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## Charming Child-Snatchers: Forming the Bogeyman in The Pied Piper, Peter Pan, and The Ted Bundy Tapes

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Charming Child-Snatchers: Forming the Bogeyman  
in *The Pied Piper*, *Peter Pan*, and  
*The Ted Bundy Tapes*

Maren Noel Nield

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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## ABSTRACT

### Charming Child-Snatchers: Forming the Bogeyman in *The Pied Piper*, *Peter Pan*, and *The Ted Bundy Tapes*

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Master of Arts

In January 2019, Netflix released the unexpectedly popular *Conversations with a Killer: The Ted Bundy Tapes*. Joe Berlinger, true crime director, compiled interviews with Bundy, law enforcement authorities involved with Bundy's arrest and trial, and members of Bundy's community to create a four-part docu-series focusing "on a man whose personality, good looks, and social graces defied the serial-killer stereotype, [which allowed] him to hide in plain sight" (Berlinger). The somewhat romanticized *Ted Bundy Tapes* serve as an example of modern folklore, in which the archetypal bogeyman has been narrativized for contemporary society as a charming, rather than hideous, monster. This bogeyman trope—a child-snatching, fear-inducing, paranoia-provoking monster—can be traced back through a number of famous folkloric tales, like *The Pied Piper*, through the fairytale realm, as illustrated with *Peter Pan*, and into popular contemporary media with productions like the *Ted Bundy Tapes* and *Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil and Vile*. These folkloresque narratives help to explain how certain trials or traumas were overcome. The *Ted Bundy Tapes* opened a discourse community surrounding Ted Bundy as more than a historically recorded villain, but as an almost fictive evil hiding behind a "hot" façade. Forming Bundy as a charming child-snatcher and then presenting this character in a widely available docu-series promulgated the surrounding lore, making Bundy into a bogeyman. Instead of romanticizing Bundy now, we have to recognize his form as a bogeyman character in order for this archetype to serve in a truly useful cautionary capacity and to help us work through inevitable trauma.

Keywords: Ted Bundy, Bogeyman, bogeyman, Pied Piper, Peter Pan, trauma studies, Caroline Levine, form, child-snatcher, folklore, folkloresque, romanticization

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE PAGE .....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iv
Charming Child-Snatchers: Forming the Bogeyman in <i>The Pied Piper</i> , <i>Peter Pan</i> , and <i>The Ted Bundy Tapes</i> .....	1
Bogeyman Definition and Archetype.....	2
Caroline Levine’s <i>Forms</i> .....	4
Identifying Motifs—Child-Snatching, Fear-Inducing, Paranoia-Provoking.....	5
Communal Narrativization and Trauma Theory.....	7
Working Through Trauma.....	8
Communal Narratives.....	10
Therapeutic Stories.....	12
Forming the Charming Bogeyman.....	13
<i>The Pied Piper of Hamelin</i> .....	13
<i>Peter Pan</i> .....	14
The Silver Screen and Social Media.....	17
Ted Bundy Lore.....	19
Community Responses.....	21

Using the Charming Bogeyman to Work through Trauma.....	23
Notes .....	26
Works Cited .....	28

Charming Child-Snatchers: Forming the Bogeyman in *The Pied Piper*, *Peter Pan*, and  
*The Ted Bundy Tapes*

In January 2019, Netflix released the unexpectedly popular *Conversations with a Killer: The Ted Bundy Tapes*. Joe Berlinger, true crime director known for *Paradise Lost* (1996), compiled interviews with Bundy, law enforcement authorities during Bundy's arrest and trial, and members of Bundy's community to create a four-part docu-series focusing "on a man whose personality, good looks and social graces defied the serial-killer stereotype, [which allowed] him to hide in plain sight." In so doing, Berlinger recognized a central fear ingrained in the human psyche: We are afraid of the unknown, especially when it hides beneath a familiar façade.<sup>1</sup> As Berlinger notes in an interview with Ricky Camilleri for the BUILD Series<sup>2</sup>, "We want to think that serial killers are these dark, twisted-looking, easily identifiable people because that implies [that] we can identify them and avoid them." But what Berlinger states next latches onto a seemingly age-old fear reemerging in the study of Bundy: "What Bundy teaches us is that the people who do the most evil in the world are often the people closest to us and the people you least expect" (Camilleri 00:04:03-14). The romanticized *Ted Bundy Tapes* serve as an example of the "folkloresque," in which the archetypal bogeyman has been re-narrativized for contemporary society as a charming, rather than hideous, monster (Foster and Tolbert). Berlinger further toys with this same idea in his critically acclaimed *Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil and Vile*. In fact, in casting former Disney heartthrob Zac Efron as Ted Bundy, Berlinger extends the bogeyman archetype into an increasingly romanticized and popular folkloresque character, the charming child-snatcher.

This expanded bogeyman narrative, in which Ted Bundy is formed into an archetypal monster, has the potential to serve in a cautionary and therapeutic form to help communities

work through predatory trauma. However, in order for this Ted Bundy narrative to work in this manner we must recognize its place in folklore. William “Bert” Wilson noted that in folklore, “what actually happened is often less important than what we think happened. We are motivated not by actual fact but by what we believe to be fact. And if we believe something to be true, that belief will have consequences in our lives and the lives of others” (54). Therefore, when Ted Bundy is narrativized, Bundy’s physical actions are not necessarily what live on, but rather the archetypal, yet charming character and the somewhat fear-mongering narrative associated with him. This archetypal character, namely a child-snatching, fear-inducing, paranoia-provoking bogeyman bears remarkable resemblance to earlier cautionary tales.

