Calling on Jack Kearns, a truly dangerous man, is a last resort. That is only because he needs someone who is capable, to handle the threat of the anthropophagi at any cost. Jack, most importantly, does not rely on anyone but himself. Thus, his character fits Terry Eagleton's description: "Human beings are self-fashioning, self-creating creatures. They take their cue from themselves rather than from God, Nature, human kinship, or objective value" (*On Evil* 85). In other words, according to Eagleton, human beings rely only on themselves. If human beings are self-serving creatures by nature, then Jack is a prime example of such a view of human nature. Jack performs his actions of evil out of his own volition, and he wants to perform demonic acts because, quite simply, he can. Jack is devoid of the connection that is the human spirit, which makes him demonic.

While it is Dr. Warthrop's idea to call for Jack's assistance in killing the anthropophagi, even he is shocked and appalled by Jack's monstrous methods. At the cemetery, Will and Dr. Warthrop witness as Kearns tosses an unconscious woman into the anthropophagi's pit to draw the creatures out to them. Both Will and Dr. Warthrop believe that the woman is already dead. They soon realize that the woman is only drugged and is still alive. Jack casually justifies throwing her into the pit:

A common tramp with which the gutters of Baltimore are choked to overflowing. A piece of rum-besotted, disease-ridden filth whose death serves a purpose far nobler than any she achieved in her miserable, squandered life. If using her offends your sense of moral rectitude, perhaps

you would like to volunteer to be the bait. (*The Monstrumologist* 314)

Thus, according to Jack, the woman is just a woman of the street, a prostitute who engages in less than moral behaviors, and deserves to die. Moreover, the woman has no family and friends, and she does not contribute much to society so she will not be missed. After Dr. Warthrop rescues the woman from the pit, he gingerly tends to her bleeding wounds, and Will observes the contrast between the two men: Jack has no regard toward the woman, while Dr. Warthrop is willing to risk his own life to save her. Hence, the men's actions are dictated by their individual reasoning capabilities. Both are manipulating the principles of reasons to adjust to their own sense of fulfillment of desires. They confuse the senses of bodily needs with the human spirit. In Chapter Nine of *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic*, Terry Eagleton describes reason and desire:

How can the spirit dip itself in the senses, as Schiller and the aesthetic tradition urge it to do, without falling to prey their mindless power; and how can spirit not hollow the senses out in its relentless pursuit of fulfillment? The dream of the aesthetic is to sensualize spirit with no of its transcendence; but this will prove a harder task than Schiller imagines in his *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*. It leaves out the question of desire, which lies somewhere on troubled frontier between body and spirit, and which is blind to the sensuous particularity of its object as the most lofty abstraction. Reason and desire, so often contrasted as rivals, are in this sense partners in crime. (243)

Will realizing in observing the actions of Jack that reason is ultimately submerged in the desires of Jack to fulfill his own needs of power. Thus, to quote Eagleton again "reason and desire" are truly partners in crime in the case of Jack. Jack is just a monster to young Will. It is not until Will is an adult that he realizes how similar Jack and Dr. Warthrop are. The difference between Jack

and Dr. Warthrop is that Jack lacks empathy. He is unable to sympathize and feel the pain of another. Meanwhile, Dr. Warthrop places the safety of the woman above his own. He is able to imagine the suffering of the woman. He plans to do all in his power to save that woman and alleviate her suffering. Hence the demonic is not an abstract concept, and this shows Will that he must understand a certain honesty in himself and his fellow man.

Furthermore, Jack is someone who never developed any moral conscious. It is the lack of conscious that makes him particularly demonic to the reader. The stages of moral development are studied by Harvard psychiatrist Lawrence Kohlberg. In the article “The Legacy of Lawrence Kohlberg,” Richard L. Hayes summarizes Kohlberg’s theory on moral development:

In Kohlberg’s view individuals are believed to produce their own development through the interaction of maturational, societal, and physical factors that are more or less in equilibrium with one another. Inherent in human nature are certain structuring tendencies, which attempt to make sense of people’s experiences within themselves and of the world in which they live. The assumption is that the “basic mental structure is the result of an interaction between certain organismic structuring tendencies and the outside world.” (262)

Thus, the developing young person is responsible for his or her own moral choices. There is also a combination of the growing process of maturity both physical and psychological, as well as the environment someone has been exposed to. Although not much is known about Jack’s up bring, his morality is lacking. While the young adult reader has the capability to recognize moral situations, Jack, however, becomes fixated on the first stage of moral development, which is acting in one’s own interest. Thus, Jack’s will is to taunt those who are weaker and with a lower IQ. He has lured a weaker prostitute with him for his own despicable purposes. Also by drugging the

prostitute, he deceives Will and Dr. Warthrop who cannot believe that Jack would actually throw a live woman into the anthropophagi's pit.

Just like the nameless prostitute, Will Henry is also betrayed by Jack when hunting the anthropophagi. At one point during the hunt, Kearns shoves Will deeper into the crypt at the cemetery where the nest is, as a plan to kill the anthropophagi using the Maori Protocol. The ultimate act of betrayal is that Jack is using Will Henry as bait. This is an important revelation for young readers because it prevents them from becoming enamored with Jack. They are able to see him as despicable. Will describes the shock of Jack's betrayal: "He put his hand on my chest and said with mock sorrow, "I am sorry, Mr. Henry, but there really is no choice. It is the morality of the moment." And with those parting words John Kearns shoved me as hard as he could" (*The Monstrumologist* 385). Thus, Jack is willing to sacrifice Will for the thrill of the hunt; he has no qualms or remorse as he puts Will in grave danger. After all, Will Henry is an active participant of the hunt, and he must prepare himself for the unexpected as well as the cruelty that comes with the job.

