I, Lyn M Arnett, hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Germanic Languages & Literature.

It is entitled:
A REEXAMINATION OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HUMAN: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE TIES BETWEEN GERMAN ROMANTICISM AND POSTHUMANISM

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A REEXAMINATION OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HUMAN:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE TIES BETWEEN GERMAN ROMANTICISM AND
POSTHUMANISM

By
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Abstract

In this thesis, I aim to show through a close analysis of three canonical works—Novalis’ Die Lehrlinge zu Sais, Tieck’s Der blonde Eckbert, and E.T.A. Hoffmann’s Der Sandmann, all found in the epoch of German Romanticism—that one of the major themes within this period is the idea of rethinking what it means to be human. Furthermore, I will show that there exists a common thread between the Romantic period of German literature and the developing philosophy of Posthumanism through the fact that both genres rethink the definition of what it means to be human. The anthropocentric view of Humanism—the definition of which is developed further in the thesis—was questioned by the many of the German Romantics and is presently being investigated by Posthumanists. Novalis, I argue, believed that humanity needed to return to a state of unity with nature, because it was through nature that man was able become his best. Novalis, much like the Pro-nature Humanist (a form of Posthumanism) understand that nature was not a force to be subdued but one to be worked with. Through this, humanity would realize their position outside the center of the world and be able to live in unity and equality with the organic universe. Like Novalis, Ludwig Tieck wrote on forces outside the realm of man’s power. He struggled most with the idea of the supernatural and its impact on man’s life, believing that it was a real and powerful force that had the ability to alter the way one lived his or her life. This idea is further developed through the eyes of a Posthumanist, who sees the supernatural, or irrational, as an influential force in the daily life of a 21st century human being. Similar to Tieck’s perspective, which was not necessarily fully positive or completely negative, Posthumanists do not have a strong stance towards one side or another. They, I argue, settle in the middle with the understanding that the supernatural can be beneficial if the human being is able to accept and walk in agreement with it. However, Posthumanists do differ from one Romantic author although they write and work through the same issues within the scientific world: robots. E.T.A Hoffmann’s work Der Sandmann, is a negative critique on the possible future of the scientific developments that were happening during the 19th century. Hoffmann believed that if humanity continued to toy with science they would create an image of themselves that would cause their future destruction, in this case Olimpia the robot, while Posthumanists see the positive in the development of science and its capabilities. In conclusion, it is possible to see the threads that run between German Romanticism and Posthumanism through these three works as both generations rethink the human being in relation to the world around them. Many of the exact same questions were asked in the 19th century are being asked in the 21st Century, and they will continue to be asked in upcoming generations as humanity progresses.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanism</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romanticism</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posthumanism</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novalis</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ludwig Tieck</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.T.A. Hoffmann</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One of the commonest and most generally accepted delusions is that every man can be qualified in some particular way—said to be kind, wicked, stupid, energetic, apathetic and so on. People are not like that. We may say of a man that he is more often kind than cruel, more often wise than stupid, more often energetic that apathetic or vice versa; but it could never be true to say of man that he is kind or wise, and of another that he is wicked or stupid. Yet we are always classifying mankind in this way. And it is wrong. Human beings are like rivers: the water is one and same in all of them but every river is narrow in some places, flows swifter in others; hence it is broad, there still, or clear, or cold, or muddy or warm. It is the same with men. Every man bears within him the germs of every human quality, and now manifests one, now another, and frequently in quite unlike himself, while still remaining the same man. —Leo Tolstoy *Resurrection*

**Introduction**

I aim to show through a close analysis of three canonical works—Novalis’ *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais*, Tieck’s *Der blonde Eckbert*, and E.T.A. Hoffmann’s *Der Sandmann*, all found in the epoch of German Romanticism—that one of the major themes within this period is the idea of rethinking what it means to be human. For centuries, from the early Romans to the great thinkers and philosophers of the 18th century, many intellectuals have considered themselves to be a species far greater than any other animal or plant on earth. They have striven for a form of perfection and superiority that is displayed in visual, written, and spoken art arrangements across societies giving different forms and fashions of the same idea with little to no connection between the varying thinkers. With that knowledge, it will be shown that what we today term Posthumanist questions were also present in German Romanticism as the Romantics rethought the human—a “divine” being previously measured by its ability to reason, placing it above nature and all non-human species—and Humanism. With the understanding that other definitions exist, this thesis defines Humanism, and consequently Humanists, as the philosophy that human beings are anthropocentric and base their existence upon their ability to reason and
process ideas. This view of humanity forged a commonality between two generations of thinkers and writers as is evident in the fact that, 200 years later, Posthumanist thinkers are processing many of the same ideas as did the Romantics. Recent Posthumanist thinkers, much like their earlier counterparts, are asking society to rethink who, what, and where humans lie in relation to their environment and technology.

The understanding of human nature has been a slow evolution over centuries. Whether one believes the story found in Genesis chapter one or the big bang theory, it is clear that humans have not been the same since their first day of existence. Their personalities, thought processes, desires, and emotions as well as their bodies have been in a constant state of evolution. Every age group thinks that it has another aspect of humanity figured out; new philosophies concerning human nature are birthed from the ideas of the generations who fed off the ideas of the past generations. These theories can be in juxtaposition to the previous view or only slight deviations from the original thoughts. Working with the philosophy of the Humanists and those who came before them, many of the German Romantics dedicated their lives to a rethinking of what it means to be a human. Novalis, Tieck, and Hoffmann sought to understand the human in a new and, for them, correct way. Novalis believed that mankind and nature were to be united as one force with the ability to sustain each other in complete peace. Tieck did not focus on nature as much as did Novalis; instead, he struggled with the interaction of the supernatural and natural. He sought to understand how the mystical force in the universe influenced the lives of those living on earth. Unlike the former or latter, Hoffmann conceptualized the idea of automatons. Could human nature be enclosed in a manmade figure? And could a human relate to such a creature? The common thread that is woven through much of German Romanticism, and presently sewed into the tapestry of Posthumanism, is this desire to reevaluate humankind, to
find its true position in the world, because the anthropocentric view of humanism was, for these
writers at least, no longer satisfactory.iv

**Humanism**

This search for answers is even more than a desire to find a new center or diverge from
the old one; for many Romantics and Posthumanists it is a desire to move beyond the restraints
of reason, the basis of what it means to be human according to Descartes. Descartes, most
famously known for his statement, *Cogito ergo sum*, believed that reason guided the human
being in everything that it did and was; to be *truly* human, one needed to possess the ability to
reason. There is hardly one aspect of humanity’s existence that was not explained or justified
through logic. In fact, even doubt was calculated to be a positive characteristic. It led the
individual to a greater depth of rationality than previously obtained. Doubt caused one to puzzle
out the validity or falsity of thoughts, thus presenting the human with the ability to make sense of
his or her own life, body, and soul. For, any aspect that was doubted was to be torn apart and
reestablished though processes of reason. It gave power to the individual’s intelligence and led to
a ratiocinated use of absolute free will—another characteristic that defined the humanist
individual but does not agree with the more expansive view of the human held by the three
Romantic writers being explored within this thesis.

It was, however, not as simple as stating that reason defined humanity. Yes, according to
Descartes, reason was the ruler to which humans were to be subjected to, but then the question is
raised: what is a human? It was not possible to state that a human was simply a being who
cogitates, because the question was then asked: what is a being? It cannot be a *living* object that
reasons because that leaves room to doubt. Descartes recognized this dilemma, and as Skirry, an
author well versed in the life and writing of Descartes, states, “Once the primary truth ‘I exist’ is

3
established, the question ‘What am I?’ is posed. The natural response to this question is that ‘I
am a man’. But what is a man? The standard scholastic-Aristotelian response would be a rational
animal”(33). Descartes did not agree that the answer should be a rational animal, because then
there existed the need to define animal as presented, and it created a slope that one would
continue to slide down until answers were nearly impossible. Instead, Descartes saw the *Cogito*
as a two-part formation of body and soul. The first being a “…mechanical configuration of limbs
called ‘the body’. The second is that he [the being] was nourished, moved about, and engaged in
sense perception and thinking, which he [Descartes] attributed to the soul” (Skirry 33). But the
reasoning does not come to a halt at this statement. With Descartes it is never that easy.

The body, Descartes argues, cannot reason, think, decide, move, etc. by itself. It requires
the spirit—made up of mind, intelligence, and reason—in order to do the daily activities of a
human. Yet the spirit, or soul as it is often referred to in philosophy and literature, cannot exist
without the body. According to Aristotelian view, the soul creates the body and

the soul of a particular living being, say a cow, makes it the particular kind of
living thing that it is. It is the principle of life and explains the range of activities
that manifest life: nutrition and growth in plants, in animals also motion and sense
perception, in humans in addition intellectual activity and will. (Broughton &
Carriero 372)

Descartes, however, removed the traditional role of the soul—nutrition, growth and motion, as
mentioned earlier—and, instead, “…narrows the role of the soul by making it the principle of
thought” (Broughton & Carriero 373). Thus, he presented the idea that without a soul an entity is
not a human being for it cannot think. *Cogito ergo sum*. Without a soul, which manifests itself
through language, thought, rationalized behaviors, an entity is nothing that can be classified as a
human being: “So our having a soul accounts for behaviors that manifest thought, such as
language, but animals are *just* machines; all of their behaviors can be explained mechanistically”
(Broughton & Carriero 374). This, as will be examined shortly, is one of the most argued points within the analysis of humanity among many Romantics and Posthumanists⁷. E. T. A. Hoffmann created an entire character, *Der Sandmann’s* Olimpia, through which he challenged Descartes theory. However, before the Romantics (and most assuredly prior to the Posthumanists) were able to take the stage, another generation of Humanist writers offered their talents and opinions to the world.

After the age of Descartes had passed, the idea of reason and intellect as the main characteristics that set humans apart from animals, machines, or the supernatural did not fade. Humanism took the stage in the thinking and writing of the German Classicists and reinforced the ideas of Descartes, going so far as to remind society of the *Humanitätsideal* (the ideals of humanity or the ideal human). Just as every philosophy has varying definitions, Humanism can be described as having three main types: “…humanism as classicism, humanism as the modern discipline referred to as humanities, humanism as human-centered” (Murphy 270). The latter of the three, Humanism as individual-centered, is the area most people associate with Humanist literature and discussion. It is the concept that man is the center of the world; everything revolves around him, and he is the master of everything. Pico della Mirandola stated in his speech *De dignitate hominis*⁸:

> Upon man, at the moment of his creation, God bestowed seeds pregnant with all possibilities, the germs of every form of life. Whichever of these man shall cultivate, the same will mature and bear fruit in him… If rational, he will reveal himself a heavenly being; if intellectual, he will be an angel and the son of God (Bernstein 4).