The bogeyman is perhaps more complex than most might first assume. I want to emphasize how the proper “Bogeyman” differs from the improper “bogeyman.” The proper “Bogeyman” offers a more definitive form and might call forward a specific character or image; for example, we might think of the iconic Bogeyman from Tim Burton’s *A Nightmare Before Christmas*, from DreamWorks *Rise of the Guardians*, or from the popular horror trilogy *Boogeyman*. These more classic Bogeymen are physically imposing and terrifying; their outward appearance matches their inward evil. The improper “bogeyman,” also represented in myriad folkloric tales, calls forth a less definitive physical form, something more akin to the unknown monster-under-the-bed. The most basic definition of bogeyman, taken from the Oxford English Dictionary, is “an imaginary evil spirit or being, used to frighten children.” Where Bogeyman is more definitive and elicits a fairly specific form, bogeyman is ambiguous, non-descript, and malleable. In this sense, its unknown form is what makes it scary; indeed, adding specific parameters to the bogeyman’s formlessness can detract from the creature’s terror. Regardless of



whether or not it has a specific physical form, both the Bogeyman and bogeyman threaten the well-being of children and elicit great fear in children and their parents.

The bogeyman trope—a child-snatching, fear-inducing, paranoia-provoking monster—can be traced back through a number of famous folkloric tales through the fairytale realm and forward into popular contemporary media. In this manner, the bogeyman resides in an intertextual realm Foster and Tolbert deem the “folkloresque.” By their definition, the folkloresque is “an item (or element of an item) in the ‘style’ of folklore; that is connected to something beyond/before itself, to some traditions or folkloric source existing outside the popular culture context; and that the product itself is potentially of folkloric value, connected in some way with the process of folklore creation and transmission” (5). Recurring in multiple times and cultures, the bogeyman first appeared, formless, in lullabies, campfire stories, and bedtime tales, creating a sort of cultural memory around the bogeyman archetype. These bogeyman stories reflect the customs and mores of the society at the time of their origination and are often retold in slightly different ways that reflect the customs and beliefs of current society. The connections between these stories, the recurring characteristics, and the typical basis in traumatic experience place this bogeyman network firmly in the folkloresque. These folk(esque) narratives help to explain how certain trials or traumas were overcome at the point of experience.<sup>3</sup> In addition, they have the capacity to engage and evince audience action, to encourage them to avoid the bogeyman and the evil it brings. In this way, tales of the bogeyman may serve as cautionary tales for succeeding generations (Frank 12-19), allowing these future generations to work through inevitable trauma.

As Berlinger noted, though, such evil is often difficult to perceive and can be effectively hidden by an attractive cover. The term “bogeyman” typically elicits an image of a hideous

monster and causes fear and paranoia in children and parents alike; however, when such a monster is hidden by a pretty facade, it has the potential to induce even greater fear since its evil is no longer readily recognized. The bogeyman character is both alluring and dangerous. The recent romanticization of Ted Bundy in contemporary media does just this—it identifies Ted Bundy, serial snatcher and murderer, as a bogeyman with a pretty façade and warns children and parents alike of the evil that can lurk in unexpected places.<sup>4</sup> The charming bogeyman—found in stories like *The Pied Piper*, *Peter Pan*, and, now, *The Ted Bundy Tapes*—serves as a facet of a much longer folkloric tradition in which the bogeyman motif is evident in a structural pattern that pervades multiple times and cultures. Contextualizing its existence in contemporary culture serves an age-old purpose of folklore, as a cautionary tale and as a therapeutic way to work through trauma. We need stories like these to work through trauma—we need to recognize this bogeyman archetype as representative of this specific type of trauma in order for these stories to work in a therapeutic manner.

In describing the bogeyman trope, I find Caroline Levine’s *Forms* particularly useful. Levine identifies four major facets of form: whole, rhythm, hierarchy, and network. She explains how forms, in her mind, are actually bounded wholes in which different descriptions, sizes, and labels are contained. These wholes, like the bogeyman container, for example, are then combined into a rhythm or pattern, emphasizing a connection between similar containers. We then give these containers a level of importance within a hierarchy (like the difference between Bogeyman and bogeyman). These connections and levels create a network surrounding a central idea or whole. Form, by Levine’s definition, “always indicates an arrangement of elements—an ordering, patterning, or shaping” (213). Bogeyman, then, as a descriptor, becomes a sort of form, a whole into which we can designate these traits. By this definition, then, to associate certain

characteristics—such as unknown, terror-inducing, child-snatching, etc.—with a particular term, like bogeyman, is to create a form, even if it includes no particular physical dimensions. Furthermore, since there is no known origin of the bogeyman character, there is no one specific bogeyman description. And because there are multiple characters that suit these traits, like *Pied Piper*, *Peter Pan*, and Ted Bundy, we can then identify a sort of rhythm or pattern of repeating bogeyman traits across cultures. The bogeyman’s appearance across cultures illustrates this pattern. In some cultures, this character is more than a fable used to scare children—it is based on an actual traumatic event within the community. These events give the character, the bogeyman, more poignance and credibility. The use of the term “bogeyman” as a descriptor for the child-snatching, fear-inducing, and paranoia-provoking motif places these characteristics into a bounded whole, or trope, allowing us to access what we could term the bogeyman network or archive.

Following Levine’s pattern of forms illustrates how and why a bogeyman might be formed, what the purpose of that formation is, and why that purpose is meaningful. As noted earlier, the bogeymen can emerge as a result of a traumatic experience within a community. The bogeyman folk narrative is in these cases a story created in an attempt to explain or understand the traumatic event. By extension, this narrative also serves to warn the future community about this now folkloric bogeyman. In order to recognize the creation of this folk narrative in relation to a traumatic event, we must first identify the recurring patterns within each tale. In his *Narrative Motif-Analysis as a Folklore Method*, Stith Thompson stated, “Inherent in the corpus of frequently told tales, pioneering folklorists noticed recurrent characters, settings, incidents, and events that ‘keep on being used by storytellers’ and hence appear to be ‘the stuff out of which tales are made’” (7). They judged these motifs to be “worthy of note because of something

out of the ordinary, something of sufficiently striking character” (Thompson 19, “Introduction”). By this definition, child-snatching, fear-inducing, and paranoia-provoking bogeyman traits do indeed combine to create a folkloristic motif. I use this motif to track the recurring bogeyman character through popular folk and fairy tales leading up to the romanticization of Ted Bundy.