In the second volume, *The Curse of the Wendigo*, the demonic is more of an actual entity that also evokes the demonic nature in others, such as fellow monstrumologist John Chanler. *The Curse of the Wendigo* probes the nature of the demonic to a greater degree than *The Monstrumologist*. The reader learns that Dr. Warthrop prides himself on studying creatures that actually exist, and as a scientist, he is unable to comprehend supernatural threats and dangers. The natural and supernatural are defined in the article "The Coexistence of Natural and Supernatural Explanations Across Cultures and Development." The author of the article, Christine Legare: "we define natural as (in principle) observable and empirically verifiable phenomena of the physical or material world. We define supernatural as phenomena that violate, operate outside of, or are

distinct from the realm of the natural world or known natural law” (780). In other words, as a monstrumologist, Dr. Warthrop observes creatures with the mind of a scientist. He must observe the creature’s etymology, behavior, characteristics, actions, and habit in order to conclude the nature of the creature. He is unable and unwilling to study legends because they have no tangible proof. Instead, Dr. Warthrop views the supernatural as primitive in nature. Further, in the article, Legare examines the nature of the belief in the supernatural:

The proposal discussed in this article is that both natural and supernatural explanations frequently operate within the same mind to explain the very same event or phenomenon. We argue that supernatural explanations do not always appear in early development; nor are they primitive or immature ways of thinking that are suppressed over the course of development. Instead, like natural explanations, they are constructed and elaborated through socialization and cultural learning and may be founded on earlier intuitive explanations. (781)

Hence the belief in the supernatural is not resulting from primitive understanding of the world, but, instead, it is a thoughtfully conceptualized notion of the world. The legend of the Wendigo serves, then, a way of understanding human greed and hunger. Dr. Warthrop, however, sees no reason for legends to explain human mind and behavior.

Unlike Dr. Warthrop, Chanler is desperate to prove that the Wendigo exists. In his quest, however, he becomes the victim of the Wendigo. Dr. Warthrop is not able to understand Chanler’s condition again because he thinks that legends are an insult to the society because after all, it is only a legend. Unfortunately, Dr. Warthrop is the only one who believes that the Wendigo cannot possibly exist. Even the president of the monstrumology society, Dr. Abram von Helrung, is

convinced of the existence of the entity, and he orders the others to search for John Chanler, and for his society to hunt down the Wendigo--not as a way to save Chanler but to eradicate the threat that is the Wendigo:

John Chanler is dead. What has arisen in his place--what animates his lifeless form-- is a spirit older than the oldest bedrock. It has many names in many cultures. Wendigo or *Outiko* are just two of them; there are more--hundreds more. For the sake of clarity, I shall refer to it simply as the beast, for that word describes its nature best. There is no humanity in the thing that was

John Chanler. (*The Curse of the Wendigo* 348)

Chanler is just a dangerous beast possessed by the demonic that must be eradicated before he can kill again. The views of Dr. Warthrop and the monstrolomological society causes a rift because of the idea of the supernatural and scientific. Thus, von Helrung believes that although Chanler is physically present, his spirit is gone. While it is Dr. Warthrop who believes that Chanler can still be rescued.

Furthermore, in Chapter Nine of *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic*, Eagleton examines the complicity of good and evil: "the line dividing culture and barbarism must always be drawn from within a particular culture, which is then bound to demonize its opposite. From the standpoint of order, all dissent appears demonic" (247). Thus, the monstrolomologist views the demonic as something that is culturally different. Dr. Warthrop is using the legend of the Wendigo as a concept of another culture. The Algonquian legend is not something he fully understands, and thus he dismisses it. Chanler is removed from the society because of his possession. However, Chanler can also be seen as a victim. He searched for the Wendigo in the name of science, but he did not expect to be overtaken by one.

The demonic Wendigo affects Chanler both physically and mentally. When Will and Dr. Warthrop find Chanler in the wilderness he is practically starved to death. Will notices Chanler's appearance, which Dr. Warthrop describes:

He's severely dehydrated and malnourished...And jaundiced; his liver may be shutting down. I can't find any external injuries beyond bedsores, which is to be expected, and internally there are no abnormalities or injuries, though it's difficult under these conditions to tell for certain. He has a mild fever but doesn't seem to be suffering from dysentery or anything else that might kill him before we can get him back. (*The Curse of the Wendigo* 103)

Thus, the physical appearance of John Chanler shocks both Will and Dr. Warthrop. Will is unsure of Chanler, but Dr. Warthrop cares for him with compassion. Dr. Warthrop also believes that if he is able to save Chanler's physical state, then he will be able to save his mental state as well. By caring for Chanler, Dr. Warthrop also performs an act of good, but at the time, according to Terry Eagleton in *On Evil*, Dr. Warthrop is a man who cannot avoid evil: "The good accept evil by embracing it in their love and mercy. In taking it upon themselves, however, they are drawn inexorably into its orbit" (56). In other words, Dr. Warthrop cares for Chanler out of love and friendship, but also the more he cares for his friend, the more he experiences the evil associated with the demonic possession of Chanler. As a result, Dr. Warthrop is pleasing his own rationality that in a way his act of goodness is corrupted by evil results, for Chanler kills his own wife and an infant.

It is important for Will to learn to recognize the presence of evil before he loses his innocence and becomes more demonic himself. However, through his studies of monstrumology and the horrors that Will Henry has encountered; has turned him demonic in the third book, *The*

Isle of Blood. Will Henry claims that he has been affected by the Ungeheuer, which is another form of the demonic. He describes the Ungeheuer as a dangerous entity: “If I would speak plainly, I would call it *das Ungeheuer*, but that is only *my* name for the *me/not-me*, the unwinding thing that compelled and repulsed me, the thing in me--and the thing is *you*--that whispers like thunder, I AM” (34). Will Henry recognizes the demonic that surrounds him and is inside of him. The Ungeheuer is man’s nature; it grabs onto men and does not let go as it pulls them into the abyss. Good and evil are dealt with whenever Jack appears, and it is Jack that shows Will Henry the face of the Ungeheuer.