Humanism, a continuation of beliefs from Roman antiquity and later the European Renaissance, focused on the power, honor, and lordliness of humankind, giving great weight to rationality and intellect.
One of the leading images of the human that is drawn from the literature and thoughts of this form of German Humanism, as exemplified by the writing of Goethe, is the picture of “der Mensch als Ebenbild Gottes” (Dörr & Hoffmann 62). This is to say, humans are not only rational beings, but they are created within the image of God, and therefore placed hierarchically above other entities and nature. This view takes the understandings of Descartes and amplifies it to incorporate a god-like position upon humanity. Allan Booth writes in his essay in the book The Questions of Humanism:

This doctrine, in its fullest acceptance, disbelieves that individual and group are subject to divine designs and constraints beyond human comprehension and control. Man assures himself instead that inherent in his rational nature lies a trait which allows and authorizes him to manufacture and direct his own destiny, freely and without divine meddling. (41)

With this view, it is valid to state: In the world of Humanists there exists a god, but the god is humanity itself. Within each human is a divine trait that advances the being beyond its surroundings and illuminates it as a super-human. Often within the Humanist world, the idea of nature as a supernatural and dominant force is unacceptable—be it because nature cannot be reasoned nor reason, or because society will always see more good in themselves than in nature. Consequently, it feeds the doctrine that humans are the superior center. In this sense, the argument would be as follows: if humans were created in God’s image, given divine power, and are gods, then whether nature is created by a spiritual being or not does not matter because the spiritual entity would be no other then humanity itself; for, the human is god and god is in every person.

For the same reasons, the Humanists do not believe in a supernatural force that guides and directs their path. As the center of the world, humans are able to use their free will and authority to move about in life as they please. The notion of a divine power or fate interfering in
one’s life, as is found in many of Tieck’s short stories, is not possible for a Humanist. To acknowledge that a force exists is to admit that a power higher than humanity is within the world, thereby diminishing the status of humans and setting within their place something unknown and irrational. Additionally, acknowledging an outer force more powerful than the human would open the door for the possibility of error. It would mean that the *Humanitätsideal* is nearly impossible because at any moment an unknown force could remove all progress towards the perfection that has been acquired. The idealized character of Goethe’s *Iphigenie* would be simply that, an idealized—and unrealistic—goal; all rationality, godliness and responsibility in her personality would be unattainable for humanity. Thus, Humanism is not only anthropocentric, it is also the belief that a perfect human (a being of rationality with a unified body and soul) can exist.

**Romanticism**

Humanism, because of its previously mentioned characteristics, is in extreme juxtaposition to the majority of Romanticism and Posthumanism, creating the need for the latter to reexamine what it means to be human. For, as it will be seen, the Romantics, with whom I work through, and later many Posthumanists are not guided solely by reason, nor are they entirely anthropocentric, nor do they believe in an ideal human. In fact, many thinkers from both philosophies expand the study of what it means to be human and, in so doing, develop the idea that humans could be just another species given time to dwell on earth before the new ‘human’, a creature whose definition still varies from philosopher to philosopher, will gain ascendancy.

T.S. Eliot wrote, “We do not mean quite the same thing when we speak of a writer as romantic, as we do when we speak of a literary period as romantic” (26). Romanticism has never been an easy notion to define; the word is often tossed around with such ease in varying,
intersecting, and diverting ways. Gerhard Schulz, an author acclaimed for his work on Romanticism, writes:

In German literary historiography the term “Romanticism” has been commonly used as an umbrella for a substantial part of the literary production between 1789 and 1830, but there have always been significant exclusions… What complicates a clear definition of German Romanticism, in particular, is the fact that there were common issues for many German intellectuals beyond their philosophical or artistic creeds and convictions. (29, 31)

Although there is a large grey zone surrounding the definition of Romanticism, it is possible to state, as Tymms does, that Romantic literature was a work of the future— with attributes and thoughts even farther in the future then the authors themselves imagined—as well as a work of the past; it is concurrently “traditional, retrospective, but yet also revolutionary—a ‘progressive’, evolving, aesthetic process” (8).

One of the major aspects of German Romantic literature that is often found to be contrary to the notions of Humanism, as well as the normally held belief of the word “romantic,” is the attraction the authors felt towards describing the “unreal” in ways that are considered to be unconventional and, almost, mentally disturbing (Tymms 7). Although Hoffmann will be discussed in greater detail later, it is important to mention him now, because he is an exemplar of an author’s ability to use the unnatural in an eerie, mind boggling manner. He conveys a perspective on reality through the mental struggle of an insane man and his emotional love for a robot. The lack of realism presented in works such as E.T.A. Hoffmann and others causes the reader to question what his own reality is. Such a literary technique draws the reader into a place where he must dwell on the concept of reality versus fantasy, rationality versus irrationality. Is the world the reader lives in the “real” world or can there be more to it? Can there exist human-like objects that are unnatural and inhuman? With those question and others, many of the writers of the German Romantic period step beyond the traditional style of writing and venture into the
world that would later be called Posthumanism. They veer off the beaten path of logic and explore areas that go beyond the commonly accepted theories of the real world surrounding humans. They not only described the uncanny, but they critiqued it as well. They believed that it was important to “…not only breathe the fragrance of a flower, but to examine its construction; not only to contemplate the fair exterior of the earth but to investigate its interior” (Silz 33). Life, at least as many of the Romantics knew it, was about understanding and reexamining everything positive and negative from nature to humans to religion.

Society’s relationship with religion is like the tide. It comes and goes, increasing in interest and love then slowing decreasing until the urge to draw near comes again. The age of German Romanticism was one of increase. They were drawn to the supernatural force that they felt existed in the world. Brown refers to it as a “divine center,” where man is no longer the center of the universe, rather only something that could be called “godly” could function as such. Symbolically, Novalis writes of the need to return to religion, or to return to god, in his work Die Lehrlinge zu Sais. In this work, humanity has lost its way and has incorrectly placed itself at the center of everything. It is important to note, that religion, in the sense that the Romantics used it, did not always mean a belief system based around the Judeo-Christian God. There are many literary critics and historians who would state differently, such as Walter Silz, who adamantly argues that Romanticism was a retreat into Christianity; nevertheless, the majority of works and interpretations point to simply, yet ambiguously, a religion of divinity. That is to say, they intuited a religion where there is a divine being or divine power(s) but not necessarily a particular god. This is made clear in Schlegel’s idea that “Every concept of God is empty chatter. But the idea of divinity is the idea of all things” (Schulte-Sasse 326).
Throughout the years, thinkers tried to rationalize religion along with other aspects of life such as science, love, and reason itself. In the 19th century, “We see in him [the human] henceforth no longer a single-minded ‘Aufklärer,’ but a Romanticist, tragically conscious of inner dualism and longingly intent on a higher synthesis” (Silz 145). The majority of Romantics, to some extent, rejected the rationality of the Aufklärung, for it did nothing more than shadow the fact that God created rationality. Although it is a healthy characteristic to possess in moderation, rationality could be taken too far and bastardized. When taken to extremes, rationality itself becomes a god, it is the authority behind which defines (and thus limits) humanity, instead of being a bolster in the reanalysis of man (Menhennet 27). In addition, rationality did not allow for the study of supernatural powers or the inner workings of the subconscious.

If religion/the divine is an important part of life and influences the daily activities of those on earth, then who/what is above or beyond controlling everything? Is there a Superior Being playing puppeteer or is the supernatural within everybody? These are questions that a portion of the Romantics raised in their literature and letters, which the Humanists would have quickly dismissed or considered to be illogical and unacceptable. Ludwig Tieck struggled with the idea of the supernatural in the majority of his works. He was always curious about the concept of death, the afterlife, and the influence of the spiritual in his daily existence. E.T.A. Hoffmann, Novalis, Kleist, and many other authors also investigated the supernatural and magical aspects of life in their work. As it will be elaborated on further below, the belief that one needed to examine the supernatural if he or she was to understand the meaning of humanity was fundamental to my three primary authors.
According to some authors, the supernatural is the unconscious displaying itself in a physical form, or it is the sounds of the human soul presenting themselves in ways that humans can understand (Silz 206). It can also be the manifestation of a character’s desire to connect with the spiritual, as he or she tries to understand the meaning of humanity and all the intricate details that have been forgotten in the world of science, rationality, and enlightenment. Silz writes,

…the Romantics sought beneath the appearance of things for recondite truth; they wished to explore the uncharted seas of the human soul and draw up their unconscious life into the light of day. They became introspective to the point of morbidness […] through senses more delicate than the eye they sought to reach the hidden mysteries of life. (206)

Unlike previous authors, who separated, and at times did not acknowledge, the unconscious from the conscious or the dream from the waking, the Romantics wanted to find a way in which to connect these dichotomized realities and thus make them a main element of life.

They [Romantics] show a pronounced predilection for eccentric, extreme, and pathological cases. They probe into the hidden side of physical nature and human nature; they regard the inner life of the individual as more vital than the outer; external occurrences often furnish only the occasion and starting-point for the psychological processes in which they are chiefly interested. (Silz 206)

They were a generation of eccentrics and revolutionaries in their thinking and inclusion of the supernatural (with the common exceptions), much like the Posthumanists who, some 200 years later, would begin to question the influences on human nature as well as the details of the human’s nonphysical interior—could the internality of a human be duplicated as a vision, robot, or nonhuman human?

Science is the final characteristic in German Romanticism that will be mentioned within this paper and, as with the previous characteristics, will later be discussed in connection with the three literary works: Die Lehrlinge zu Sais, Der blonde Eckbert, and Der Sandmann. “Both inside and outside the University of Jena vii a new generation of writers [Romantics],
philosophers, and scientists was trying to redefine man’s understanding of himself and the world at large [with the help of science]”, states Walter Wetzels (44). Science encompasses many of the previous aspects such as religion and the supernatural. In fact, it often times argues against both.

Romantic writers were developing their skills during the eve of the industrial era, when the imagination was being expressed in technological forms (Mahoney 209). “The scientific and the poetic imagination inflamed each other; the mind leaped with intuitive speed from hypothesis to hypothesis, outstripping empirical verification; the most ardent poet seemed the best scientist” (Silz 4). A number of the authors were well educated in fields outside of writing as well, including such areas as medicine, technology, physics, natural science, and so forth. E.T.A. Hoffmann, for example, was “…engaged in intensive scientific, medical, nature-philosophic studies alongside…” his writing career (Mahoney 209). This not only broadened their scope on creation, but also gave them a wider lens through which they were able to reexamine life and the meticulous details of what it meant to be human. This is seen in works by authors such as E.T.A. Hoffmann, Novalis, and Schlegel, who incorporated their desire to understand life beyond what was presently known, through robots, nature, or the natural state of the human soul. Science is a field of rationality, but unlike the Humanists who focused on that particular aspect of it, the Romantics (and Posthumanists) used it to expand their perspective on the possibilities of humankind.