Identifying these bogeyman motifs in a number of folktales across cultures further illustrates this rhythm and allows us to begin recognizing the hierarchical nature of the bogeyman narratives. As stated earlier, anthropologists, historians, and psychologists often turn to folklore and fairytale when studying societal traditions and cultural identity in order to illustrate the beliefs, customs, and conventions prevalent in society at the time of the tale’s telling. The bogeyman crosses cultures, appearing in tales from South America to Central America to North America to Europe to Africa and to Asia. In his book, *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres*, Elliot Oring states that “folk narratives” tend to exist in multiple versions, following a “recreation process” that reflects the past and present and the individual and community. Because bogeymen started out in multiple folk narratives, so too does the bogeyman exist in multiple variations. Furthermore, Oring implies that not only are folk narratives ongoing processes, they are not necessarily ancient or even very old; nor do they necessarily represent all that is good, beautiful, or noble (122-123). The bogeyman, as a recurring character, is also not necessarily ancient, and it certainly does not represent all that is good, beautiful, or noble. The bogeyman narrative, like other folk narratives, is a creation of individuals formed during social interactions in everyday life and informed by surrounding cultural tradition (Wilson 83).

Of course, we must recognize the issues with using this motif or tale-type to identify recurring patterns. In 1962, Alan Dundes noted that classifying tales as types is based upon “the subjective evaluation of the classifier” (96-97). While recognizing these bogeyman motifs may

be subjective, stories like the bogeyman narratives help us to give form to the worst that people can do and to avoid resulting pain (as a cautionary tale) because, in a sense, we are trained to find the magical, beautiful, and charming trustworthy. The classic bogeyman, which we might qualify with the proper noun *Bogeyman*, appears creepy or hideous and obvious in its intention to harm. The bogeyman characteristics and surrounding narratives I use to complicate this definition nuance the classic form, adding magic, beauty, and charm to the otherwise overt child-snatcher. As Tolbert and Foster note, “Within a popular culture text...the perceived folkloric motif can be thought of as an indexical sign that points directly to a particular tradition and therefore stimulates the consumer to mentally or emotionally access all that he or she knows about that tradition” (21). We create and recognize these bogeyman narratives in part so we can recontextualize them in our own culture and society; today the magical, beautiful, and charming are often a mask for the sinister and terrible. Throughout this article, I justify my identification of these motifs in bogeyman narratives to evidence our recurring creation of folk and fairy tales to explain and understand traumatic events. By Levine’s definition, identifying these motifs in various narratives allows us to recognize a rhythm or pattern allowing us to give the bogeyman form, albeit still somewhat malleable, and to use this form as a cautionary tale of potential traumas.

More traumatic folk narratives, like bogeyman narratives, often seem to have an instigator in a historical traumatic event. These narratives serve as an explanation of this trauma and a warning to prevent others from experiencing that same trauma. Take Krampus, for example. First recorded in early German folklore, Krampus, revisited in countless folktales, fairytales, novels, films, and television series since the 1600s, is a well-known folkloric figure rumored to snatch and eat children if they don’t behave. The counterpart to the mythical Santa

Claus, who rewards well-behaved children with gifts, Krampus is an effective bogeyman character as he plays on the inherent fear and trauma a child feels upon receiving no gifts for Christmas. Portrayed as a fanged, cloven hoofed, horned devil, the Krampus character also serves as a rather terrifying warning for any children who misbehave: be good or you will be snatched by a monster (Ridenour 26). Now, this isn't to say that the Krampus narrative emerged following a legitimate event where children were taken for misbehaving; however, an imagined trauma based on an element of truth, like not getting presents for bad behavior, often serves to deter children from behaving badly. Evidentially, the child-snatching, fear inducing, and paranoia-provoking bogeyman character, Krampus, is loosely based on a universally experienced trauma and has been formed into a cautionary narrative. Other folk characters that fall under this example archetype include La Llorona, El Cucuy, and Baba Yaga. Krampus has the most definitive physical form of these characters; however, each character's physical description varies from story to story. While each of these characters has no definitive origin tale, they universally reflect childhood trauma through communally developed cautionary narratives.

We saw this same communal narrativization, the act of telling a story in an effort to better understand and communicate an event or experience, emerge following the nationally televised Ted Bundy Trial. Narrativization potentially allows a community to work through a traumatic event, such as that which Bundy repeatedly caused. The narrative form produced from Bundy's trial, arguably a traumatic experience in itself, could serve as a cautionary tale, warning the community to be wary of such characters or events. Narrativizing the trial allows this bogeyman-esque form to potentially serve in a predictive capacity, informing the community of which traits to be aware. The most common narratives we see emerging from trauma are news stories and court testimonies, such as those shared during Bundy's trial. Unfortunately, "trauma," as trauma

studies scholar Dominick LaCapra states, “is itself a shattering experience that disrupts or even threatens to destroy experience” (115). Ideally, we could trust the record of a person relating the events of a traumatic experience, but as LaCapra notes, “testimonies concerning extreme, disconcerting events” have a tendency to vary based on the situation. The testimonies of survivors “may well contain accurate factual statements concerning events, but their accuracy does not derive only from the further fact that the person recounting them actually lived through the events in question” (115-117). Relating a traumatic experience might make the event seem more credible, but “testimonies always supplement facts with experience and performative qualities” (115). Because courtroom testimony always has a performative aspect, it must be cross-checked to determine accuracy and evidentiary value. In Bundy’s case, in addition to his performance in court, Bundy also used his charm to romance his victims and the surrounding community before the trial, further diluting the verity of the courtroom testimonies.