In *The Isle of Blood*, Jack Kearns returns, and the demonic and humanity become harder to decipher. In the third book, the possibility of destroying humanity using a substance called *pwdre ser* is introduced by Kearns through the hapless Wymond Kendall who arrives at Dr. Warthrop’s door. He has with him, the *pwdre ser*. Unfortunately for Kendall, he has been exposed to the substance. The exposure causes him great pain as it begins to change his physical appearance: “I raised my head, bringing my eyes to the level of his right hand, and saw that the skin had gone from rosy red to a light gray. It seemed almost translucent. I imagined I could see right down to his bones” (*The Isle of Blood* 54). The immediate effect of *pwdre ser* is that Kendall is slowly having his skin change, and his body temperature is plummeting as well. Kendall is exposed to the substance because he is tempted to open it. He has no idea of the contents of the package, but he is curious to see how powerful the substance is. Poor Kendall barely even touches the *pwdre ser*, and his zombie like state causes him great pain. Finally, he still dies while in great pain.

The demonic Kearns loves to play cruel mind games with people, because these mind games are supposed to prove his superior intellect over the average human and create personal enjoyment. Dr. Warthrop understands and recognizes Jack’s tricks because of previous dealings

with Jack. Now, Dr. Warthrop understands how strong temptation can be as he explains to Kendall the reason why he opened the package:

You couldn't bear it. The not knowing. Why would Kearns go to such bizarre lengths to send me this package? What was in it that was so valuable that he was willing to commit murder rather than see it go undelivered? You were terrified; you didn't want to open it, but you *had* to open it. Your desire is understandable, Mr. Kendall. It is human to turn around, to stare into Medusa's face, to tie ourselves to the mainstream mast to hear the siren's song, to turn back as Lot's wife turned back. I am not angry at you for looking. But you did look. You did touch it. (*The Isle of Blood* 47)

After Dr. Warthrop sees the specimen that is *pwdre ser*, his curiosity and temptation leads him to abandon Will in pursue of his own personal glory.

In order to search for the *pwdre ser*, Will and Dr. Warthrop first reunite and then travel to the island of Socotra. Where they find an abandoned village. The villagers were exposed to the *pwdre ser*. Thus, Will and Dr. Warthrop find one adult female survivor and her baby, and she is at the early stages of exposure. Will ponders if he should kill the mother, as he lies awake processing the right decision: "I could have stayed awake for a thousand nights, so tightly wound was the thing inside me, das Ungeheuer, the me/not me, the thing that whispered I AM, and not the thing that strove within me--and strives within you--to be free" (464). Thus, Will Henry is aware that the das Ungeheuer, or the Faceless One is speaking to him, making him kill the young woman. According to Dr. Warthrop, the woman's death is only a matter of time. Will is enticed by das Ungeheuer to kill the woman, but he disguises this feeling by convincing himself that it is for the protection of the infant who does not seem affected by the substance. However, the act of killing

a defenseless woman is seen as demonic in Will's eyes. By looking at the woman, he is possibly reminded of the actions of Jack Kearns, who cruelly shoved the prostitute into the anthropophagi's pit. Thus, at his young age Will still believe that it is cruel and demonic to kill an innocent person.

Dr. Warthrop and Will encounter Jack Kearns, and the three form a hesitant yet necessary truce. Kearns claims that he already knows where the nest of the *pwdre ser* is. Once they arrive at the nest, Jack first shows Will the home of the *locus ex magnificum*. He has Will stare into the nest while he whispers: "Do you see it now? *You* are the nest. *You* are the hatchling. *You* are the chrysalis. *You* are the progeny. *You* are the rot that falls from the stars. All of us--you and I and poor dear Pellinore. Behold the face of the *magnificum*, child. And despair" (*The Isle of Blood* 495). Now Dr. Warthrop's and Will's quest to find the demonic substance called *pwdre ser* is at an end. They have been on a long and desperate search to find its nest, but it is Jack who has seen it first. Thus, the *pwdre ser* is the demonic nature of man. The people of Socotra have killed one another over something that they did not understand. Will and Dr. Warthrop must now realize that the people they have sworn to protect are the most dangerous creatures of all. It is Jack, however, who takes delight in the people of Socotra's suffering. The more that Jack is able to corrupt Will and Dr. Warthrop, the more enjoyment he gets out of life. Moreover, Jack knows that the monstremologist and his apprentice are more similar to him than they would like to admit--Jack did not force them to look for the substance. The doctor and Will chose to go on their own volition. Thus, Dr. Warthrop is successful in his quest but it is not the success that he had envisioned. Chapter Nine of *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic* discusses the layers of repression of these destructive elements and how important it is to face:

To be authentic, culture must immerse in the destructive element, acknowledge these things of darkness as its own, otherwise it will fall ill of the neurosis

which springs from repression; but how is it to confess its roots in the non-rational without succumbing to a demonic irrationalism which might tear it apart? Karl Jaspers argues that “when we are most highly successful we most truly fail.” (Eagleton 243)

Thus, people tend to focus on their dreams and ways of achieving them. As Eagleton points out, however, when people are highly successful they also fail. Once Dr. Warthrop discovers the Holy Grail of monstremology, he realizes that his successes are not as they should appear. Instead, he has failed in his pursuit for something that will mark him as the greatest monstremologist to ever live. When he learns the true source of *pwdre ser*, his discovery is not groundbreaking. Dr. Warthrop already knows that men have been killing each other over things, ideas, and concepts that they did not understand. Thus, Dr. Warthrop’s grand discovery is not groundbreaking at all, but it is just a horrible part of human nature.

When the true nature of the nest is revealed, Dr. Warthrop is in shock. He refuses to believe that he has let his obsession get the best of him. Jack knows that Dr. Warthrop is in disbelief, and, therefore, Jack explains their findings as: “Ask Will Henry. He’s just a boy, and he sees it. You’re the monstremologist; how is that you cannot? Look at it, Pellinore. Turn and see! The Faceless One. The *Faceless* One. You have been pursuing something that has been right in front of you since the beginning. There is no monster. There are only men” (*The Isle of Blood* 496). Dr. Warthrop is explored then as a scientist hungry for fame. He now faces the fact that the *pwdre ser* does not exist and that the people are dead because of their own actions.