With all of these characteristics in mind, it is still exceptionally difficult to form a precise definition of Romanticism, as was stated at the beginning. The authors varied greatly in their thoughts, motives, and styles of writing between the Frühromantik and late Romantics. Nonetheless, for the purpose of this paper a large and overarching definition will be given in
order to establish a general thought that can be carried throughout. It is a movement away from rationality as the center and towards rationality as a buttress to the imagination and conceptions already formulated—allowing the reader to wrestle with problems within him/herself. Romanticism strives to understand the pure essence of the human soul through emotion, nature, the supernatural, religion, philosophy, sciences, and symbols; they never delineate anything out clearly for the reader. Instead, they believe the reader to be intelligent and resilient enough to make sense of what is being presented. It is not a genre full of lovers and roses (as the name would suggest). It is a journey of understanding a world where humans are no longer the center and the Humanitätsideal is no longer the key word in life. “German Romanticism was an attempt to create a harmony of intellect and heart, of life and art, on the basis of individualism” it is “…a most awkward and inadequate name for a literary, artistic, and philosophical movement of highly composite character and most diversified ramifications” (Porterfield 177, 178).

**Posthumanism**

John Passmore states in his book *Science and Its Critics*: “Whether this fear that science might deanthropomorphize human beings has any grounds is the leading philosophical issue […] of our time” (13). In accordance with German Romanticism, Posthumanism, a modern deanthropomorphizing of human beings, is a difficult term to define. It has only been in accepted usage since the mid 1980s, and it is still in the process of forming its full identity. Posthumanism can refer to the formation of non-human entities, which is the most commonly associated meaning due to the name of the genre, or it can refer to a generation that is searching for meaning outside of the supreme human. Moreover, Posthumanism can also allude to a pro-nature Humanism. This thesis will, at different points, make reference to all of these interpretations since Posthumanism is a delicate combination of all of them. It is an exploration
of the significance of what it means to be human in the 21st century. Just as the Romantics could not settle for another generation of rational, self-consumed Humanists, the Posthumanist are beginning to understand that the society presently known as humanity will not last for years to come. A restructuring of humankind, and the world around it, must take place because the current status of society is not eternal. The world is evolving in ways that will affect humanity both for the negative and positive. In stating this, it is important to note that one cannot take Humanism out of the world. Humans may not always be the center nor the Supreme Being, but they will presumably always exist in one form or another. For this reason, it is important to view Posthumanism not as a subject that rejects human beings, but one that works to embrace the concept in a new fashion. Raymond Murphy, author of Sociology and Nature, states, when speaking of Posthumanism, that, “…the challenge is to expand humanism both synchronically and diachronically” (289). This will open the mind to understand Posthumanism as a field that recognizes the human as well as go beyond the traditional limits of humanism set within it, thus, not fully turning away from the notion of a human individual but molding it into something larger.

There are those who see absolutely nothing wrong with developing nature, human nature, and science. There is no reason to hold back or restrict great minds and their capabilities, they would argue, for the idea of “what it means to be human” was created by humans and should be open to alteration. They, like Romantics, are not satisfied with the human long presumed by traditional Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment humanism [as] a subject…who is at the center of his world (that is, the world); is defined by his supreme, utterly rational intelligence; does not depend (unlike his predecessor) upon a divine authority to make his way through the world but instead manipulates it in accord with his own wishes; and is a historically independent agent whose thought and action produce history. (Seaman 2)
The Posthuman generation is not looking to merely understand what makes an individual a human, but they want to find a way to make a more supreme entity. This involves studying the way the soul interacts with nature, interacts with the body, and interacts with the world. It requires a new and developed examination of the physical and mental capabilities of the body in relation to its surroundings, both living and non-living. Seaman wrote, “In this view, the body limits and constrains individual freedom” (4). The question is then, what is a better human form that allows for greater freedom and exploration? The restriction of flesh limits the ability of the soul to mature and metamorphose in ways the Posthumanists believe are possible.

In the Judeo-Christian belief system, the soul rises from the body after death and transforms into a new being, a supernatural being. Eastern religions, on the other hand, employ the notion of reincarnation, where the soul of a person travels and transfigures into an entity not always considered to be the “ideal” human. A number of Posthumanists thinkers believe that the post-human will not be a new creature, but “…a more developed, more advanced, or more powerful version of the existing self” (Seaman 6). The species of the future will not be the human of the Enlightenment or the individual of the antiquities, but it may be the characteristics of the human soul found in animals, nature, and the supernatural. This is, as one must keep in mind, only one of the many perspectives that an individual can have towards the developing school of thought termed Posthumanism.

Posthumanism can also be largely considered a ‘pro-nature humanism.’ It is a relapse into the idea that humans and nature need to unite; nature is powerful and needs to be worked with not worked on. Murphy argues that Posthumanism “…has as its goal the harmonization of human social action with such determinism” as nature’s fate (290). Often, human beings believe that they are able to hold creation in their hands, to control and rule over it, but a Posthumanist
believes that this idea will only lead to disaster. It is a movement, not away from the root word per se, but towards creation; it is viewing the world with the understanding that the environment and individuals must live in accordance with one another. As a result, it is believed, that nature cannot be removed in its entirety from the civilized world nor can it be subdued “…because nature is recognized as the creator and sustainer of humans” (Murphy 291).

The third major area that Posthumanism is often connected with is the realm of robots, cyborgs, and automatons. When individuals imagine a time beyond humanity (the period of the future), they often think of science fiction. It is a world where machine-like-persons are the new humans. It is a place where cars fly and animals live as legal members of society. This is not surprising as the word “post” incites readers to think of a time where humans are the afterthought, where things no longer exist and function by them or for them. It will be a society which asks “…questions that had never before been asked: Will humanity progress or regress? Will its social forms change? Will humanity survive?” (Gunn xiv). While the Humanists would have argued that people will always progress and assuredly survive the Romantics and Posthumanists were asking these questions knowing that the probability of societal change is strong and the survival of humankind as previously known is unlikely and unhealthy.

With that, “posthumanism rejects the assumed universalism and exceptional being of Enlightenment humanism and in its place substitutes mutation, variation, and becoming” (Seaman 3). Posthumanism is the desire to crumble the ‘Great wall’ that exists between the opposites of: “…human/inhuman, self/other, natural/cultural, inside/outside, subject/object, us/them, here/there, active/passive, and wide/tame” (Badmington 5). In other words, it is the desire to reevaluate characteristics of life that have been ingrained in every person since birth, and rebuild them based upon a different scheme—one where the opposites of life are not as
certain as they presently are; where the line between self and other, human and inhuman, feelings and programs is not nearly as distinguishable.

**Novalis**

A strong certainty towards particular traits of humanity was not an area in which Novalis was lacking; instead, he wrote with passion and fervor of the innately organic features of life, which he believed every man possessed. It was not until after the death of his fiancée and brother that Novalis was “…prompted… to a kind of mystical meditation on death and possibility of resurrection…”, believing that an individual was made up of the natural world and would return back to it when dead (Stoljar 3). While alive, though, Novalis felt that man was as much a part of the organic world as a plant or nonhuman entity, and, should he depart from it, he was departing from that which gave him life, friendship, and joy.

This idea is expounded through Novalis’ style of writing in the 1800s with his “abuse of adjectives,” which allowed the writer to explore the relationship between nature and humans, as well as individuals and the divine, in creative ways (Ferber 3). It is important to note that the use of one’s imagination in the 1800s was believed to be a “…faculty higher and more inclusive than reason,” thereby, giving the author or poet the intellectual power and authority once held by those of reasonable minds only (Ferber 10). This is seen through Novalis’ ability to deal with nature, its powers, its beauty, and its relation to humans in a fantasy-like style throughout *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais*.\(^x\)

Keeping the previously supplied definition of Posthumanism in mind, it is easy to see how *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais* can be considered a revision of humanist thinking and link to Posthumanism. The main section that will be considered within this paper is the fairytale titled *Hyazinth und Rosenblütchen*.\(^xi\) It is the tale of love disrupted by a desire for knowledge of the
unnatural yet rekindled within the realm of nature. The key element that will be explored is Novalis’ attempt to redefine what it means to be human through his use of animals and plants. He characterizes them in a manner that makes one question the humanity of their being and the humanness of the normal man. One of the main ways this is accomplished is through the manipulation of language, as it is seen to be one of the defining features between a human and a nonhuman in the pre-Romantic era. It symbolized that one had a soul, a conscious, and life itself.

Eighteenth century thinkers had many names for man, calling him/her a “rational animal” or an “animal of language.” But where is the line drawn which segregates man from animal, making him/her not simply an animal but an “animal of reason” more superior than the others? For many in the 1700s, this was seen through the ability to use language or to express oneself in a rational manner with words and thoughts. Animals, the majority of the world would have argued, could not achieve this and, thus, were merely machines whose lives were only clocks waiting to unwind. For Novalis, however, there was no line. Instead, it was to be understood that nature was the mirrored image of an individual and visa versa (Kuznair 429). Just as one looks into a mirror to remind him/herself of how he/she appears, humankind is the largest and most accurate reproduction of nature, considering its unification with creation. In the fairytale, Hyazinth’s interaction with the organic world around him is that of equality and respect. He speaks with the plants and animals as though they share family ties, comforting each other in times of sadness and sitting with each other through the pleasures of life.

Höhlen und Wälder waren sein liebster Aufenthalt, und dann sprach er immerfort mit Tieren und Vögeln, mit Bäumen und Felsen, natürlich kein vernünftiges Wort, lauter närrisches Zeus zum Totlachen. Er blieb aber immer mürrisch und ernsthaft, ungeachtet sich das Eichhörnchen, die Meerkatze, der Papagei und der Gimpel alle Mühe gaben ihn zu zerstreuen, und ihn auf den richtigen Weg zu weisen. Die Gans erzählte Märchen, der Bach klimperte eine Ballade dazwischen, ein großer dicker Stein machte lächerliche Bockssprünge, die Rose schlich sich freundlich hinter ihm herum, kroch durch seine Locken, und der Efeu streichelte
ihm die sorgenvolle Stirn. Allein der Missmut und Ernst waren hartenackig.
(Novalis 18-19)

From this example, it is possible to see the level of sophistication Novalis gave to all creatures on Earth. They—human or animal—were able to recognize emotion and from that act in accordance to it.

