

**Metamorphosis and the Fragmented Self in The Last Werewolf: A
Jungian Reading of Identity Crisis**

التحول والذات المتشظية في رواية الذئب الأخير: قراءة يونغية لأزمة الهوية

ايمان شامل حسين

Eman Shamil Hussien

emanshamil90@gmail.com

جامعة سامراء / قسم اللغة الإنكليزية

0771 213 2280

أ.د. اروى حسين الدوري

Prof.Dr. Arwa Hussien Al-Doori (Ph.D.)

dr.arwa.husseini@tu.edu.iq

جامعة سامراء / قسم اللغة الإنكليزية

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Last Werewolf; Identity Crisis.**

Abstract

This study examines metamorphosis and the fragmented self in Glen Duncan's *The Last Werewolf* through the theoretical framework of Carl Gustav Jung's analytical psychology. The research explores how the novel represents identity as unstable, divided, and psychologically conflicted within a postmodern context characterized by uncertainty and the collapse of fixed meanings. Drawing upon Jung's concepts of the Shadow, Persona, Self, and individuation, the study analyzes the werewolf not merely as a supernatural figure, but as a symbolic representation of unconscious instinct, repression, and internal psychological division. Furthermore, the study highlights the relationship between postmodern identity and Jungian fragmentation, showing how the instability of the self reflects broader postmodern concerns regarding subjectivity, reality, and existential uncertainty. Ultimately, the research concludes that *The Last Werewolf* presents the werewolf archetype as a complex psychological figure that embodies the crisis of identity and the destructive consequences of failed self-integration in postmodern literature.

الملخص

تتناول هذه الدراسة التحول والذات المتشظية في رواية الذئب الأخير (*The Last Werewolf*) لـ Glen Duncan من خلال الإطار النظري لعلم النفس التحليلي عند Carl Gustav Jung ويسنكشف البحث كيفية تمثيل الرواية للهوية بوصفها هوية غير مستقرة ومنقسمة ومضطربة نفسيًا ضمن سياق ما بعد الحداثة الذي يتسم باللايقين وانهيار المعاني الثابتة. واعتمادًا على مفاهيم يونغ المتعلقة بالظل (Shadow) ، والقناع الاجتماعي (Persona) ، والذات (Self) ، وعملية التفرد (Individuation) ، تحلل الدراسة شخصية المستذنب ليس بوصفه كائنًا خارقًا للطبيعة فحسب، بل بوصفه تمثيلًا رمزيًا للغريزة اللاواعية، والكبت، والانقسام النفسي الداخلي. كما تسلط الدراسة الضوء على العلاقة بين هوية ما بعد الحداثة والتشظي اليونغي،



مبيّنةً كيف يعكس اضطراب الذات اهتمامات ما بعد الحداثة الأوسع المتعلقة بالذاتية والواقع واللايقين الوجودي. وتخلص الدراسة في النهاية إلى أن رواية *الذئب الأخير* تقدّم نموذج المستذئب بوصفه شخصية نفسية معقدة تجسد أزمة الهوية والنتائج التدميرية لفشل التكامل الذاتي في أدب ما بعد الحداثة.

1. Introduction

In postmodern literature, metamorphosis and the fragmented self-emerge as central conceptual frameworks through which the instability of identity is critically examined in a world marked by uncertainty and the collapse of fixed meanings. Metamorphosis, as defined in literary theory, refers to a significant transformation in form, identity, or condition, often employed to express symbolic, psychological, or existential change (Cuddon, 2012: 43; Abrams, 2018: 22). This concept extends beyond mere physical alteration to encompass deeper disruptions in subjectivity, reflecting the disintegration of the unified self in contemporary narratives.

The roots of this thematic concern can be traced back to the works of Franz Kafka (1883–1924), one of the most influential modernist writers. His novella *The Metamorphosis* (1915) represents a foundational text in the literary exploration of alienation, identity crisis, and existential transformation. Kafka's portrayal of transformation not only redefines the boundaries between the human and the non-human but also anticipates the postmodern condition in which identity becomes unstable, fluid, and continuously reconstructed (Gallagher, 2009:101).