Finally, Will Henry and the doctor face the ultimate concocted by Jack Kearns. Who does not plan to let them leave the island. Once the decision is made, Will makes the ultimate decision to murder Kearns. He tries to reason with the doctor:

I am not afraid, sir

I know that, he said gravely. And that makes me afraid. (*The Isle of Blood* 522)

By saying that he is not afraid, Will Henry has no qualms or misgivings about killing another man. Although Jack is seen as demonic by Will and the reader, he is still a human. Now, Will has crossed a line in his moral development: When Jack shows Will the nest, he emphasizes how the demonic is man's nature. Jack wants Will to realize that he is not morally superior. Bushman and McNerry stress how important Young Adult Novels are in moral development. in *Moral Choices: Building a Bridge between YA Literature and Life*:

Morally correct decisions prevent individuals or groups from violating the rights of others, sometimes others who cannot stand up for their own rights. It would be nice if our society rewarded morally correct decisions, especially among adolescents whose moral values are being formed and tested, but often the moral position is difficult to identify, let alone follow through on. It's just not that simple...The strength of young adult novels, however, both classic and contemporary, to challenge students to discuss, contemplate, and develop their own moral standards cannot be overlooked by today's language arts and reading teachers. As these young adults develop their own moral standards, through engaged, critical examinations of moral dilemmas, they can also begin to explore how their own engagement can be incorporated into participation in the improvement of society. (1)

In other words, Will is making his own moral decision by volunteering to kill Kearns. He is doing this to protect himself and the doctor from a certain death. However, killing is not a morally sound decision that society praises. Only Will and Dr. Warthrop know about his deed, but the deed has

dire consequences on Will in the last volume. According the article, it is important for the young adult reader to develop his or her own moral standpoint through reading. Although Will commits a despicable act, the reader must determine if it is morally right for Will to kill the demonic Kearns, or if perhaps there could have been another way off of the island and away from Jack's clutches. By challenging the reader, he or she is able to recognize the same moral dilemmas that Will Henry undergoes.

In the final book of the series, *The Final Descent*, Dr. Warthrop comes into possession of a prehistoric snake, and he soon becomes obsessed with the snake. He does not view it as a monstrous creature. Instead he views it as a pet, a harmless creature that needs care:

The light of the monstrolomologist's lamp kissed the rough surface of the egg; he leaned over it, bringing the lens of the loupe close, and his breath was but a whisper of wind through that beautiful meadow at springtime. He'd taken measurements--mass, circumference, temperature--and listened to it through his stethoscope. He worked quickly. He did not want to expose the snake too long to the basement air. As Maeterlinck had observed, New England was anything but tropical. (*The Final Descent* 118)

When Dr. Warthrop first receives the snake, it is just an egg. The egg needs constant care and attention because it is valuable and vulnerable. While Dr. Warthrop does study the egg, he actually treats it more like a pet, and as a result, he is beginning to not view it as a future offspring of a dangerous creature. When the egg does hatch, it is a prehistoric baby snake called the *T. cerrejonensis*.

The *T. cerrejonensis* is a dangerous creature, but the creature itself is not demonic. It does not have the typical supernatural powers that are associated with the demonic. According to

Chapter One of *On Evil*, Eagleton describes evil as: “its uncanniness, its appalling unreality, its surprisingly superficial nature, its assault on meaning, the fact that it lacks some vital dimension, the way it is trapped in the mind-numbing monotony of an eternal recurrence” (49). In other words, the snake does not exist for an evil purpose because it is just a living creature. It is trapped in Dr. Warthrop’s basement because he refuses to relinquish it. As a result, the ownership of the snake causes Dr. Warthrop to act demonic and even become mad. As a matter of fact, he is willing to do anything to keep the snake even murder an innocent young woman. After Will Henry leaves Dr. Warthrop, he hires a cook named Beatrice to care for the doctor’s domestic affairs. It is an unfortunate accident that Beatrice finds the *T. cerrejonensis*. An adult Will is absolutely horrified and disgusted when he realizes that his mentor fed Beatrice to the *T. cerrejonensis*. In Will’s mind, what makes matters worse is that Dr. Warthrop tries to justify why he did it:

I didn’t kill her...The ridiculous woman’s curiosity got the better of her---she opened the door and went too far down the stairs. Too far, Will! I pulled her from its mouth, but it was too late. Too late! And then what was I to do?

Who could I tell? No, no. Not our fault. *Her* fault. Will. Her fault! I flung him to the floor. He curled into a ball; he did not try to get up. His father had been found this way, curled up like a fetus in its mother’s womb. Ending as he

began. (*The Final Descent* 292-93)

Thus, in the final volume of the series, Dr. Warthrop is no longer the compassionate and kind monstremologist that Will and the reader once knew. Gone is the man who jumped into a pit to save a whore from being devoured alive without any concern for his own safety. Now he chooses to keep a snake as a pet instead of studying it. He is willing to go to great lengths to keep the snake a secret. As soon as Beatrice discovers the snake, she is doomed because the doctor refuses to risk

her revealing to anyone his grand prize. Dr. Warthrop has fallen into the same realm of thinking and justification as Jack Kearns. According to Kearns, those who are weaker and less intelligent than him are fair game to hunt. Notably Dr. Warthrop believes that aberrant creatures are the superior species.