“When Novalis conjoins man and animal in a fragment, it is frequently to imagine their interchangeability, to demonstrate the human potential for the fullness of animal life, rather than the descent into beastliness” (Kuznair 430). That is to say, that Novalis did not view the animal as an inferior being but as a character of divinity. They were so greatly intertwined with the natural elements of life that to become more like them was to become more like the divine. He took the biblical old notion of animals that is inherent in everybody and transformed it into something unconventional. He depicted his animals with emotions and features that were once only associated with the human being, blurring not only the deep-rooted hierarchy found within the minds of people but also the divisions between us and them (Oerlemans 74). The image of the ideal human from the 18th century no longer existed in the sense that it had. In contrast, it was focused on becoming a being of nature. It was through this fusion of the natural animal and human that the fullness of life was attained. In Hyanzith und Rosenblütchen, the perfect existence and accurate aspects of life were found through the flowers, animals, old lady found within the woods, and language of the spirits (Novalis 21).

Language is a unique and complex system of communication; it not only requires the formulation of words but also involves the giving and interaction of them. It is cowardly and dishonest in nature as it is used to convey a message concerning an object (reality) that one has manipulated in order to display it in the fashion chosen. It is, according to Novalis, a toy for the weak and powerless because language, just like man, can become anything that the subject
One can easily label this as a form of anthropomorphizing on the part of the author, as he or she places onto nature the voice it is assumed to possess. Language imparts upon the user a sense of superiority and right, as it is distorted to signify truth and rationality by individuals who, without a form of reality, do not exist or have divinity; the development of language gives to humanity the greatest intelligence and, therefore, the greatest power. Novalis, certain Romantics, and a number of Posthumanists would scoff at such an idea, believing, instead, in a commonality between the nature of language (the power for communication) and the language of nature (language stems from the natural). Within every being (human or non) evolves the ability for language as a tool for communication because it is derived from the part of the being that is interwoven with nature. When individuals speak from the portion of their soul that is connected to the environment, they resound with words of intelligence and truth; otherwise, they are nothing more than ignorant fools preserving the capability of language. This is seen further in a portion of Novalis’ monologue where he states:

Es ist eigentlich um das Sprechen und Schreiben eine närrische Sache; das rechte Gespräch ist ein bloßes Wortspiel. Der lächerliche Irrthum ist nur zu bewundern, daß die Leute meinen--sie sprechen um der Dinge willen. Gerade das Eigenthümliche der Sprache, daß sie sich blos um sich selbst bekümmert, weiß keiner. Darum ist sie ein so wunderbares und fruchtbares Geheimniß,-- daß wenn einer blos spricht, um zu sprechen, er gerade die herrlichsten, originellsten Wahrheiten ausspricht.Will er aber von etwas Bestimmten sprechen, so läßt ihn die launige Sprache das lächerlichste und verkehrste Zeug sagen. (Novalis, Monologue)

Kuzniar explains this quote best when she states, “…we find in Novalis an intense desire to comprehend the diverse languages of nature combined with a keen consciousness of the inaccessibility of these languages if man does not try to escape the confines of his familiar, anthrocentric worldview” (235). If humanity does not travel back to its beginning state—as Hyazinth returned to the organic world—than it will lose its respect for nature, animals, and
itself. For, as Novalis argues, the human is one with the stone, the animal, or even the plant whose language innately flows from us when we are presenting ourselves in the truest forms. This harkens back to the belief of a certain number of Romantics’ idealized view of nature and the pro-nature humanism where the human species and nature are to unite as one.

Novalis reverses the thoughts of the past philosophers who viewed the nonhuman world as the Other and, instead, considers everything through the lens of equality. In a world where nature has a voice of its own—its own song, humor, and thoughts—the human is unable to understand it until he/she can remove him/herself from the center. In the fairytale *Hyazinth und Rosenblütchen*, Hyazinth is the Other after meeting the stranger. He removes himself from his past friends—the animals and plants—and views his own desires as more important, all the while not accepting the satisfaction found in nature that existed before the stranger arrived. In the end, however, once Hyazinth has found Isis, and Rosenblütchen is unveiled in the midst of the mystical, natural land: “Hyazinth lebt nachher noch lange mit Rosenblütchen unter seinen frohen Eltern und Gespielen, und unzählige Enkel dankten der alten wunderlichen Frau für ihren Rat und ihr Feuer” (Novalis 23). He has gone from the Other back into the world of communal living, not to be confused with the word equality, for Novalis did not see the animals, stones, flowers, or spirits as equals with humans but, instead, saw the former as the more divine entities. This is not to say that the latter is unable to become god-like, but for this to take place the individual must first “look beyond human life and its limitations while remaining in the phenomenal world” (Kuzniar 436). They must learn to speak the language of nature and not wait for a time when the nature of language will be grasped by non-humans. The narrator of the monologue found within *Die Lehrlinge zu Sais* instructs his apprentice to listen to the language of nature and its song will guide him back to the life from which he was born, in return, giving
him the joy, peace, and power which he desires. It is only through a symbiotic relationship with nature (a being more powerful than any man) can one reach his/her fullest potential and speak the language of the universe—which, until then, is mute just as the tree was mute to Hyazinth.

To further evolve this argument, people must state that the belief that one day non-human species will be capable of using the same vocabulary and language structure as what we, as the human race, presently know is not a commonly held one. It is the idea of communication awakening within society the understanding that nonhuman species are capable of thought, feelings, and existence. As Wolfe, one of the leading authors on Posthumanism, writes, “…we ought to be interested in [the idea of language] not because it is a diminished or dim approximation of ours but because it is part of a very different way of being in the world that calls on us to rethink, ever anew and vigilantly so, what we mean by ‘person,’ ‘mind,’ ‘consciousness’” (47). It is interesting that language, for so many varying authors, carries with it the ability to define a human. Novalis uses it to explore the organic side of humanity, Wolfe (the popular Posthuman author) uses it to remind society that we cannot sit ideally by as the definition of an individual is changing, and, quoting Hegel, Klemm states that language “‘is the existence (“Dasein”) of the self, as self; in language, self-consciousness, qua independent separate individuality, comes as such into existence, so that it exists for others’. Language […] is the medium for the exteriorization of the otherwise hitherto self enclosed self” (234). This sounds like a modern Descartes—the belief that the self is not obtained or expressed without language, but when one continues to read Hegel’s philosophy it emerges that Hegel strongly connects the self with nature thus connecting nature with language, language with self, and self with nature. Klamm writes of Hegel,

Hegel, in turn, wrote that one self requires another: the self only exists in its relation to another self. The self, then, is perplexing: we seem to know nothing
more intimately, yet there can be nothing so strange. The self is, so to speak, at once selfsame and selfdifferent: it belongs to itself and yet it transcends itself into nature and the world of others. (227)

The human is a split organism that possesses two different—yet connected—selves. It has the self, the exterior being, that we, as the human species, respond to and are able to associate with. Simultaneously, the self of “nature and the world of others” also exists within the human being (Klamm 227). As can be seen, it is not the soul/body connection that Descartes often spoke of, but, for Hegel, it is also a spiritual and natural connection with the Other world, often translatable as Nature.

In relation to communication, this possession of two selves is important, because through communication one is able to express his/her self-conscious, acquainting the self with itself. Yet, the ego is not the center, as was often assumed by many of the Humanists, but, instead, “it finds itself besides itself,” and the latter self is within nature (Klamm 229). Going back to language, it is possible to see that through communication—the means of meeting with oneself—an individual is converging with the environment, for the second self has transcended into nature. This is seen in a number of the works by Romantic authors. Novalis, for example, has his characters Hyazinth and Rosenblüten, communicate with the environment they live in and finally find themselves through the language. He believed that the ego was continually running from itself in an effort to find itself—just as Hyazinth ran from his parent’s home (where his two identities were merged as one) into the woods (a place away from his second ego)—and the ego will discover unification with itself through the language it shares with the universe—Hyazinth’s union with Rosenblüten (a figure from his parent’s home where, as stated previously, the two identities were converged).
This has the ability to place upon non-human individuals the need to become more human-like in the language arena, anthropomorphizing, in a sense, the ability of language onto all non-human beings. Novalis, albeit, wrote in order to remove this flaw from the eyes of his readers. In his fairytale the non-human beings are acknowledged and speak in greater amount than the, believed to be, human individuals. It is only twice that Hyazinth speaks during the entire tale and Rosenblütchen does not do it even once. Additionally, there is an instance within the tale where Hyazinth is unable to understand the Tree: “Nun wurde die Gegend auch wieder reicher und mannigfaltiger, die Luft lau und blau, der Weg ebener, grüner Büsche lockten ihn mit anmutigen Schatten, aber er verstand ihre Sprache nicht, sie schienen auch nicht zu sprechen” (Novalis 21-22). He must adapt himself to the ways of the environment not the environment adapt to him. Novalis has taken the opposite of anthropomorphism and created a atmosphere where the human must become more like the organic world, learning to speak the language of paradise. As one author put it, it was not nature that was kicked out of the Garden of Eden but man. Humanity is focused on being not human (but something much greater and more divine—in an effort to return to their original state) while nature is content in its place, knowing that it is already divine (Kuzniar 438).

In this effort to reach perfection, we place everything believed to be sacred above and before us. We hold to the conviction that it will create us into a holier more ideal civilization. While this is an admirable aim, it is an illogical one because the race reaching for perfection is the same subject deciding which object will help them become perfect, instead of embracing the thing from which they came: nature. As Novalis writes, the environment is placed before us in all of her divinity, yet we choose to walk over her searching blindly for the better option. This view is expressed best through pro-nature Humanism, the form of Posthumanism where Novalis
would most likely have found himself had he lived 200 years later. It is a form of though that see the organic world—animals and plants—as mutual and equal. It should not be controlled.

Novalis writes of the men who tried to achieve human mastery over it:

Es mag lange gedauert habe, ehe die Menschen darauf dachten, die mannigfachen Gegenstände ihrer Sinne mit einem gemeinschaftlichen Namen zu bezeichnen und sich entgegen zu setzen … Vielleicht ist es nur krankhafte Anlage der späteren Menschen, wenn sie das Vermögen verlieren, dieses zerstreuten Farben ihres Geistes wieder zu mischen und nach Belieben den alten einfachen Naturstand herzustellen oder neue, mannigfaltige Verbindungen unter ihnen zu bewirken. (Novalis 7)

Novalis believed in the Romanticism of a united world where creation and humanity could live as one. He imagined, longed for, and believed that it was possible to have a world of:

“…Menschen, Götter und Tiere als gemeinschaftliche Werkmeister und hört auf natürlichste Art die Entstehung der Welt beschreiben” (Novalis 9). As pro-nature humanists point out, the world cannot continue to sustain a species that sucks the life out of its counterpart. Just as

*Rosenblütchen* wept for *Hyazinth* when he traveled the path of the mysterious man, the few individuals who understand the need for a symbiotic relationship will weep for humanity as it destroys itself in an effort to be master. Through continual reexamination, certain Posthumanists see the need for nonhuman species and human animals to unite in blissful contentment just as

*Hyazinth* and *Rosenblütchen* joined together with nature in the end.