Most trauma studies work as a response to a traumatic event. Research into trauma often studies the after effects of an experience, primarily looking into courtroom proceedings. In essence, trauma studies attempt to find the verifiable truth of an experience to allow the testimony to serve as a credible narrative in court. In order for a traumatic event to be successfully formed into a folk narrative, and for this narrative to help the community work through a trauma and serve in a predictive capacity, we must sacrifice some elements of what trauma studies scholars might deem the truth. Renowned scholar on memory and experience in literature, Cathy Caruth, stated, “the transformation of the trauma into a narrative memory that allows the story to be verbalized and communicated, to be integrated into one’s own, and others’, knowledge of the past, may lose both the precision and the force that characterizes traumatic recall” (154). Because of this loss of “precision,” we must be careful in narrativizing traumatic

events, even when this narrativization might help us work through the trauma. As is the case with the narrativization of Ted Bundy, we lose, as Caruth notes, “the event’s essential incomprehensibility, the force of its *affront to understanding*” (154, author italics). In a sense, narrativizing a trauma forces reality into what we might call a “second world,” a place where reality is less tangible, more subjective, and, therefore, has less of an effect on the victim.<sup>5</sup> As Frank notes, “If stories are suspenseful, if they are open to multiple interpretations, if they express an inherent morality, if they shape-shift, then the utilization of these capacities rarely sits easily with the needs of truth telling” (91). While a testimony in court might support existing evidence and work toward a conviction, it rarely, if ever, relates the whole truth. LaCapra notes how these stories often offer a limited and biased interpretation of the traumatic events, given that each narrative is meant to persuade its audience of a character’s guilt or innocence, rather than to warn about the potential recurrence of such an event, again, like Bundy’s serial murders and trial.

The *Ted Bundy Tapes* not only romanticized Bundy himself, through the act of making something appear better or more appealing than its reality, but portrayed many of his victims as naïve and vulnerable, even child-like, as possible. The purported truth of a courtroom testimony is even further diluted if it later enters the folkloric realm through the addition of a communal performance to the personal performance aspect of the story. Because “folklore is considered common property—nobody owns it,” many feel folklore is not a legitimate measure of human culture; however, as Foster and Tolbert note in their *Folkloresque*, this lack of ownership “is the very thing that allows the proliferation of versions and variants...indeed, all the processes through which expressive culture is transmitted from person to person, from culture to culture, from one generation to the next” (23). In this manner, folklore narratives, “provide a sort of



automatic sampling.” Folklore will “move from individual expression” to “the communal expression of those who preserve it...in a short time reflecting quite accurately the consensus of the group” (Wilson 48). This process, Wilson calls communal re-creation, provides a different sort of truth, one not diluted by an individual bias or convoluted memory, but confirmed as truth by the community who choose to believe it as such.

In *The Ted Bundy Tapes*, both Bundy and his victims are romanticized to some degree, with Bundy portrayed as cunning and charming and his victims portrayed as child-like and vulnerable; this communal narrativization effectively makes Bundy a new bogeyman—charming rather than hideous—inducing fear and paranoia while on the prowl for innocent, child-like victims. Turning reality into a narrative has the potential to more effectively convince the reader or listener of the trauma of the validity of the rhetor’s statement, even if the rhetor’s statement doesn’t reflect the truth. Narrativizing trauma, however, can detract from the vicious reality of an event. The romanticization or, perhaps, re-romanticization of Ted Bundy in *The Ted Bundy Tapes* and *Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil and Vile* has faced extreme backlash for this same reason—many feel the response these projects elicited detracts from the true horror of Bundy’s actions, from the trauma the victims, the families, the communities, and the country felt.<sup>6</sup> Trauma, itself, is not something that can be wrapped up in a box with a neat little bow, or even in a brightly wrapped docu-series. But to ensure an event is remembered and becomes adequately cautionary, the performative nature of testimony, the persuasive power of a rhetor, and the willing naiveté of an audience serve this narrativization effectively. The narrative—how we tell and react to the story—becomes more important for working through the trauma than the actual event itself.

Arthur Frank, in his book *Letting Stories Breathe* reiterates and expands this idea of narrativization. Narrativizing an experience or event can allow stories, as Frank notes, to “give people a sense of subjectivity.” After hearing or reading a story, the listener or reader creates a sort of discourse community surrounding that narrative in which to discuss or relate “shared understandings of particular stories” (18) Accordingly, stories have a certain capacity to “deal with human trouble, but also the capacity to make TROUBLE” (28); to “make life dramatic and remind people that endings are never assured” (32); to “inform people’s sense of what counts as good and bad, of how to act and how not to act” (36); and “to report truths that have been enacted elsewhere...morphing into their more distinct capacity to *enact* truths” (40, author emphasis). Narrativization also has the capacity to allow the victims of trauma to recapitulate an experience in a way that allows them to work through trauma and step away from the event. Doing so creates this sense of subjectivity and allows them to define their role in the experience and reframe the morality of the event in a therapeutic manner. This subjective retelling of the event becomes the new reality, exiting the harsher “first world” experience and entering into the softer “second world.”

This transition from “first world” reality to “second world” narrative can be problematic, but LaCapra further recognizes how giving a narrative form to a traumatic event may help the original experiencer of the trauma, the community affected by the event, and those later made aware of this trauma through the narrative to work through the trauma. In essence, narratives regarding trauma can be used to understand and explain the event and to allow the story itself to work in a predictive capacity, warning its listeners of potential trauma and helping them to identify what traits need to be avoided. These narratives allow the experiencer to disassociate

from the event, to step back and see the trauma as a story with the potential to help them work through the trauma and help others to avoid the trauma (114-17).