Dr. Warthrop is now demonic, for he values the beast's life over the life of a young woman. Though the monsters are supposed to be studied and observed, but they are now a higher priority than the lives of humans. Will realizes that his master is no longer sympathetic toward humanity. Dr. Warthrop's tragic loss of humanity is perhaps best captured by Eagleton's comments on the notion of tragedy in the fourth chapter of his book *Sweet Violence: The Idea of the Tragic*:

In tragedy... 'we see the greatest misfortune, not as an exception, not as something occasioned by rare circumstances or monstrous characters, but as arising easily and of itself out of the actions and characters of men. Indeed, almost as essential to them, and this brings it terribly near to us'. There is no need for colossal errors or unheard of accidents, simply that characters as they usually are...in circumstances that frequently occur, are so situated with regard to each other that their situation forces them knowingly and with their eyes open, to do one another the greatest injury, without any of them being in the wrong.' (92)

Dr. Warthrop is so removed from his humanity that he does not see how his actions have hurt others and in particular Will. By defending the grotesque snake, Dr. Warthrop is no longer the man who put protecting people from the monsters, but instead, sees the monsters as creatures that are the ones worthy of protection at the expense of human life. By sympathizing with the monsters, Dr. Warthrop has become one of the monsters. Thus, the tragic transformation of Dr. Warthrop and Will is ultimately a great lesson to young adult readers. In other words, the

violence and description of evil is self-serving, sources of pure entertainment, seriously engaging the young reader in questions concerning morality.

The Redemption of Will Henry

Throughout the series, Will Henry deals with many horrors that extend far beyond the imagination of the average teenager. As the assistant to the monstrolologist, Will must study aberrant creatures, which expose him to the violence found of nature; however, the more he delves into the field of studying monsters, the more he confronts the deviant nature of man. Thus, the monsters expose him to the evil of his fellow human beings, and he must, therefore, pass the ultimate price of monstrolology such as committing unspeakable acts of horror himself as a result of his fascination with monstrolology. However, the journals of Will are written in retrospect. The elderly Will, at the end of the series, is aware of that price when, looking back in his journals. It is in the last volume of the series where the reader observes that Will's descent into evil, chaos, and madness happens because he is willing to do anything to serve his mentor: "*Dr. Warthrop is a great man engaged in a great business. And I shall never turn my back upon him, though the fires of hell itself arise to contend against me*" (*The Final Descent* 24). *The Final Descent* is a final chapter in the progress of Will's transformation from an orphan with little say in his relationship with Dr. Warthrop to a young adult who knows that the relationship with the doctor is toxic.

A part of Will's redemption is to set fire to the house on Harrington Lane, the house that exposes Will to the horrors of monstrolology and man. Will's first major loss is caused by fire, yet he is the one starting the fire as an adult man: "And the beast that waits for us in the final descent. I turned one last time and started down the stairs" (*The Final Descent* 294). Will is accepting the evil that is inside of him, but he is also going to use it as a way to purge the sins from inside of him. By setting fire to the house, Will abandons Dr. Warthrop to die, and rids the world from monstrolology. He has no reason or desire to continue his studies in the field.

Instead, Will Henry is the phoenix who will rise from the ashes as a new person. He can rid himself from his sins and monstrosity and hopefully start anew.

It is interesting to observe that the last volume switches from a boy Will, to a young man, to an elderly man. From the time of young man to elderly man, Will's story is left blank. Thus, it is the reader's job to speculate Will's possible redemption. He commits horrible atrocities in order to protect monsters rather than man. Thus, Dr. Warthrop's life, and the life of his pet monstrous snake end in a fire before they can cause any more damage. It is Will who starts this fire, and by doing so is he committing murder or protecting the world from the doctor. However, by killing Dr. Warthrop, Will's story is not over yet. He still needs to warn people about monstrosity. Will's idea for doing so is when he sees a young boy fishing. He imagines that the boy is fishing for monsters. When he returns to his home with newly purchased journals, he remembers the boy:

*For the boy on the bridge, the man thinks, taking up his pen. And for all the boys
for a hundred generations who drop their lines into the swift dark water to
catch the leviathans lurking in the deep:*

These are the secrets

These are the secrets

These are the secrets

These are the secrets:

Yes, my dear child, monsters are real. (The Final Descent 306)

Thus, by writing down his secrets, Will Henry is finally free of them. He also states to anyone reading that monsters are real. These monsters are not just aberrant creature, nor are they the demonic, but they are men. We all have the possibility to be monsters, but we all have the equal

possibility of redemption. It is possible that Will found his redemption through his readers. Rick Yancey realizes that Will Henry kept many secrets, even his own name is a lie. While Yancey struggles with the betrayal, he realizes that Will is only trying to prevent others from following monstrosity. His journals are a desperate plea of a lonely man who wants a home: “And it lives in you, Turn around now, Will Henry has come home” (*The Final Descent* 310). By opening and reading the journals of Will, the reader takes a part of Will’s story with him or her. There is an enjoyment and fascination while reading the series. As much as the reader wishes for a happy ending, an obvious happy ending is not plausible. However, by sharing his story, perhaps the elder Will’s consciousness has been freed, and thus he does have a home with the reader.

All along, the safety that Dr. Warthrop is supposed to provide is nonexistent. He is a man who does not know how to care for a traumatized child who is growing into a traumatized young man. In the final volume, Will looks back on how the doctor treats him when he first arrives. Will recalls his anguish over the death of his parents, and how Dr. Warthrop does nothing to comfort him:

Now I think he heard my screams and remembered another boy, a boy from long ago, consigned to that same attic space away from the beating heart of the house, the lonely boy whose mother had died and whose father blamed him for it. The terrified boy who watched his father fade away from him while remaining all the while in his sight, a majestic ship disappearing over the endless horizon, the boy alone and sick and sick in his loneliness. The kind of loneliness you never completely leave behind, no matter how crowded your life becomes. He was helpless to save that boy; he was helpless to save me. The distance was too great-- there were not enough years in a lifetime to climb that eight-foot ladder

and say to the boy, *Be still, be still. I know your pain.* (*The Final Descent* 84)

As a child, Will desperately needs Dr. Warthrop's comfort and affection. However, due to the doctor's past experiences, he is unable to provide Will with the love that he needs. The two have similar experiences but are unable to ever fully relate to one another as being orphans in the final volume. Will learns the story of his master's abusive relationship with his father, which affects how the doctor relates to those around him, for he never had a loving person in his life. It is only as an adult that Will can begin to piece the fragmented pieces of Dr. Warthrop's childhood together.