The nineteenth century Romantic which I am concerning myself with and the majority of late 20th century Posthumanists acknowledge the new reality that is coming into place. Carey writes that this new reality is

that the human occupies a new place in the universe, a universe now populated by what I [sic] am prepared to call nonhuman subjects. And this is why, to me, posthumanism means not the triumphal surpassing or unmasking of something but an increase in the vigilance, responsibility, and humility that accompany living in a world so newly, and differently, inhabited. (47)
To reexamine the philosophy of Humanism and embrace the ideas of a new world means accepting that the earth is occupied by species equal to that which we refer to as humans. It also requires entertaining the idea of forces stronger than the power of man and the influence of extraterrestrial beings in the lives of the entities on earth. It is an understanding that through a communicable relationship the individual is able to find its second self in nature, thereby, finding its true self. For some, this was an easy thought to process while for others, such as Ludwig Tieck, it was a constant thorn in the flesh of what had been known as reality for ages past.

**Ludwig Tieck**

Tieck struggled with the notion of death and the supernatural from a young age. He had a morbid curiosity for the attributes of death, the frightful, and the ghostly spirits that may exist in the natural world (Atkinson x). His characters, often modeled after the average man and Tieck himself, struggle to understand external and internal supernatural powers that influence the individual. “The Tieck fairy tale is concerned with a break-through to the person, with a typical generalization of personal problems of modern man in order to make them a theme of existence” (Thalmann 35). Tieck desired that his characters represent the true human and the issues that they dealt with on a daily basis, often plaguing them with undesirable imperfections and difficulties. As will be seen in the following analysis of *Der blonde Eckbert*, Tieck’s perspective on the unnatural and supernatural is not a positive one. It is an aspect of the human being that many Romantics struggled to understand and accept in the puzzle of what it means to be human.

*Der blonde Eckbert* visits the frightful idea of the supernatural’s influence on the lives of its subjects—the average person. In the world there are thousands of questions that one is left wondering the answer to and the reason for: To what degree can man control the environment around him or justify through reason the events that happen in society? When Tieck wrote *Der
many Romantics were questioning the validity of rationality and logic; they were searching for new justifications to the traditionally rationalized events. Tieck believed that a power unseen and uncontrollable dwelt in the world impacting the lives of those in it and possibly even dwelling inside the mind of man. This belief was best expressed through Tieck’s fairy tales, which allowed him to explore the parts of the human mind that intertwined with a larger whole as well as wade through the individual’s consciousness (Lillyman 77-78). “[And] his early tales…present an almost bewildering interweaving of natural and supernatural, calculated to inspire in even the most matter-of-fact reader Tieck’s own uncomfortable conviction of the immanence of the strange and uncanny even in everyday life” (Atkinson xi).

In the outer frame of Der Blonde Eckbert, the supernatural elements are not seen as ghosts, spirits, or something religious but they are found in nature, much like the argument found in Novalis’ works. In four sentences, Tieck is able to set the entire mood of the first section of his fairy tale, establishing that nature possesses a supernatural power which will affect the entire tale.

Es war schon im Herbst, als Eckbert an einem neblichten Abend mit seinem Freunde und seinem Weibe Bertha um das Feuer eines Kamines saß. Die Flamme warf einen hellen Schein durch das Gemach und spielte oben an der Decke, die Nacht sah Schwarz zu den Fenstern herein, und die Bäume draußen schüttelten sich vor nasser Kälte. […] das Feuer durch Holz vermehrt, und das Gespräch der Freunde heitrer und vertraulicher.

Es war jetzt gerade Mitternacht, der Mond sah abwechselnd durch die vorüberflatternden Wolken. (Tieck 4)

Autumn, the setting of this story, is a mystical time of the year; it brings with it death and birth. The animals are alive in their rush to prepare for their escape from the world for a few months, while the trees and plants are transforming from the shades of summer into hues that are seen only once during the year—they birth dark, transfixing reds, oranges, and yellows. In autumn the world is carried away on the fleeing days of summer but pulled back by the mystery of the bright
colors and bustle of end of the year. Tieck chose to situate his story during a time that symbolizes the supernatural feelings the characters will later work through. Additionally, Tieck uses the concept of fire as an image for the unknown and unpredictable in the world. “Die Flamme warf einen hellen Schein durch das Gemach und spielte oben an der Decke,” much like a spirit that is passionate yet controlled by none, dusting everything around it in fervor, autumn (mystery), and power (Tieck 4). It possesses a particular authority that draws the friends in together and allows for intimate conversation—which would later bring the destruction of all three characters. “[D]as Feuer durch Holz vermehrt, und das Gespräch der Freunde heitrer und vertraulicher” (Tieck 4).

For a story that is only a few pages long, every section matters. The author opens his mind up to the reader in a quick, but not always clear, manner. In Der blonde Eckbert, Tieck positions the story in such a fashion that his readers feel as though they could be the characters; he uses words of simplicity but yet still have great depth to them. The vocabulary choice makes the readers think to themselves, could this happen to me? Do supernatural powers have a place in my life, my world, my personality, my mind? Tieck believed they did and, thus, every word in the previous four sentences (found in the block quote) carries with it weight. There is not a single word that is misplaced or irrelevant to the tale. Words such as: “schwarz,” “Nacht,” “Mitternacht,” “Mond,” “abwechselnd,” “sich schütteln” pull the reader’s mind into a world where anything can happen. Take for example the simple word “Mitternacht.” It is not a time; it is neither day nor night. It is when, according to European folktale, supernatural events occur and paranormal creatures have the most power. How the individual is affected by the witching hour/ midnight is left to the imagination of the reader. Yet, through the inclusion of the word, Tieck has raised the idea that it is possible for humans to be affected and that there is an aspect of
humanity that can be controlled by the changes of the hour. The other words—“black”, “night”, “agitated”, and so on—work in much the same way. They provide the reader with a further detailed mental picture of the scene, and reassure him/her that it is not a positive situation. In the inner story they will be used as a counter-picture to the positive, bright life Bertha finds in the mountains.

It must be acknowledged that this fairy tale, the inner framed story especially, is often regarded as a religious lesson. Bertha’s running from home into the mountains can be seen as the atonement for the sin of her father, and the old woman she meets is described as a Jesus figure, who has the ability to redeem Bertha. While a religious undertone is a valid argument, and one that could be pursued in greater detail, it is not the perspective that will be given exceptional weight here. Thus, without going into too much depth, religion will be mentioned, as it is an area of extreme supernatural yet the focus will be less on the religious supernatural and more on Tieck’s understanding of it.

In the inner story, Tieck artistically crumbles the wall that stands between the rational and irrational, the mystical and natural. “Nur haltet meine Erzählung für kein Märchen, so sonderbar sie auch klingen mag” (Tieck 4). He asks the reader to embrace Bertha’s tale no matter the amount of irrationality that exists within it. It is as though his reader is pulled through the tale by some unknown power, forced to contemplate it, just as Bertha lacks the control of her actions when running from home and then from the old woman: “Als der Tag graute, stand ich auf und eröffnete, fast ohne dass ich es wusste, die Tür unsrer kleinen Hütte. […] Ich sah ihr lange nach und wusste selbst nicht, warum ich so beängstigt war; es war fast, als wenn mein Vvorhaben schon vor mir stände, ohne dessen deutlich mir bewusst zu sein” (Tieck 6, 14). In order to fully
understand the Posthuman aspects of this tale, the inner story will be approached in two different ways: an exploration of words and phrases followed by consideration of the old woman.

When one thinks of the word “spirit” he or she often associates it with ghosts, magic, and the paranormal. When a Posthumanist or Tieck uses the word spirit it is often associated with part of the human mind and body. A spirit can dwell within the individual, it may be a feature of the mind that is buried within the subconscious, or it can be ignored for fear of what it brings with it. During the Aufklärung, a spirit could not be rationalized, so they were commonly regarded as a matter of fiction or horror. As is seen in Der blonde Eckbert, however, Tieck incorporated the spirits not into a “Märchen” but reality (4). Bertha recounts her interaction with spirits in a number of different places stating:

…dann sah ich Geister heraufschweben, die mir unterirdische Schätze entdeckten, oder mir kleine Kiesel gaben, die sich in Edelsteine verwandelten, kurz, die wunderbarsten Phantasien beschäftigten mich es war seltsamer Kampf in meiner Seele, wie ein Streiten von zwei widerspenstigen Geistern in mir. In einem Augenblicke kam mir die ruhige Einsamkeit so schön vor, dann entzückte mich wieder die Vorstellung einer neuen Welt, mit allen ihren wunderbaren Mannigfaltigkeiten (Tieck 5, 15)

There are a number of varying ways that one can interrupt the interjection of “Geister” in these two passages. I will argue that in both exerts Tieck does not want the spirits to be a figment of one’s imagination, but he depicts them as a character of reality.

The first mention of spirits humanizes them. It portrays them as creatures that can be interacted with and acknowledged. Some would argue that they were simply a figment of Bertha’s consciousness or a symbol for the deeper longing within her subconscious. These are both valid points, and they could be followed through to great precision, but it is plausible and even reasonable, knowing Tieck’s fascination with the supernatural, to see them as the Posthumanist would: that is, to see them as another species within the environment, which is as
validly present as the ‘human’ being. For the Posthumanists, the individual is not bound to skin. There is an aspect of it that dwells outside of the normal skin apparatus; “[W]e can never determine the absolute boundary of the human,” which, as far as the Posthumanist is concerned, “…means that human beings do not exist in the sense in which we ordinarily think of them” (Pepperell 18). They can depict themselves in forms and fashions that are suitable for their interaction with the environment. This is further argued out in Tieck’s work and shown in Posthumanist thoughts when they state that consciousness (life) cannot be completely separated from the environment (Pepperell 18).

The second explicit mention of spirits (“Geistern”) is a more commonly accepted presentation of supernatural forces in life. Tieck takes the common and connects it to the previous mention of indefinite boundaries, the human as an unrestricted entity whose limits are transformable, and develops the idea of spirits dwelling within an individual. The quarreling spirits within Bertha demonstrate the lack of rationality that governs the individual. If a Humanist had written this tale, the character would not have internally struggled between right and wrong, and chosen wrong, but would have—much like Iphigenia—responded in a responsible and reasonable fashion. Had the individual struggled, he/she would have ended with a choice that was towards the betterment of mankind and its personality. Instead, Tieck, as a Romantic, created his character to opt for the imperfect option, thereby, showing one’s lack of rationality, as stated earlier, as well as one’s inability to fully control his/her actions. His characters depict the internal struggle as a supernatural force influencing the daily life of Bertha making her less of a superior being and more a subject of fate.