In order to understand and draw out this more nuanced bogeyman narrative, we may follow Levine's blueprint—whole, rhythm, hierarchy and network. Thus far we've identified the whole, or the container, as the term bogeyman. We've determined which traits are a part of this particular motif, namely child-snatching, fear-inducing, and paranoia-provoking; *The Pied Piper*, *Peter Pan*, and the *Ted Bundy Tapes* add another dimension to this bogeyman, hiding the stereotypically terrifying and hideous behind a beautiful and charming façade. We turn now to identify these traits in folklore, fairytale, and contemporary popular media to illustrate the predictive potential of this bogeyman container. I look first at the "Pied Piper of Hamelin." The Pied Piper is recorded in a variety of sources, most famously Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm's fairytale collection as "The Children of Hameln."<sup>7</sup> In their telling, the Brothers' Grimm note that this story is purportedly a historical record from 1284, recorded as being inscribed on Town Hall 272 years after the piper led the children away. Evidentially, this event impacted the community so traumatically that the people of Hamelin found it necessary to inscribe the story on the gate of the town's main building. The Brothers' Grimm published this tale in 1816. In their version, the Pied Piper is hired to rid Hamelin of its rats. Upon leading the rats to their death by drowning with his magical flute, the piper demands payment. The people of Hamelin refused to pay the piper. "He returned...now dressed in a hunter's costume, with a dreadful look on his face and wearing a strange red hat," so says the tale. It continues, "...He sounded his fife in the streets, but this time it wasn't rats and mice that came to him, but rather children: a great number of boys and girls from their fourth year on...The swarm followed him, and he led them into a mountain, where he disappeared with them" (Grimm). In total, 132 children were lost, never to be seen

again. The Pied Piper's vengeful response, using his magical powers to snatch the children away, mimics the child-snatching, fear inducing, and paranoia-provoking motifs evident in the "Ted Bundy Tapes." This tale lived on as a local legend and led to the idiomatic phrase "pay the piper" to remind people to pay their debts or suffer the consequences. The Piper's charming nature as a traveling pest control salesman who disappears after stealing the children shows the similarities between this archaic folktale and the lore surrounding the Ted Bundy murders. Just as the Piper charmed the children away, inciting fear and paranoia in parents, it is highly likely that so too did the publicized trial of Ted Bundy persuade parents to warn their children to be more cautious around charming strangers.

I turn next to a less obvious example—Peter Pan. While not a middle-ages horror-inducing German folktale, certain aspects of the much longer and more detailed *Peter Pan* also evidence these bogeyman motifs. First referenced in J.M. Barrie's 1902 adult novel *The Little White Bird* and then reimagined by J.M. Barrie in *Peter Pan; or, The Boy Who Would Not Grow Up* in 1904 as a stage production, Peter Pan typically represents childhood innocence and imagination. Some interpretations, however, see Pan as a malicious, vindictive character incapable of learning right from wrong.<sup>8</sup> With no moral qualms, Pan is, perhaps, even more ambiguous in nature than "adult" cultural bogeymen, like "The Pied Piper," or even Ted Bundy. We note that the stage directions for the first act detail the Darling house and discuss the current condition of the home following Pan's intrusion into the family's life. Barrie's description identifies a card outside the house that now says, "No children." Barrie surmises that "maybe the goings-on of Wendy and her brothers have given the house a bad name." In a further somewhat unnerving description of the Darling house, Barrie makes the claim that "you may dump it down anywhere you like, and if you think it was your house you are very probably right" (87). In one

interpretation, this makes for an exciting and imaginative scene where children can fly and dogs are nannies. By another interpretation, one from a parent's perspective, this description might serve as a caution to the reader—your children can be disappeared in the blink of an eye right from their own bedroom.

The audience's first introduction to Pan, in fact, is watching Mrs. Darling prepare her children for bed. Mrs. Darling sees Pan's face outside the window, and fearing for her children's safety, rushes into the bedroom, crying, "My children!" At this point, Barrie's stage directions state, "She [Mrs. Darling] sits down, relieved, on Wendy's bed; and Wendy and John come in, looking their smallest size, as children tend to do to a mother suddenly in fear for them" (Barrie 89). Despite the beloved nature of Peter Pan as a fairy tale character, his first introduction induces fright. Immortalized in Disney's "You Can Fly," Pan's charming the children to leave London for Neverland only serves to cement Mrs. Darling's fear for the lives of her children. The play closes with Wendy, John, and Michael returning to their nursery, a happier ending than most bogeyman tales, but, before they return, we see a frantic and frazzled Mrs. Darling searching and searching for her lost children. She sobs, "They will never come back" (Barrie 147). Knowing they disappeared from the window, Mrs. Darling has kept the window open in hope of their return. Peter overhears her impassioned explanation of this and immediately closes and bars the window to convince Wendy and her brothers that their mother no longer wants them. In response to Mrs. Darling's cries, Peter shouts, "You will never see Wendy again, lady, for the window is barred!" Thinking to himself, Peter continues, "She wants me to unbar the window. I won't! She is awfully fond of Wendy. I am fond of her too. We can't both have her, lady!" (Barrie 148-149). Although Wendy and the Lost Boys return safely to the Darling family, it is only Peter's childish lack of follow-through in locking the children out that makes this

possible. His exclamations, if followed through, could have convinced Wendy and her brothers never to return home, turning Peter into a terrifying bogeyman who stole the Darling children from their own bedroom in the dark of the night.

Alternative interpretations of Peter Pan include seeing Pan as a representation of death, taking children away in their youth, never to grow old, because, in his mind, dying is better than growing old or seeing Neverland as the place where sick children go in their minds as they fade from the living world. These interpretations reify the almost horror story nature of Peter Pan. Linda Robertson, in her “‘To Die Will be an Awfully Big Adventure’: Peter Pan in World War I,” for example, dives into Barrie’s portrayal of Pan, noting that “to be Peter Pan is to be ‘heartless’—incapable of emotional range” (53). In so noting, Robertson latches onto yet another of these darker interpretations of Pan, one in which Pan does not care about life or death in regard to himself or others.