When Will first begins his apprenticeship with Dr. Warthrop, he is sickened by the grotesqueness surrounding him. Although Dr. Warthrop is well known, he and Will always seem to work in secret. In the last volume, Will remembers his first time assisting Dr. Warthrop in his lab. In the lab, Will and Dr. Warthrop dissect the corpse of a young boy. The doctor works with precision and expertise, and he ignores the bloody corpse in front of him. He thus has no personal attachment to the dead boy, and he is able to remove himself from sympathetic situations. Will, however, is too young to separate himself from the boy on the operating table:

A human being. He is speaking of a human being, a boy around my age was the report, and all that is left is a tooth--the rest now part of the beast or in a pile of its shit.

Waste, waste.

And the boy in the tattered hat, in the tattered hat, in the tattered hat. (32)

Thus, Will is spending a long night in the cold, damp, and dark laboratory basement of Dr. Warthrop. He cannot ask the doctor any questions about this nameless boy. Will must comprehend on his own the terror of the dead boy's demise. In the cold basement, Will wears the tattered hat

that his father bought for him. His hat, thus, connects him to his now deceased parents. Now, he wears it for warmth, but it is a hat connected to death. Both the deceased boy and Will Henry have lost themselves. The boy is physically lost to the world, and Will has lost his innocence. Thus, Will wears his hat as an attempt to reclaim his innocence.

As a child, Will is exposed to many horrors yet wonders of the natural world, but instead of letting Will process his feelings about his studies, Dr. Warthrop lectures him. Will is unable to remove himself from the situations that surround him. Hence, the freedom that Dr. Warthrop gives to Will is not healthy in the sense that he never processes the horrors in his life. The reader is not left, however, with the portrait of a corrupted human being. Instead the reader participates in the redemption of Will Henry. The ideas of freedom and its various types are discussed in Thomas W. Bean's and Helen J. Harper's article "Exploring Notions of Freedom in and Through Young Adult Literature." The notions of freedom are argued amongst many scholars and thinkers. Bean and Harper quote Hirschmann:

If choice is key to freedom, then what is necessary to understanding freedom is an examination not only of the conditions in which choices are available but also of the construction of choice itself; what choices are available and why, what counts as choice, who counts as a chooser, how the choosing subject is created and shaped by social relations and practices. (98)

As a result, the series is a good illustration of the importance of the investigation of Young Adult Literature because it prepares themselves for adulthood by exploring the notions of freedom. They cannot have someone telling them what they must do, for that defeats the meaning of freedom. The monstrous characterization of Dr. Warthrop prepares Will's final decision to withdraw from the society and write his journals as a warning against the fascination of evil. The series stresses

the idea of the development of a young person through a series of choices, most of them under traumatizing circumstances. Will Henry always states that he had a choice whether to staying with the doctor. However, as a young boy, Will is unsure of this choice. While he is in the lab, Dr. Warthrop rips the agency of freedom and choice away from Will and leaves him alone to process his emotions.

Most of the time Will is confused and has to make sense of his contradictory responses to the acts of violence that he participates in because he is both repulsed and fascinated by them. The only times that Will and Dr. Warthrop seem to care a great deal about one another is when they are in deep distress. Thus, Dr. Warthrop cares about Will when he is close to losing him. It is possible that he only cares about Will because he needs him as an assistant and not as a surrogate son. Yet, Dr. Warthrop cares for Will when he is ill or injured. The way he treats Will is self-contradictory. In Chapter One of *On Evil*, Eagleton examines the fallen and self-contradictory behavior of people:

“fallen” has to do with the misery and exploitation that human freedom inevitably brings in its wake. It lies in the fact that we are self-contradictory animals, since our creative and destructive powers spring from much the same source. The philosopher Hegel considered that evil flourished the more individual freedom did. (30)

Thus, Eagleton is arguing that people are fallen creatures because of their individual freedoms. The reader notes how both Dr. Warthrop and Will are self-contradictory animals. They are unable to express their concern for one another in a healthy manner. Instead they cycle back and forth between frustration, contempt, panic, and moments of gentleness.

In the third volume, *The Isle of the Blood*, Dr. Warthrop leaves Will with the Bates as he searches for the *pwdre ser* with a new assistant Thomas Arkwright. While Will tries his best to adjust with living with a family unit again, he still struggles with missing Dr. Warthrop. Though he is a frustrating person, Will has adjusted to the life of a monstremologist, and this life is his new normal. Will, however, is not as upset about living with the Bates than he is over the fact that Dr. Warthrop has replaced him with Thomas Arkwright. He discusses his suspicions with von Helrung. Abram von Helrung tries to encourage Will and remind him to remain hopeful:

And you must prepare yourself for the worst, Will. Use these days to steel your nerves for that--not to torture yourself over Thomas Arkwright and these perceptions of perfidy. It is easy to see villains in every shadow, and very hard to assume the best of people, particularly in monstremology--for our view of the world is skewed, by virtue of the very thing we study. But hope is no less realistic than despair. It is still our choice whether to live in light or lie down in darkness. (*The Isle of Blood* 184-5)

Will Henry is territorial in regard to his relationship with the monstremologist, yet it is the doctor who leaves Will with the Bates when he goes in pursuit of the *pwdre ser*. It is von Helrung who cares for Will in a way that a parent should, and he tells him that although their view of the world is not always positive, it does not mean that people are all inherently evil.