As Margaret Atkinson writes, “Bertha is mysteriously impelled to steal the bird and leave the dog to its fate; also [the verbs used to express] Bertha’s description of her parting from her
childhood home” reaffirms the lack of personal control (xv). “Als der Tag graute, stand ich auf und eröffnete, fast ohne dass ich es wusste, die Tür unserer kleinen Hütte. Ich stand auf dem freien Felde, bald darauf war ich in einem Walde, in den der Tag fast noch nich hineinblickte” (Tieck 6). Unlike the Humanist, some Romantics wrote with a belief in chance. It was a unique combination between the supernatural fate found in the Greek tragedies and the emotional fate found buried in Romantic philosophy (Babbitt 190). Instead of believing in the interference of Greek gods as the sole Moirai, particular Romantics questioned what supernatural force was present, believing all the while that one did exist. In Der blonde Eckbert, Tieck enables his readers to assign the power to whichever force they feel most compelled to belief in—the old woman, the spirits, or something even larger and unknown. He does not configure his tale in such a manner that allows for an intellectual or rational reading. Instead, the reader watches as the life of each character (Eckbert, Bertha, and Walter) is guided about freely with little to no justification or understanding.

“Surf or die,” reads the 11th General statement of the Posthuman manifesto, “You can’t control a wave, but you can ride it” (Pepperell 181). Interpreted, it states that, according to Posthumanists, Bertha and Eckbert were unable to control their actions. They were riding the wave of life, fate, or the supernatural, whichever word the audience feels is acceptable. The Humanists would find this thought laughable. The idea of ‘riding the wave’ would place the human out of control and out of the center. It would diminish their ability to understand life, as well as rationalize it. It is clear through Bertha, and the interaction of Tieck’s characters, that Tieck was not a Humanist but a Romantic and, much like the Posthumanists, “is open to ideas of ‘paranormality’, ‘immateriality’, the ‘supernatural’, and the ‘occult’” blueprinting the life of the individuals on earth (Pepperell 186).
One of the most highly discussed characters within Der blonde Eckbert is the old woman. She has been translated as a Jesus figure, as the archetypal woman and mother, and she has been considered to be an enigma of Bertha’s imagination—everything that Bertha craved displayed itself in the formation of an old woman: food, shelter, intelligence, love, family, and a home. While all of those are valid interpretations, they are not fitting for a discussion on the supernatural. I will focus on the position that the old woman is a mystical power—an entity outside of the ‘normal’ human. It is not a highly discussed viewpoint but, in relation to Romanticism and Posthumanism, it is the most appropriate.

The first meeting we have with the old woman comes shortly after Bertha prays for human contact when lost in the woods. “[I]ch ging näher und wurd an der Ecke des Waldes eine alte Frau gewahr, die auszuruhen schien. Sie war fast ganz Schwarz gekleidet und eine schwarze Kappe bedeckte ihren Kopf und eine große Teil des Gesichtes, in der Hand hielt sie einen Krückenstock” (Tieck 8). As seen in the previous sections, Tieck uses color to convey a message indirectly. The old woman is clothed in black, a color that has often been associated with magic, witches, death, and the superstitious. Through this he is giving a glimpse into the nonhuman aspects of life or even the afterlife. It is only magnified in the last three paragraphs of the tale, when the old woman reappears in the bodies of Walther and Hugo, thus driving Eckbert mad and, finally, to death. “Eine krummgebückte Alte schlich hustend mit einer Krücke den Hügel heran. ‘Bringst du mir meinen Vogel? Meine Perlen? Meinen Hund?’ schrie sie ihm einseit. ‘Siehe, das Unrecht bestraft sich selbst: Niemand als ich war dein Freund Walther, dein Hugo’” (Tieck 24).

With this, it seems as though Tieck is arguing for a world where the humans do not make the rules. They are given choices (from an outside source) and are driven by their decisions,
because as Tieck writes, the old woman knew of Bertha’s irrational actions, knew of Eckbert’s father’s immoral deed, and was simply giving to the individuals one of the predestined conclusions set before them. Due to the fact that a Humanist did not write this tale, the conclusion is not a positive nor rational one where the human arrives on the top. Alternatively, the non-human body displayed a strength and knowledge greater than any traditional human.

One of the key factors to best understanding Tieck’s perspective on the supernatural comes in the form of the old woman’s social conditions. Bertha finds what society is like for an ideal human—one who meets the criteria of the Humanists’ view of perfect—through the life of the old woman. Before Bertha arrived at the hut, she heard:

dass ich ein einfältiges dummes Kind sei, das nicht das unbedeutendste Geschäft auszurichten wisse, und wirklich war ich äußerst ungeschickt und unbeholfen, ich ließ alles aus den Händen fallen, ich lernte weder nähen noch spinnen, ich konnte nichts in der Wirtschaft helfen, nur die Not meiner Eltern verstand ich außerordentlich gut. (Tieck 5)

Following her arrival at the house in the woods, she was capable of all the previous activities that once labeled her as a dumb child. “Ich lernte mich schnell in die Wirtschaft finden, und alle Gegenstände umher wurden mir bekannt… In den Abendstunden lehrte sie mich lesen, ich begriff es bald, und es ward nachher in meiner Einsamkeit eine Quelle von unendlichem Vergnügen” (Tieck 11). It is only in the uncanny clearing in the woods with a magical bird, a witch, and a dog that Bertha experiences a ‘normal’ human life. Reading becomes enjoyable and she possesses the talents and skills of a normal human and is capable of surviving on her own (Rippere 477). Yet, all of this is achieved only after she has entered into, acknowledged, and embraced the life of what later generations might call a mystical anthropoid.

In a Posthuman world this would not be uncommon or surprising, for Posthuman thinkers believe that the human is only a species that, like other groups, will be overcome both
intellectually and mentally by another form of ‘living’ entities. What this creature will be or how it will appear is still unknown. It is a question that looms over many current thinkers just as the human-centered position was questioned by a number of the Romantics. In the book *The Post-human Condition*, Pepperell deals with this issue best in his following statement: “In the Post-human era many beliefs become redundant—not least the belief in human beings” (Pepperell 180). Thus, many Romantic authors used non-human beings as a character within their written and visual works. It was a technique employed in order to awaken the individual to a part of life that had been considered irrelevant for past centuries. Certain Romantics wanted to create a society that involved the spiritual aspects of life—both religious and none—that they felt were continually influencing their lives. For this reason, Tieck created the ‘ideal’ society in the mystical woods with a witch as the perfect family and mother. Tieck is not the only Romantic who displayed life in this fashion. Painters such as Casper David Friedrich\(^{xvii}\) exhibited the mystical particularities of life through extraordinary paintings.

In other words, all forms of art, visual as well as literary, should be symbolic, adumbrating spiritual truth through the code of material forms. Infinite truths were by definition not accessible to human reason, but in the hieroglyph of art they might be fleetingly and imperfectly intuited. The artist did portray material reality, whether human or natural, but this reality should ‘intimate immortality’. (Saul 227-228)

The “intimate immortality,” in the case of *Der blonde Eckbert*, can be seen not so much as an everlasting but more as the familiar supernatural (Saul 228). We know this to be true, because of Tieck’s extreme fascination with the authority of the mystical—manifested in the old woman.

As a Romantic, Tieck was able to embrace the supernatural and incorporate his own thoughts and questions concerning it into his written works. It not only went against the opinions of more traditional German authors—as many of them had argued themselves with Humanists perspectives—but allowed the German public to question what it truly meant to be human in an
age where doctrines were changing. His opinion on the progression of philosophies and the destiny of humanity if supernatural bodies were embraced was one that varied. I would argue that Tieck accepted the notion of forces out of his control, but when society worked against this power it would only lead to destruction of the race. It was a negatively embraced concept of the world around him that was further investigated by authors such as E.T.A Hoffmann, who saw only one negative path that humanity would end up on if they embraced the tangible form of the mystical: the machine human.

E.T.A Hoffmann

Hoffmann created characters who turned their backs to the reality of life and sought refuge in the unknown—the otherworldly aspects. His opinion of where the world would end up if society allowed itself to dabble in the uncertainty of automatons and the paranormal was not a positive one. He, like Tieck, was conscious of the difference between reality and the ideal, thus, many of his characters explore “the conflicts that arise whenever an individual becomes conscious of the discrepancy between a Platonic, metaphysical realm of ideas and the world of everyday reality” (Röder 5). In Hoffmann’s famous short story, Der Sandmann, Nathanael is a young artist internally conflicted over the love and acceptance he feels from a nonhuman (ideal) versus the affection and rationality of his human fiancée (reality). Through this tale, Hoffmann approaches a number of different issues concerning mankind and its essential reexamination. The largest, and yet to be discussed, matter being that of the ideal individual in the form of a machine/automaton.

“In short, it could be said that machines are gradually acquiring human characteristics and humans are gradually acquiring machine characteristics,” states the Posthumanist writer Pepperell, “It is almost inevitable, at some point, that the two will merge to the point where we
cannot be absolutely sure of the distinction between them” (157). The last half of this statement is vital when discussing the world of automatons in Hoffmann’s work, because it is the lack of distinction between Olimpia and human women that raises the questions of humanity’s future in the 19th century, and casts a dark shadow over the advancements in human science.

The shadow looms over the story from the very beginning as we are simultaneously introduced to the notion of a Sandmann, an extraterrestrial being who kidnaps bad children and feeds their eyes to his own offspring, and Nathanael’s father, who is believed to be working on creating his own humongous. The concurrence of these actions place both in a negative light, since it is the memories of the Sandmann and its ‘creators,’ so to speak, that thrust Nathanael into a state of madness and despair.

As Nathanael is mentally disturbed by the image of his father’s works and the appearance of the Sandmann, Klara rationalizes his father as an alchemist and, thus, the purpose for his work. She is not affected as negatively as her fiance’, but still does not see the need to prolong life through scientific experimentation as a positive one. Her rationalization of the explosion and Nathanael’s horror is expounded in her letter to him, in which she begs him to acknowledge that his fears reside in him alone. “Sei überzeugt, daß diese fremden Gestalten nichts über Dich vermögen; nur der Glaube an ihre feindliche Gewalt kann sie Dir in der Tat feindlich machen” (Hoffmann 148). The powers of the foreign influences were not present within reality, states Klara. They were
figments of Nanathael’s mind that he had allowed to become reality. Through this, Hoffmann has introduced two areas of humanity that he challenges in his work: human machines and the influence of fantasy in reality. Both of these subjects are dealt with in greater detail throughout the story leaving the reader with a strong understanding of Hoffmann’s believe in what the future humanity should not be.