Within postmodern discourse, the notion of the fragmented self reflects the breakdown of the coherent subject under the pressures of late capitalism, mass media, and competing systems of meaning. As a result, identity is no longer perceived as unified or stable, but rather as dispersed across multiple discourses, simulations, and social constructs (Aizaz, 2024: 44). In this context, transformation



becomes a key narrative strategy through which literature represents the crisis of subjectivity and the loss of ontological certainty.

2. Jungian theory and the crisis of failed individuation:

Carl Gustav Jung's analytical psychology provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the structure of the human psyche and the dynamics of identity formation. Unlike Sigmund Freud, who emphasized the role of sexuality and personal experience, Jung proposed a broader and more symbolic model of the mind, one that integrates cultural, mythological, and spiritual dimensions into psychological analysis (Graf-Nold, 2015: 75). His approach extends beyond the study of mental illness to encompass creativity, meaning, and the deeper structures underlying human experience (Bishop, 2014: 44).

At the center of Jung's theory is the conception of the psyche as a dynamic and multi-layered system composed of both conscious and unconscious elements. The conscious mind is organized around the ego, which governs rational awareness and everyday identity. However, Jung argues that the ego represents only a limited aspect of the self. Beneath it lies the personal unconscious, which contains repressed memories and emotionally charged complexes, and, more fundamentally, the collective unconscious an inherited and universal dimension of the psyche shared by all humanity (Jones, 2013: 199).

The collective unconscious is structured through archetypes, which are universal symbolic patterns that shape human perception, behavior, and imagination. These archetypes do not appear as fixed images but manifest symbolically in myths, dreams, and literary texts. Among the most significant archetypal structures are the Shadow, the Persona, the Anima/Animus, and the Self. The Shadow represents the repressed and unacknowledged aspects of the personality; the Persona reflects the



socially constructed identity; the Anima and Animus embody the unconscious opposites within the psyche; and the Self represents the totality and unity of the individual personality. Together, these archetypes reveal the internal tensions that define human subjectivity and contribute to the formation—and fragmentation—of identity (Jones, 2013: 329).

Central to Jungian psychology is the process of individuation, which he defines as the psychological movement toward wholeness through the integration of conscious and unconscious elements of the self. As Jung states, individuation is “*the process by which a person becomes a psychological ‘whole’*” (Jung, 1968: 134). This process requires the recognition and assimilation of the Shadow, as well as the reconciliation of internal opposites. However, individuation is not always successfully achieved. When the ego fails to integrate unconscious contents, the psyche becomes divided, leading to inner conflict, instability, and the emergence of what can be described as a split self.

This failure of individuation is closely linked to the condition of alienation, in which the individual becomes estranged not only from society but also from the deeper dimensions of the self. Instead of achieving psychological unity, the subject experiences fragmentation, repression, and disconnection from unconscious forces. In this sense, Jung’s theory provides a powerful interpretive model for understanding the crisis of identity in modern and postmodern literature, where characters often appear as divided, unstable, and unable to reconcile competing aspects of their existence.

Jung conceptualizes the human psyche as a dynamic and multi-layered system in which conscious awareness represents only a limited surface of a much deeper psychological reality. According to his model, the psyche is structured through the



interaction of three interrelated dimensions: the ego, the personal unconscious, and the collective unconscious, which function together as an integrated whole rather than as isolated components (Jung & Hull, 2023: 48).

The ego constitutes the center of consciousness and is responsible for the individual's sense of identity, rational awareness, and engagement with the external world. However, Jung emphasizes that the ego is only a partial and limited aspect of the total psyche. When individuals overidentify with the ego, they risk ignoring the deeper unconscious forces that significantly shape behavior and perception, which may lead to psychological imbalance and a distorted sense of self (Hopwood, 2023: 58).