Furthermore, Will's obsession with Dr. Warthrop is unhealthy and borders on frantic. While he is in the care of the Bates family, his every thought is about the doctor. Thus, it is Lilly, however, who notices that Will constantly think about Dr. Warthrop. Will believes that something terrible has happened, and Lilly tells Will that if he loves Dr. Warthrop he should go in

search for him. Eventually he denies the attachment that he has to the doctor, but he wonders why he has been left behind:

I don't love him. I hate him. I hate Pellinore Warthrop more than I hate anything. More than I hate *you*. You don't know, Lilly. You don't know what it's been like, living there in that house, and what happens in that house and what happens because I live in that house...No, he doesn't beat me. He...he doesn't *see* me. Days go by, weeks sometimes...and then I can't escape him; I can't get away. As if he's taken a rope and tied us together with it. And it's him and me and the rope, and there is no undoing it. That's the thing you don't understand, that your mother doesn't understand, that *no one* understands. He is a thousand miles away--maybe even dead and it doesn't matter. He's right here, right *here*...And there's no getting away. It's too tight, too *tight*. (*The Isle of Blood* 189)

Although he tries to forget Dr. Warthrop and push his memory out of his mind, Will is unable to do so. Both monstrumologist and apprentice have been through too much together, and it is difficult for Will to physically and mentally escape Dr. Warthrop. Despite needing Dr. Warthrop's approval, Will claims that he hates Dr. Pellinore Warthrop more than anyone. He even claims that he hates Lilly, but he spends most of the third volume thinking about her beauty and holding a schoolboy crush on her. Thus, by stating he hates both Dr. Warthrop and Lilly, Will is unable to express his love for anyone in a healthy manner.

While Will expresses to Lilly that he hates the doctor, he does admire him out of fear as well as respect. The one thing that Dr. Warthrop gives Will is freedom. Many times, Will notes how the doctor left him alone for weeks on end. Now that he is removed from Dr. Warthrop, Will is reacting negatively to his freedom. This negative freedom is explored in the article by Thomas

W. Bean and Helen J. Harper, “Exploring Notions of Freedom in and Through Young Adult Literature”: “Negative freedom suggests that the extent of one’s freedom can be determined objectively by the number of barriers to choose. According to this perspective, even in hypothetical conditions of absolute freedom, individuals may not act on their freedom, but they possess it nonetheless” (97). Now, that Will is living with the Bates he is free from Dr. Warthrop. He does not enjoy this new freedom, instead he obsesses over the doctor’s whereabouts and wondering why he has been left behind. After the events of *The Isle of Blood*, Will continues to live with Dr. Warthrop for another three years.

Throughout those three years, something deep inside of him changes. He no longer fears Dr. Warthrop, but he views him with extreme contempt. Yet, every action and killing that he commits is for Dr. Warthrop. In the last volume, *The Final Descent*, Dr. Warthrop’s and Will Henry’s relationship has reached a breaking point as both men speak cruelly toward one another, and both men are unable to understand the other’s perspective. When Will kills innocent men for Dr. Warthrop, the doctor is completely aghast. Will, however, argues that he kept him in the dark for most of the dealings with the *T. cerrejonensis*, and how is he to know Dr. Warthrop’s true intentions. During an intense argument, Dr. Warthrop accuses Will of losing his way. He also states that he does not understand how Will could change so drastically. The doctor’s accusations cause Will to cry out: “Nothing has changed since the beginning. It is not I how has gone blind. It is you whose eyes have been opened” (*The Final Descent* 94). Thus, Will is claiming that he has always been demonic and monstrous. Although in previous volumes, the reader can see that Will is neither of these things. However, Will’s perspective of himself is skewed now. Due to the violence, demonic, and his own actions, Will is unable to see himself as human. Dr. Warthrop, however, still believes that the innocent boy still lives in Will Henry. He cannot believe that Will

is cruel towards others. He wonders how Will can no longer care for others, but Will claims that he has always been monstrous, the doctor just chose to ignore the fact. That statement by Will shows the beginning of his independence from Dr. Warthrop, which is crucial to the choices made by Will in the last volume and his redemption.

Sadly, Dr. Warthrop could never be the substitute parent that Will was looking for, but perhaps Will is uncertain of what he imagines the role of the doctor to be in his life. Throughout the volumes, he speaks highly of him. Despite Will's frustrations with Dr. Warthrop, he is proud of the fact that the doctor needs him for various and difficult tasks because he experiences a sense of importance that a man as brilliant as Dr. Pellinore Warthrop needs him. However, it turns out that Will is wrong and the consequences are dire for those around him. When Dr. Warthrop and Will argue over who is to blame for the death of Abram von Helrung, the Competello, and the near loss of the *T. cerrejonensis*, Will accuses his master of turning him into one of their monsters:

Dr. Kearns was right about one thing: There is something missing in you, a blind spot that prevents you from seeing all the way down to the inescapable conclusion of your philosophy--...The thing you claim to love above all else. You asked what I am, but you know already: I am the thing that waits for you at the bottom of those stairs. (*The Final Descent* 245-46)

Thus, Will is now accusing Dr. Warthrop of being blinded by his love and passion of monstrosity. While Dr. Warthrop is unable to comprehend how his meek assistant has transformed into a demonic monster.

In his Introduction of *On Evil*, Terry Eagleton explains that evil can be committed by anyone at any time. He uses the example of two British boys who murdered a toddler without any reason:

There was an outcry of public horror, though why the public found this particular murder especially shocking is not entirely clear. Children, after all, are only semi-socialised creatures who can be expected to behave pretty savagely from time to time. If Freud is to be credited, they have a weaker superego or moral sense than their elders. In this sense, it is surprising that such grisly events do not occur more often. (1)

Thus, Terry Eagleton is stating that unless someone teaches a child right from wrong, his or her actions are based on survival. Children do not always know right from wrong, but adults expect children to reasonably discern their savage behavior with civilized behavior. In other words, throughout his time with Dr. Warthrop, Will is on the precipice of childhood and adulthood. He is a semi-socialized creature, and working in the field of monstrosity has only made him more monstrous. It is Dr. Warthrop who cannot comprehend that monstrosity can have a negative effect on his apprentice.

Will is quick to point out, however, that Dr. Warthrop chose to be blind and ignore Will's transformation. Furthermore, Dr. Warthrop cannot bear to see how Will has changed. He states his regret in taking Will in to live with him:

I have made a terrible mistake...I never should have taken you in---and in that one respect you are right: I am a hypocrite. There is no room for pity, and I took pity. No room for mercy, and I was merciful---...I sacrificed everything for you!...And at every turn you have hindered me, burdened me, betrayed me! Everything was perfect, down to this last instance, until you butted your head where it didn't belong. (*The Final Descent* 246)

Thus, Dr. Warthrop claims that he has sacrificed so much for Will, but Will has mentioned many times that the doctor usually ignored him for days at a time. Hence, it is only in the last volume does Will actually betray Dr. Warthrop. In the earlier volumes, however, Will does everything that he is asked to do. Now that he has done something against Dr. Warthrop's wishes, he is seen as a burden and a traitor. This accusation only places more strain on their relationship.