These darker interpretations of Peter Pan have been adapted in numerous stories, perhaps most famously in ABC’s *Once Upon a Time*, a show whose initial season followed bounty-hunter Emma Swan’s rise to law enforcement professional in the real world/fairytale crossover town Storybrooke. Season 3 of the popular fantasy/mystery series introduced a dark Peter, bent on maintaining his youth, no matter the cost. Portrayed as a vindictive child-snatcher for a full season, dark Peter illustrates this bogeyman archetype in the popular crime genre. The *Pied Piper* is also reimagined in the police/detective drama *Grimm*. “Danse Macabre” follows a young high schooler, with the same abilities to charm and lure as the Pied Piper, who plots a scheme against his school bullies. The episode ends with the boy’s capture, but not before a macabre portrayal of a teacher eaten by rats, a rather dark interpretation of the beloved tale.

In her chapter “Getting Real with Fairy Tales: Magic Realism in *Grimm* and *Once Upon a Time*,” Claudia Schwabe dives into these shows arguing that “current televisual fairy-tale reinventions are based on the rapprochement of the dichotomy between the familiar, visible, nonmagical, ordinary, and rational (the everyday) and the unfamiliar, invisible, magical, extraordinary, and nonrational (the magical)” (295). In her article, Schwabe inadvertently recognizes this bogeyman character when she describes the popular crime show *Grimm*. In the series, fairy tale characters living in the real world hide their true monstrous appearance behind a charming, unassuming mask. Their true appearance can only be seen by descendants of the Brothers’ Grimm. Schwabe notes that, “The series counteracts most audience expectations by alienating the traditional fairy-tale characters in sometimes radical and uncanny ways” (308). *Grimm* subverts stereotyped norms where fairytale creatures are alluring and beautiful and replaces them with a more nuanced portrayal that is more appropriate for a world fascinated with crime-shows. Referencing an online fan response, Schwabe observes that when the audience sees the “CG [computer graphics] of seemingly normal humans flashing into glimpses of their true monster nature, it looks creepy” (306). Adaptations of *Pied Piper* and *Peter Pan* into televised police procedurals illustrate the already emerging pattern of the bogeyman motif. In fact, these police procedurals are where we further see the development of these charming child-snatchers.

This child-snatching bogeyman found form in the medieval era oral folktale *The Pied Piper*, then moved to the early 1900s novel and performed *Peter Pan*, and is now evident in the lore surrounding Ted Bundy on the silver screen and social media. This transition is predictable given folkloric tradition. Greenhill, Rudy, Hamer, and Bosc note that, “Fairy tales [and folk tales] historically developed as oral traditions (told by people in different geographical locations and at various historical times up to the present) and literary stories (written by known authors).”

They recognize that “Throughout its history, however, the form has involved a variety of media, engaging, the visual and/or auditory senses, sometimes resulting in new narrative forms” (15-16). Given this tradition, it is no surprise that folk lore and fairy tales quickly made their way on television and the silver screen, what Rudy and Greenhill identify as “a medium in some ways ideal for the genre” (1). Scholars regularly announce “the death of folklore,” yet television and film seem to be the ideal medium through which to continue an oral tradition and ensure that these stories, in fact, do not “die” (11). Television has allowed characters like the Pied Piper and Peter Pan to reemerge with new life and interpretations and allows us as their audience to recognize reoccurring patterns. In this way, while perhaps not akin with traditional folklore, television procedurals have allowed these “folkloresque products” to be “(re)appropriated by the ‘folk’...who repurpose its component parts, introducing them...into a new folk cultural context.” Analyzing television as an aspect of the folkloresque allows us to “assume different perspectives (multiple perspectives), not lingering on origins or even folklore per se, but exploring perception, social value, and function as well as the agency of creators and consumers in popular culture” (Foster and Tolbert 25). Recognizing these reoccurring patterns evident in tales at first glance so different, such as *Pied Piper*, *Peter Pan*, and *The Ted Bundy Tapes*, helps us establish a network through which to identify child-snatching bogeyman archetypes.

A number of the longest running television crime shows, like *NCIS* and *Criminal Minds*, attempt to dive into the mind of the perpetrator to understand and catch the criminal. In so doing, these television shows often romanticize the representation of serial killers. One such show is *Bates Motel*. Detailing the history of Alfred Hitchcock’s infamous killer Norman Bates from *Psycho*, *Bates Motel* attempts to explain Norman’s criminal behavior. While as a character, Bates suits stereotypical expectations for a killer’s history and life experience, *Bates Motel’s* casting of



Freddie Highmore, known for innocent and lovable characters in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *August Rush*, subverts this stereotype and romanticizes the malicious character. The killer is disguised behind an innocent and child-like appearance (Cuse, Ehrin, and Cipriano). Alfred Hitchcock made this same choice in casting then Hollywood Heartthrob Anthony Perkins in the role of voyeuristic murderer in *Psycho*: charming face, hidden killer. This is somewhat surprising given that the character was inspired by Robert Bloch's novelized interpretation of 1950s serial killer Ed "The Butcher of Plainfield" Gein, a not particularly appealing, grave-robbing-to-make-a-dead-skin-mother-puppet loner. Gein has been made into a folklore character through Norman Bates, now a household horror story, distributed and romanticized across the silver screens (McFarlane 257).

More recent shows and films, like *The Ted Bundy Tapes* and *Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil, and Vile*, express this romanticization and play on the societal fear of being unable to determine good from evil based on physical appearance.<sup>9</sup> The connection between the romanticization and surrounding narrative of Ted Bundy in television and film with the folklore and fairytale classics of *Pied Piper* and *Peter Pan* may seem nebulous at first; however, the Ted Bundy narrative has formed in much the same way as these classic tales of old. Ted Bundy's crimes and televised trial created a lore around the murderer as a charming and terrifying character who could lure the innocent and naïve and escape from justice. The *Ted Bundy Tapes* opened a discourse community surrounding Ted Bundy as more than a historically recorded villain, but as an almost fictive evil hiding behind a "hot" façade. Forming Bundy as a charming child-snatcher and then presenting this character in a widely available docu-series promulgated the surrounding lore, making Bundy into a bogeyman.