Humanism is a push for the ideal being. It is an effort to achieve complete human mastery through rationality and thought. Romanticism reexamines what it means to be a living being. And Posthumanism is a movement towards a new form of a human. It questions the supremacy of humanity and acknowledges the potential in the non-human entities just as Nathanael embraced the positive qualities within Olimpia, his ideal female companion. Hoffmann created this exemplary character not out of flesh and blood but out of metal and wire, so is she still the ideal female human or is she sub-par to the ‘real’ person? Röder writes,

[I]t is hardly surprising that they [the other men] cannot see that Nathanael’s being in love with a mechanical doll bears more than a passing resemblance to their relationships with their wives and fiancées. For how do these latter differ from Olimpia when all they have to do to be regarded as real human beings is to demonstrate a rudimentary capacity for “Denken und Empfinden.” (61)

Descartes’ statement “I think therefore I am” is alluded to here, as well as the Humanist thinking of what it means be a real human. The bourgeois felt themselves to be more alive than Olimpia because they were capable of the thought and reason of which she was incapable. But if it is only reason and thought that separates man from animal or machine than Olimpia is a Descartesian being, for she possessed the ability to think and speak (through reason) from the personality placed upon her by Nathanael’s understanding of the ideal: “Nathanael creates one, rather like a present-day Pygmalion. Whereas Spalanzani and Coppelius construct Olimpia’s body, Nathanael
constructs her personality” (Röder 61). This will be discussed in greater depth shortly, but first a clear distinction between the two opposing women—ideal versus rational—must be given.

The first mention of Olimpia is a mixture of attraction and repulsion. She is described as: tall, perfectly proportioned, beautiful, graceful, and even angelic, yet Nathanael could not stay within her sight because her eyes lacked life. It was as though they were transfixed on nothing and had no power. “Nun erschaute Nathanael erst Olimpias wunderschön geformtes Gesicht. Nur die Augen schienen ihm gar seltsam starr und tot. […] Nathanael lag wie festgezaubert im Fenster, immer fort und fort die Himmlisch-Olimpia betrachtend” (Hoffmann 162). She was a model of something divine just as humanity was made from something godly into something of divinity. The narrator of the story states that had the people of the town seen the depiction of Olimpia that Nathanael saw from the beginning, with all the images and thoughts springing from within his soul, they too would have seen her as an equal clothed in the vibrant colors of life. Instead, they took her to be a stupid and worthless child. But do not be too quick to assume that this is because she was machine. No, this mistake is made even with the individual formed from flesh and blood.

Klara was pure and considered heavenly by the poets and architects around her, but she did not often speak, making it appear as though she lacked consciousness just as a beautifully molded sculpture lacks the breath of life. When she did speak it was always of pure rationality. She was unable to grasp and agree with the whimsical ideas of anything outside of reason. For Klara, the absolute was what could be understood and explained. Nothing else existed outside of this. “Lieben Freunde! Wie möget ihr nir denn zumuten, daß ihr eure verfließende Schattengebilde für wahre Gestalten ansehen soll, mit Leben und Regung?—Klara wurde deshalb von vielen kalt, gefühllos, prosaisch gescholten” (Hoffmann 154). Klara’s rationality and
continual thought (the ideal human characteristics) would become the thing that drove Nathanael back to the automaton—the creature he was driven from due to her lack of human attributes. In fact, it is the traits Klara has of the rational humanists and Enlighteners that drive Nathanael into his state of madness and illusions. “He [Nathanael] wants to plunge into the Romantic world of the imagination, whereas Klara clings to the rules and paradigms of her rationalistic world. Of course, both are guilty of exaggeration when they claim that happiness is only to be found in their world, the only one which is real (emphasis added)” (Röder 64). Hoffmann writes, “Der verständigen Klara war diese mystische Schwärmerei im höchsten Grade zuwider, doch schien es vergebens, sich auf Widerlegung einzulassen” (Hoffmann 155).

Reality for Nathanael was not actuality for the majority of society. It contained haunting memories of past monsters and the need for recognition in actions that were irrational and fantastical.

As is seen from this passage, he was not a man who believed in the rationality of the world, but he accepted the fact that humans were a slave to a larger force, just as a machine is enslaved to humans or an animal that must follow the rules of nature. Nathanael lived in a world he understood was predestined for him. He was controlled by another individual or force like a robot controlled by its master. His actions and thoughts were not his own but another man’s, in this case Coppelius.’ Nathanael’s thoughts align with those often seen in the present idea of humanity. Hatfield, authors of Automaton: The Future of the Mechanical Man, argues that the idea of humanity is the force that controls humans. As a population we decide who we are, what we are, and how we are to act. “A vast and successful activity carried on in its name [humanity]
strives perpetually, by a thousand different methods, to create communities of well-washed, well-fed, well-regulated, well-behaved, mildly cultured people as devoid of all individuality as machine-made automata” (Hatfield 11). Individualism—the unique and ideal in this story—is not accepted and will lead one to be viewed as an ‘Other.’

Relating Hoffmann’s story to 21st century issues, it is easy to see how an individual such as Nathanael would still be seen as an unacceptable member of society, because he does not fill the machine like characteristics of modern society. Unlike the general Western population, he desired to express himself in ways that were unconventional and lacked conformity.

[Western life] bear[s] no trace of human hands, produced by a machine, itself almost equally devoid of all individuality, but hundreds of times more powerful and accurate than the hands of the craftsman. We [western society] strive steadily towards a life among objects all possessing this inhuman perfection, surfaces uniform in colour, or patterned in endless perfection repetition, form of geometric perfection. (Hatfield 10)

According to Hatfield, and many other authors of the Posthumanist era, the majority of the world, as it is presently understood, is working towards absolute perfection—an aspect that has changed little over time yet the means of reaching perfection has. Modern societies are not finding the ideal in their citizens anymore, but are, instead, creating it out of material that will not change or alter. This is seen in the growth of perfect robots or computer generated machines that, unlike the human, will not change based upon mood, knowledge, or ideas. Once perfection has been reached it will not be lost or questioned as Romantics did or Posthumanists are doing. The lives and talents of humans will exist through their modern counter-part: the machine.

As a machine, Olimpia was able to offer Nathanael the recognition and acceptance he desperately needed in order to be what society deemed as sane, which is just as easily replaced with the word perfect. This is interesting, because Hoffmann (in the mid 19th century) used an automaton to define the difference between insane and sane, between the rational and irrational.
The Posthumanist would argue that, for centuries, humans used themselves as tools to translate between the normality and abnormalities of human life. This, they would state, is not only illogical but also unintelligent, because at what point should one measure him/herself against him/herself. This is like holding a mirror up to yourself and stating that you are healthy with no form of measurement outside of yourself—no ability to see the contrarieties between healthy and sick. On the other hand, the figure of Klara, whose pressure to ignore the fantasy of life and accept the reality, is not satisfactory either. In fact, the ability to reason everything and not accept the imagination literally kills Nathanael. So, Hoffmann asks: what is the ideal human? Can it be a machine?

Olimpia, as mentioned earlier, she possessed all the physical traits of a mortal. Spalanzani developed a daughter who did not carry blood through her veins, but was built by man with the limbs and technology of a divinely created entity—the human. She, though mechanical in nature, was able to sing and play the piano as well as almost any individual, demonstrating ability to learn and express that knowledge. But, it is not until Nathanael figuratively breathes life into her that she attains every attribute of the normal human—love, thoughts, passion, feelings, etc. “…er küßte Olimpias Hand er neigte sich zu ihrem Munde, eiskalte Lippen begegnten seinen glühenden! … aber fest hatte ihn Olimpia an sich gedrückt, und in dem Kuß schienen die Lippen zum Leben zu erwarmen” (Hoffmann 166). He continues, arguing that she does not come alive (express herself fully) unless it is for the arts, a passion that Nathanael himself exists for. He displaces his life onto her, in so doing, giving her his warmth, his feelings, and his passion for the written word. Through this, she is everything that Nathanael needs or believes he needs. She was created for the progression of the human species and is used by Nathanael to procreate his ideal human—himself.
Without Olimpia, who is dismembered in front of Nathanael at the end of the story, Nathanael’s life is nothing. He is, once again, left to the hands of the rational society who deems him unworthy and incapable of truly living, because without Olimpia as his counterpart, the mirror of his soul, he is left to conform to the world around him, which is to say become just another machine in the matrix of modern society. With that being said, it can be understood that Olimpia, the automaton, was not the ideal human, because she was merely a vision of what another individual considered to be perfect. She was nothing more than a flawless image of a particular human’s imagination and a mockery of the human life. Everything she accomplished was done with such mechanical precision and accuracy, that the bourgeois (the most educated, achieved, and advanced members of society) felt her to be an infringement on their rights as humans—as divine creatures. Perfection was not to be reached through the manufacturing of a machine nor was it to be achieved through reason, according to Hoffmann. Both are simply an opportunity for humanity to express its anthropocentric tendencies.

**Conclusion**

So, the questions still remain: what does it truly mean to be human? Will we last? Where is the human race as a whole going and becoming? These are questions that authors, philosophers, poets, theologians, psychologists, and so on have been working to answer for hundreds of years, and the task is not becoming easier. Since the late 1700s when certain Romantic authors took it upon themselves to reexamine what is means to be human, based upon the humanist traditions that were present at the time, the question of humanity has continued to infest the minds of thinkers around the world. No one author approached the subject in the same manner nor did they raise the same questions concerning the species they were considered to be part of. There were authors who felt the movement of the 18th century to be progressive, while
others viewed the changes as a negative characteristic of humanity presenting itself in a fashion that would become harmful to the members of the human species.

In this thesis, Novalis, Tieck and Hoffmann present the common thread that is woven in and out of Romanticism, continuing into the centuries of Posthumanist thinkers, which questions the definition of a human: I think therefore I am. Novalis saw this reanalysis as a positive stride in the human journey because nature is humanity and humanity is within nature. Modernly speaking, this perspective is one of the most common forms of Posthumanism that exists: pro-nature humanism. Tieck, at the same time, was focusing on the supernatural aspects of an individual’s life. The anthropocentrism of centuries past was no longer acceptable because he believed that a supernatural power existed which influenced the lives of those on earth and, if fought against, was capable of repressing the human to a position of nothing. Hoffmann took a much different approach to the subject. He questions humanity’s ability to duplicate itself in the form of a machine, as well as the advantages of possessing the capability of rationality. It can be seen that neither the former nor latter were positive for Hoffmann, thus leaving his audience with the opportunity to question what it means to be human for themselves.