At a deeper level, Jung introduces the concept of the collective unconscious, an inherited and universal dimension of the psyche shared by all human beings. Unlike the personal unconscious, it is not shaped by individual experience but by the accumulated history of human existence. This dimension explains the recurrence of similar symbolic patterns, myths, and narratives across different cultures and historical contexts. The collective unconscious is structured through archetypes, which function as universal organizing principles of human experience, manifesting symbolically in dreams, literature, and cultural expression (Phung, 2025: 86). As Jung notes, "*the unconscious is not just evil by nature, it is also the source of the highest good*" (Jung, 1968), highlighting its dual role as both a source of disruption and creative potential within the psyche.

Jung identifies several archetypes that play a crucial role in psychological development and identity formation. Among these, the Mother archetype represents nurturance, care, protection, and the source of life. It is associated with emotional security and psychological grounding, yet it may also manifest negatively through



overprotection or control, reflecting the dual nature of archetypal influence (Knox & Fonagy, 2003: 133). The Hero archetype, by contrast, symbolizes struggle, courage, and transformation. The hero's journey, often involving confrontation with danger and the overcoming of obstacles, reflects the individual's psychological effort to achieve growth and self-realization (Knox & Fonagy, 2003: 54).

However, within the context of this study, particular emphasis is placed on a group of archetypes that are directly related to identity formation and psychological division, namely the Shadow, the Persona, the Anima/Animus, and the Self. The Shadow contains the hidden and repressed aspects of the personality that the ego refuses to acknowledge, including instinctual drives, fears, and socially unacceptable desires (Jung, 1959: 68). When left unrecognized, the Shadow is often projected onto others, leading to distortion, conflict, and psychological imbalance. As Jung states, "the shadow is a moral problem that challenges the whole ego-personality" (Jung, 1959: 69).

In contrast, the Persona refers to the social mask that individuals construct in order to function within society, adopting roles and behaviors that conform to social expectations (Jung, 1959; Widiyanti et al., 2022: 56). While the Persona is necessary for social interaction, excessive identification with it can result in alienation, as the individual becomes disconnected from their authentic inner self.

The Anima and Animus represent the unconscious opposites within the psyche, mediating between the conscious mind and deeper emotional and symbolic dimensions (Rasmi, 2022: 20). Their integration is essential for psychological balance, as they allow the individual to reconcile internal dualities and achieve emotional and psychological depth.



3. The Werewolf

The werewolf is one of the oldest mythological figures in human history, appearing in the folklore, religious beliefs, and oral traditions of many cultures. The term *lycanthropy* originates from ancient Greece, derived from *lykos* (wolf) and *anthropos* (man). In Greek mythology, stories such as that of King Lycaon who was transformed into a wolf as divine punishment reflect early beliefs that humans could physically or spiritually turn into animals as a result of moral corruption or divine anger. (Stebbins, 2017: 94).

In ancient and medieval Europe, belief in werewolves became widespread and was closely connected to fear, superstition, and religious ideology. During the Middle Ages, werewolves were often associated with witchcraft, demonic possession, and sin. Individuals accused of being werewolves were sometimes tried and executed, much like those accused of witchcraft. These beliefs were reinforced by the Church and popular culture, which portrayed the werewolf as a cursed being who had lost control over human reason and morality. In many traditions, transformation occurred under specific conditions, such as the full moon, symbolizing the power of uncontrollable natural forces over human life. (Bystrický, 2015: 59).

Across other cultures, similar figures existed under different names, suggesting that the idea of human–animal transformation is universal. These myths reflect deep-rooted anxieties about human instincts, violence, and the fragile boundary between civilization and nature. (Bystrický, 2015: 109).

4. The Werewolf Archetype



At a symbolic level, the werewolf represents the idea of duality within the human self, highlighting the constant tension between civilization and instinct. On one side stands the rational, socially disciplined individual who follows moral rules and cultural expectations; on the other lies the instinctual, animal side driven by desire, aggression, fear, and survival impulses. The werewolf's transformation from human to wolf symbolizes the breakdown of this fragile balance, a moment when suppressed instincts that are normally controlled by reason suddenly erupt. In this sense, the werewolf is not simply a terrifying creature but a symbolic expression of an inner psychological conflict that exists within all human beings. (Çimen, 2022: 65).