Looking into these trends, we note a societal transformation and reimagination of the bogeyman. As we work to identify and form this bogeyman motif, so too is the bogeyman itself transforming and wending its way into the most accessible mediums. Nearly every household today has a television which allows for these previously location-centric bogeymen to escape their cultural compounds and enter into a globalized world. Television has become that medium through which contemporary folklore is often distributed. Recognizing television as a distribution center, a platform that disseminates both classic and current tales, and noting how these stories then open a dialogue surrounding their content, we can see how these narratives can propagate certain patterns and characteristics that could potentially work to caution our interactions in the world. In forming this bogeyman, communities reveal the ever-present fear transmutable and traceable across places, people, and cultures. Recognizing these patterns could help us predict bogeyman action and avoid catastrophic consequences.

With unexpectedly high viewership, *The Ted Bundy Tapes* and *Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil, and Vile* highlight society's current serial killer obsession (Haggerty and Ellerbrok). Popular police procedurals and dramas perpetuate this fascination. Recent trends have portrayed villains or killers not as bodyless or physically frightening, but as attractive, charmers—often even portrayed by former Disney Channel stars and Hollywood heartthrobs (Dowler). More archaic bogeymen, like those from folk and fairytales, were typically feared for their formlessness or frightening physical form (like El Cucuy, La Llarona, Baba Yaga, Krampus, etc.); the new bogeymen of today are feared because of their charming form. No longer is the monster-under-the-bed a monster by form, if we are looking at form by Levine's container definition; now the monster-under-the-bed is someone you might willingly invite into your room, examples of which we see with killers like Ted Bundy. The new bogeyman's charm

is not folklorically magical as much as it is charismatic—in any case, the new bogeymen are equally captivating, beguiling, entrancing, and terrifying. *The Ted Bundy Tapes* and *Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil, and Vile* serve as a sort of modern fairytale archetype to illustrate how the charming child-snatcher has again reemerged in contemporary society. As Berlinger noted, in an interview with *The Salt Lake Tribune*, “He [Bundy] teaches us that people who do evil are not these two-dimensional monsters who are easy to spot in society. Quite the contrary. They’re usually the people you least expect and the people you trust” (Pierce).

Berlinger attempted to establish this persona in both his docu-series and film; however, both received intense backlash and unexpected feedback claiming the productions romanticized and overly humanized one of America’s most vicious killers. One such unexpected response was the “Bundy-stans” who saw Ted Bundy merely as attractive and charming, not as a malicious criminal. Social media sites ran rampant in the month following the release of the tapes on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Bundy’s death with hashtags commenting on Bundy’s “hotness” and sexual appeal. This, as Lucy Jones’ article for *The Independent* noted, put Ted Bundy right back where he wanted to be: the spotlight. On January 28, 2019, Netflix US responded to the fawning Twitter users stating, “I’ve seen a lot of talk about Ted Bundy’s alleged hotness and would like to gently remind everyone that there are literally THOUSANDS of hot men on the service—almost all of whom are not convicted serial murderers” (author emphasis).<sup>10</sup> In so stating, Netflix acknowledged the growing fascination with Ted Bundy, particularly with young teenage girls.

The very charm that convinced women, men, teachers, churches, and schools alike that Bundy was trustworthy perpetuated the romanticization of Ted Bundy, a romanticization that began when Bundy’s trial was first publicized in the 80s, and maybe even prior given Bundy’s ability to romance his victims and surrounding community. This romanticization has created a

sort of campfire-horror-story lore around Ted Bundy. This is especially dangerous because, as we discussed earlier, narrativizing trauma can help us work through a traumatic experience but can also detract from the vicious reality of a traumatic event. It's rare to meet someone who grew up in Utah in the 1970s who doesn't have a story to tell about meeting, seeing, knowing, or hearing about the man or his many victims. In so doing, we have, just as Bundy did, designated his victims as merely a type—young, female, naïve, and child-like—who fell victim to Bundy's trustworthy appearance, suave speaking, established reputation, and charismatic personality. By most accounts of the man, Bundy was charming, and he charmed these young women away from the safety of their homes. During his reign of terror from Washington State to Florida, Bundy snatched and brutally murdered at least 30 unsuspecting women, terrifying their families and communities (Berlinger, *The Ted Bundy Tapes*).

Bundy's case was the first time a serial killer trial was covered on national television making it, arguably, the first televised "true crime" media sensation. This television coverage turned Bundy into a kind of celebrity, fueling the "evil genius myth" while commentating on his put together appearance, impressive manner of speaking, attractive features, and charismatic attitude (Jones). "Considered attractive and charming, Bundy became something of a national celebrity...and many women flocked to the courtroom day after day," Berlinger noted in an interview with the Salt Lake Tribune. These televised appearances also served to cement Bundy's entering into a folkloric realm. Appearing on screen in peoples living rooms and then entering into their nightmares further allows us to see Bundy as a bogeyman—a horror behind a charming face. Berlinger continued, "He [Bundy] took the opportunity to turn his trial into entertainment, strutting around the courtroom in a powder blue suit and bowtie while acting as his own attorney" (Samsian). The trial, according to Jones, "became a ridiculous pantomime

conducted by an entitled narcissist who cracked jokes which made everyone laugh as they forgot the bodies of the women and children lying in the ground.” Even the Judge who found Bundy guilty said to the man, “You’re a bright young man. I don’t have animosity to you” (Jones). Even as Bundy stood trial for murder, his charm romanced the person sentencing him to death. Bundy’s performance in the courtroom created a character, a mask, behind which hid a terrifying bogeyman.