During the events of the final volume, Will Henry actually does leave Dr. Warthrop. When he leaves, all Dr. Warthrop can say is, "I have saved you from yourself for the last time" (271). Thus, Dr. Warthrop believes that he can no longer protect Will from the gruesome monsters, or from his own actions and behaviors anymore. Now, Will Henry is a creature that is loose upon the world, a failed experiment. Instead of staying away, an adult Will does return to Dr. Warthrop. He is unable to leave the man alone because their fates are tied like a rope with a knot that cannot be undone. However, despite claiming that he hates the doctor and is done with him, Will still returns.

Now, it is Dr. Warthrop who is the changed man. He is no longer the honorable man that Will admired and feared as a child. When Will returns, all Dr. Warthrop can say is: "Leave...you were right to leave before. Right to leave, wrong to ever come back. Leave us, leave us. It is too late for us, but not for you" (*The Final Descent* 186). Thus, Dr. Warthrop believes that his actions are irredeemable. He has killed a young woman, Beatrice in order to protect his grotesque snake. He is even claiming that after all that Will has been through, his sins and actions, that he still has a chance of redemption. Several years, perhaps decades ago, Dr. Warthrop tells Will he will no longer save him from himself. Now, he believes that Will can be saved. The reader can notice the contradiction of regret, remorse, and redemption that Dr. Warthrop has for his former apprentice.

Will Henry also has his own personal regret and remorse. As a child, he lost his parents in a fire, and Will witnesses how his father and mother are engulfed in flames:

I screamed for my mother as smoke and the stench of burning flesh filled the little room. She rushed into the kitchen carrying one of my blankets, which she proceeded to slap at my father's withering form, all the while screaming hysterically for me to *run*. By now the flames had crawled up the wall to caress the ceiling timbers. The smoke was thick, and I flung open the door behind me to allow it to escape, but the allowing instead a fresh influx of air spinning soot, I saw my father lunge for her, and that was the last I saw of my parents while they lived, enfolded in each other's arms, my mother trying in vain to extricate herself from his clutches as the fire enfolded them in its. (*The Monstrumologist* 341)

While his father has lost his mind and reason, Will's mother is aware of her impending death. She tells Will to run for his life before he is killed as well. Following the actions of a dutiful son, Will flees from his house and watches as everything he once loves and cherishes go up in flames. Yet Will also blames himself for running because he opens the door, and he was the cause of the flames spreading faster. If he had not run, then he would have died as well. It is Will's mother who wishes for her son to escape with his life. She loves him wholeheartedly and wants him to continue living. Thus, Will does just what his mother asked him to do, although it causes him great grief:

And my confession had been true: I did run, and I have been running ever since. Running from the acrid smell of my parents' melting flesh and the pungent stench of my mother's burning hair. Running from the groaning joists as they collapsed behind me, and the bestial roar of the gluttonous flame chomping and chewing everything in its path. Running, running, ever running. Running still, running to this day nearly thirty thousand days later, always running. (342)

It is by running that Will feels guilt. He believes that he should have perished in the flames along with his parents as a family. Also, the act of running replays in his mind for a long time. The image of his parents dying is ingrained in his mind, and the guilt he feels for leaving them does not easily dissipate. Thus, Will believes that as a child, he should be blamed for actions that are not his fault.

When Will records his story in the final volume, he embraces his past actions. The reader may have a hard time distinguishing if Will's contradictory nature is a result of madness or intentional cruelty. However, Will does remain consistent in one aspect of his life again; he runs. After Will's and Dr. Warthrop's last falling out, he leaves the doctor behind. When Will kills the Camorra, Dr. Warthrop is livid at him because he has started a war. Since Will is tired of being accused of being an idiot, he runs away. He hears the words of the hitman, Mr. Faulk, in his head, "Man has a right to defend himself" (*The Final Descent* 241). Now, Will is not only defending himself from the Camorra, but he is also defending himself from Dr. Warthrop. Will blames the doctor for withholding information about the monstrous snake. He also believes that the doctor has caused all of his hardships. Thus, this causes Will to say: "That is the issue. The only one that mattered. Yes. The only one. I left" (241). Before when Will is a child, he refuses to ever leave Dr. Warthrop, and he reacts negatively when the doctor leaves him. Now, his contradictory nature causes him to leave.

Once Will leaves Dr. Warthrop, He is finally free. However, his freedom is not permanent because he still returns to Dr. Warthrop some years later, When upon his return, he sees the state of the doctor and his house. Dr. Warthrop is now bemoaning the state of his affairs as well as everything that has happened between him and Will. Furthermore, Dr. Warthrop still remembers how Will refers to himself as one of his creations. This causes Dr. Warthrop to tell Will: "You are not my creation you know" (*The Final Descent* 40). By admitting this, Dr. Warthrop is trying to

make right with Will, and he is attempting to ask Will for forgiveness. It is Will's response that is tragic: "No, Warthrop,...I am not anything. I am not anything at all" (40). Thus, Will believes that he neither monster nor man. Terry Eagleton in Chapter Three of *On Evil*, defines the characteristic of an evil person: "The evil cannot be persuaded out of their destructive behaviour because there is no rationality behind what they do" (157). Now, the reader must conclude if Will's destructive behavior is without rationality. This may not be the case because everything he does is for Dr. Warthrop. It is also for his love of monstrumology. When Will studies with Dr. Warthrop, a new world of temptations has opened for him. The violence of monstrumology directly effects Will, this violence leads to a contradictory relationship with Dr. Warthrop, as well as the reader having to infer if Will ever found his redemption.

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