Whether Hoffmann expected his questions to be asked 200 years later will never be known, but they are as society is progressing into a more technologically, spiritually diverse, group of individuals who state they want to give nature the rights it deserves. Leo Tolstoy was not wrong when he stated that, “One of the commonest and most generally accepted delusions is that every man can be qualified in some particular way…” (252). It is not only impossible to contain the human species within a box of particular qualities and traits, but it is madness to assume that the human species will continue to live within those limits and characteristics. As the world evolves it will progress and digress. It is impossible to know who or what will be the
superior being in five, ten, or thirty years, but as it was seen the writings of the Romantics, and presently observed in the thoughts of Posthumanists, individuals cannot continue to live as though they are an immortal entity. The anthropocentricism of Humanism may still exist as a reality in the minds of persons around the world, but it is nothing more than an ideal for them, as has been presented within this thesis. The center no longer holds the human nor does it revolve on the axes of rationalism. Supernatural spiritualism is evolving; the quest to reunite with nature is on its journey. One has only to look around in order to see where the machine has replaced the traditional human. Is the idea of a human being a legend? Is what it means to be human nothing more than a configuration of wires; a soulless being swayed by external forces, fighting for the rights of entities once believed to be a machine? For some, the answer to this is question is, yes, and they embrace the change with open arms because it means a world of greater perfection, while for others there is no answer. It is simply an issue one must ponder for him/herself with the understanding that humanity may not be what we have always assumed it to be—the rational, soulful, centric, superior being. If in 100 years the human species still exists, I believe that this issue will still be sewn through the literature and thoughts of its society as strongly as it was in the 1800 and 2000s. Humanism ignored these issues, Romanticism reflected on them, and Posthumanism is acting upon them.
Posthumanism is the study of a non-anthropocentric world where the formation and existence of non-human beings is a common and accept reality within life. This idea will be further detailed on page 13 of the paper.

Humanism is a word that carries with it a great amount of weight. There is no one definition that has the ability to define the word in a manner that encompasses its complexity and diverse range of followers. The word can be used in an exact manner or it can be used in a vague, philosophical context. For the sake of simplicity and space, this thesis will always view Humanism as the complex set of ideas where humans are the center of the world and are instilled with the process of rationality, thus making them superior to all other living and nonliving beings. From this, it can be assumed that Humanists—a term frequently used throughout the paper—is a group of people who hold strongly to the previous set of beliefs.

Posthumanists are not mimicking the actions, thoughts, or philosophies of some Romantic authors, nor are they basing their research and examination upon the views of that generation. One does not stem from the other nor does one look to the other for answers. The two epochs are, as can be seen when one compares literature, simply approaching life with many of the same questions and concerns. This creates a string of commonalities found within both but not connecting them.

The anthropocentric view of humanism that lasted from the Roman Antiquities to the late 18th century in German literature states that humans are at the center of everything. If the world advanced or decline in knowledge, power, or status it was due to the impact of human rationality. As particular branches of Romanticism developed the desire to break away from the traditional views grew stronger and became more evident within the writings of a number of Romantic authors. This is further seen in the philosophy of most Posthumanists—who, like their predecessor—are visually displaying their desire to move away from anthropocentricism and find the either a new center or balance between the natural world and humanity.

The following is an exemplary list of authors who can be considered Posthuman in their style of thought and writing: Michel Foucault, Donna Haraway, Peter Singer, Cary Wolfe, Aldous Huxley, and Francis Fukuyama

On the dignity of man, 1487

The University of Jena was built in 1558 and was home to many of the great minds in German Romanticism. It is “strange to think that Fichte and Schelling, Friedrich and August Wilhelm Schlegel, Novalis, Tieck, and the “Romantic” scientist J.W. Ritter at one pint all lived in or in the vicinity of Jena, thus forming one of the most stimulating constellations of minds in German intellectual history” (Werztel 44). It is here that German idealism and early Romanticism took form as authors such as those previously mentioned met together to teach and discuss past, present, and future literary works.

The reconstruction mentioned here can take place in a number of different ways. The most commonly associated form with term Posthumanism is the alteration of human, animal, robot, plant, etc. statuses and rights. Peter Singer, an extreme animal rights activist from Australia, is a prime example of the social reorganization that Posthumanists believe will and should become
reality. Singer, and others, state that human beings will diminish on the ladder of societal supremacy and previously believe to be inferior objects and beings will become equal, if not superior, to the human.

This famous “visionary moment,” or belief change, came as Novalis was standing at the grave of Sophie, his dead fiancée. He wrote in his journal that, “I wept ecstatic tears upon her neck to welcome the new life. It was the first, incomparable dream—and since then I have held an eternal, changeless faith in the heaven of night and its lights, the beloved.” (Stoljar 2)

Die Lehrlinge zu Sais, written in 1798-1799, is a fragment monologue concerning the notion of nature and its influence on humanity. The fragment is split into two sections; the first being a monologue by the Lehrling and the second can be considered a lesson to the teacher’s students on nature. Within the second section, Novalis uses the fairytale, Hyazinth und Rosenblüten as an analogy for humanities interaction with nature.

Hyazinth und Rosenblüten is the fairytale of a young man who spent his time talking with creatures found in nature. He was well liked by the majority of the girls, but there was one in particular that held strong affections for him and he for her. Her name was Rosenblütchen. However, none of the other children knew of this love, thus it was the plants and animals that told the others of the secret love through a manner of mockery and joking. This did not last long, because a stranger came into town—a dark man who spoke of magic and held a book that no person could read. Through his conversation and ideas he drew Hyazinth’s attention away from the joy he found in Rosenblütchen and nature. Shortly after the old man left, Hyazinth felt that he too must take his leave for he was no longer himself. He continually reflected on the old man’s book and needed answers to the questions of life. After a long journey through foreign lands and languages, Hyazinth, with the help of the spirits of nature, found the answers he had been seeking and the shelter he sought. It was no other than Rosenblütchen. She was the virgin he journeyed after, and she, within nature, was his ability to be happy. They lived happily ever after with thanksgiving to the old spirits that guided Hyazinth back to the organic world from which he had left.

This taken from a short work titled Monolog found in Novalis larger work Das Philosophisch-theoretisch Werk, in which he playfully discusses the power and ability of language and its user.

The Other is a term often given to individuals or groups of people who do not appear to belong or are excluded from a larger society or group. From this Othering, the excluded individuals will form an identity and thus create a home-like atmosphere for themselves. Friedrich Hegel is considered to be the father of the term, while Edward Said further developed the idea through his written work Orientalism.

“…Tieck drew largely on his personal experiences. Whether consciously or not, he gave to Eckbert something of himself: his own characteristic of changing from dreamy passivity to sudden violent action, his own vivid imagination and tendency to experience hallucinations in moments of particular stress or extraordinary emotional excitement, his own fear of madness.” (Atkinson xxiv)
Der blonde Eckbert, written in 1796, is one of Tieck’s earlier works, and considered to be one of his best. It is a fairy tale like framed story of a couple, Eckbert and Bertha, who are frequently visited by a gentleman named Walter while is in the area gathering plants. The outer frame sets the living conditions and setting of the story, while the inner frame is Bertha’s telling of her childhood. It is a peculiar, childhood story that later leads to the death of Bertha, Walter, and Eckbert when the story jumps back out into the outer frame. Bertha shares that she is a run away child from abusive parents who found herself living with a unique, and somewhat magical older woman. At the age of 14, after a number of years of living in the mountains with the older woman, Bertha runs away again, this time back to her hometown where she finds her parents have died and marries Eckbert. Until the night the story is told, when Walter (having no connection to Bertha as a young child) mentions it, Bertha cannot remember the name of the old woman’s dog. From the point the dog’s name is mentioned, the tale takes a downward turn as Bertha dies, Eckbert kills Walter, and finally Eckbert dies in the mountains beside a character that tells him of his incestuous marriage and mental instability.

This hour is often referred to as the ‘witching hour.’

Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1880) is an acclaimed painter from the German Romantic period, whose works have been interpreted and critiqued as extensively as his contemporaries such as: Novalis, Kleist Tieck, and Wagner to name just a few (Siegel I). Friedrich’s works capture the philosophy concerning humankind in the late 18th and early 19th century. One of Friedrich’s main beliefs was that no man should simply copy what lies before him. Instead, he is to take up his brush and paint not only what the eyes see but also what is found in his soul. This is best defined through Friedrich’s ability to move beyond boundaries in his paintings, i.e. mountains that have no end, clouds that float forever, or farmland that one could till until death. This is realistically not the case because mountains end, clouds dissipate, and farmland runs out, but for Friedrich, the idea of infinity was reality. It was an exceptionally Romantic notion and one that allowed many of the Romantic thinkers to analyze the human beyond what had ready be done, because they had no bounds. Even in the 21st century as one gazes at Friedrich’s work, he/she is always able to draw a new conclusion about the scene just as one can interpret the human in new and evolutionary ways. The paintings, like many literary works, ask the audience to imagine what lies beyond the horizon in their own life, society, or world that they cannot see. This is most commonly done through the use of nature: human nature interaction, human placement, and nature’s power.

As it was previously mentioned, Friedrich does not contain his paintings with borders or limits, but allows the one viewing the painting to travel with the scene wherever he or she may chose. This is not accomplished through never end trails of people or crowds of people in a small space, but it is displayed through the position of the human being within nature. Nature is always the larger, dominant force in the painting with the human nearly lost within its universe. There are numerous Romantic writers and Posthumanist thinkers who view the human in this particular manner as well. Tieck, for example, describes nature in a fashion that demands respect through its stillness and magnitude just as Friedrich does in one of his most famous paintings, Moonrise over the Sea (1822).
Der Sandmann, written in 1816, tells the tale of a mental disturbed young man named Nathanael and his obsession with the irrational, specifically a nonhuman named Olimpia. Nathanael, from a young age, became entranced with the idea of the Sandmann, a creature created to keep children in their beds. As he grew and moved about in life, Nathanael saw the Sandmann in the form of people he often associated with. Klara, his fiancée and source of reason, did not approve of his continual irrational behavior and talk, which often manifested itself in his poetry. For this reason, Nathanael finds his identity in Olimpia the automaton. By the end of the story, Nathanael has been driven into a state of unrelenting madness and commits suicide, because he cannot truly exist in a world of reason. Olimpia is dismembered and shown to be nothing more than an automaton, while Klara is happily wed in a rational, acceptable marriage.
Work Cited


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