The folkloresque narrative surrounding Ted Bundy’s 1970s killing spree turned him into a bogeyman—a child-snatching, fear inducing, and paranoia-provoking figure hiding behind a trustworthy and charming façade. In the years following the highly publicized trial, Bundy’s fame faded, but with the 2019 release of *The Ted Bundy Tapes* and *Extremely Wicked, Shockingly Evil, and Vile*, America’s obsession with one of its most horrific serial killers has reemerged. In her same article from *The Independent*, Jones questions why we are so intrigued by a violent criminal who doesn’t look like he could “tear girls apart.” She further wonders why his looks apparently give him a free pass to be lusted over and, in a sense, glorified. “Certainly we are primed from childhood,” Jones writes in response, “in the books we read and the Disney films we watch[ed], to expect monsters and baddies to be ugly. But you’d think by adulthood, it wouldn’t surprise us that good-looking people aren’t necessarily good. Or that they can inflict great harm.” And perhaps we are primed from childhood to see ugly as evil and beautiful as good, but perhaps that’s because we’ve even romanticized the stories that warn us to be afraid of the charming child-snatcher. And perhaps we’ve merely overlooked these darker tales and interpretations in our hunt for the beautiful. We make these stories pretty because we are drawn to the beautiful. Yet these beautiful faces, beautiful characters, or beautiful stories can often hide a darker truth beneath a charming cover—that of a child-snatching bogeyman.

As referenced previously, in folklore, “what actually happened is often less important than what we think happened. We are motivated not by actual fact but by what we believe to be fact. And if we believe something to be true, that belief will have consequences in our lives and the lives of others” (Wilson 54). The charming bogeyman reflects this changing belief and changing reality. The stereotypical folkloric bogeyman, formless and hideous, has been recast modernly in a charming and attractive façade. Stiofán Ó. Cadhla, Irish folklorist, notes that, “Folklore studies was long a romantic hobbyhorse, and today it must insist on its right to explore the social and cultural fallout caused by the quarrying of ‘mere folklore’ from the most grotesque nadir of human behavior.” Cadhla continues, “Legend tends to echo life, and life echoes legend as well; as a result, a common rejoinder to accounts of legends should be, perhaps, that they are not in fact legend, but truth” (118). The nuanced charming bogeyman, evident in the likes of the *Pied Piper*, *Peter Pan*, and *The Ted Bundy Tapes*, depicts a child-snatching, fear inducing, paranoia-provoking monster and dredges up an archetypal warning to us all: be wary of the danger that could be hiding behind the allure of the beautiful and charming. The narrativization process of this bogeyman character and the subsequent folklore narrative is useful in helping a community work through associated trauma. Narrativizing the bogeyman forces these characters into a visible archetype, making the narratives accessible for thought and discussion in society. The communal narrativization and romanticization of Bundy has formed him into a folkloric bogeyman archetype useful in helping the charming bogeyman narrative work in both a cautionary capacity and to help communities work through trauma. The modern re-narrativization in television shows and films of these charming bogeymen, based on real, lived experiences, creates a more accurate tale for our time. These almost romantic representations of bogeymen demonstrate how the bogeyman narrative isn’t just a story to convince children to stay

in bed, but a charming and terrifying reality. The charming bogeyman reminds us that life is messy—it doesn't always have a happy, or even assured, ending. Folklore and the folkloresque are indeed pragmatic tools for understanding trauma. We need stories to work through the inevitable trauma of life, and we need charming bogeyman stories to warn us of real-life, charming bogeymen.

## Notes

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1. Dr. Robert Carleton discusses the human fear of the unknown in his *Journal of Anxiety Disorders* 2016 article “Fear of the Unknown: One Fear to Rule Them All?” Carleton defines fear of the unknown as “an individual’s propensity to experience fear caused by the perceived absence of information at any level of consciousness or point of processing.” His article develops and evaluates the proposition that “fear of the unknown may be a, or possibly the, fundamental fear” underlying human anxieties.

2. The BUILD Series is an online interview platform where fans can question some of today's biggest names in entertainment, tech, fashion and business as they share the stories behind their projects and passions.

3. Karyn Stapleton and John Wilson further discuss the application and use for narratives in a community in their “Telling the Story: Meaning Making in a Community Narrative.” Stapleton and Wilson recognize their purpose is “to examine the role of the shared narrative (template) as a sense-making resource within the community.

4. While some controversy may arise from using the term “child-snatcher” as a descriptor for Ted Bundy, given the adolescent/adult age of most of his victims, I use “child” in the sense of innocence and vulnerability, rather than just age. Ted Bundy’s victims fell victim to Ted Bundy’s charm and were often stolen away from locations deemed safe and secure, like school campuses, grocery stores, and even church gatherings.

5. J.R.R. Tolkien discusses this second world in his “On Fairy Stories” from December 4, 1947. Claudia Schwabe also discusses a more nuanced argument regarding the second world in contemporary popular media in her “Getting Real with Fairy Tales: Magic Realism in *Grimm* and *Once Upon a Time*.” Further, narrativizing crime is warned against in such articles as



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Alfredo Verde's "Narrative Criminology: Crime as Produced by and RE-LIVED Through Narratives."

6. Social media reactions recorded in Barr, Foreman, Jones, Millington, Pierce, and Samsian evidence these community responses.

7. Archaic form of the name. The Brothers' Grimm used this spelling in their initial publication of the story.

8. Bill Bradley, Sarah Dunnigan, Michael Howarth, Charles Moss, Zachary Pavlin, Linda Robertson, Allison Kavey, and Lester Friedman all authored alternative interpretations of the Peter Pan tale. These interpretations vary from Pan's moral ambiguity as a character to Barrie's dark past as an author.

9. A number of popular horror movies, like *The Visit* and *Split*, and television series, such as *You* and *Dexter*, also grasped onto this fear of evil hidden behind a charming face.

10. The Netflix Twitter account uses the singular "I" to represent the entire corporation.

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