From a psychological perspective, particularly in the work of Carl Gustav Jung, the werewolf closely corresponds to the Shadow archetype. The Shadow consists of those parts of the personality that the ego refuses to recognize because they conflict with social values or personal ideals. These rejected traits may include anger, jealousy, cruelty, forbidden desires, or socially unacceptable instincts. Jung argued that the Shadow is an unavoidable part of the psyche; when it is denied, it does not vanish but becomes autonomous and destructive. The werewolf, in this context, represents the Shadow breaking free from repression and taking control of the individual's actions. (Covington, 2018: 199).

Jung did not view the Shadow as entirely negative. While it contains dangerous impulses, it also holds vital energy, creativity, and authenticity. The tragedy of the werewolf lies in the failure to integrate these shadow elements into conscious life. Instead of being acknowledged and managed, they erupt violently, turning the individual into something feared and rejected by society. The werewolf therefore symbolizes the psychological danger of refusing self-knowledge and inner balance.



The strong association of the werewolf with nighttime and the moon further reinforces its connection to the unconscious. Night traditionally symbolizes darkness, mystery, and the hidden aspects of the psyche those parts that remain invisible during the daylight of conscious awareness. The moon, unlike the sun, reflects light indirectly and follows cyclical patterns, making it a powerful symbol of emotional fluctuation, transformation, and instability. The full moon, in particular, represents moments when unconscious forces reach their peak, overwhelming rational control. (Alberton, 2025: 39).

5. The Werewolf in Literature

The werewolf has been used as a powerful metaphor for identity crisis, moral struggle, madness, and social alienation. Early literary representations often followed folkloric traditions, portraying the werewolf as a cursed or evil creature. However, as literature evolved, particularly during the Gothic and modern periods, the werewolf became a more complex and psychologically rich figure. (Guðmundsdóttir, 2007: 74).

Gothic literature of the nineteenth century emphasized the theme of double identity, using the werewolf to explore hidden desires and the fear of degeneration. The figure often appears as a respectable individual by day and a violent beast by night, reflecting the tension between the public self and the private, repressed self. This duality parallels broader Gothic concerns with secrecy, repression, and moral hypocrisy. (Todd, 2011: 144).

In modern and contemporary literature, the werewolf is frequently portrayed with greater sympathy. Writers use the werewolf to explore themes such as psychological trauma, social exclusion, mental illness, and the struggle for self-acceptance. The transformation is no longer simply a curse but a metaphor for inner



fragmentation or uncontrollable psychological states. In this sense, the werewolf becomes a symbolic representation of the human condition itself torn between reason and instinct, order and chaos.

The werewolf in literature functions as a symbolic mirror of the human psyche, revealing fears about identity, self-control, and the consequences of repressing inner truths. Its enduring presence across historical periods demonstrates its deep psychological and cultural significance, making it a valuable archetype for literary and theoretical analysis. (Stypczynski, 2013" 245).

6. Jungian Reading of Violence and Instinct in *The Last Werewolf*

Moving from theoretical discussion to textual analysis by examining selected passages from *The Last Werewolf* through a Jungian framework. While earlier points have outlined the relationship between metamorphosis, identity, and morality, the following analysis focuses more closely on how these themes are articulated within the narrative itself. In particular, it explores how moments of violence, desire, and instinct reveal the emergence of what Carl Gustav Jung describes as the Shadow the repressed dimension of the psyche that contains impulses excluded from conscious identity.

"Fed on her flesh my own silted." (Duncan, 2011: 82).

The statement is articulated by Jake following an act of violent consumption, where the boundaries between self and other are no longer maintained. It occurs in a moment in which the werewolf does not merely kill, but consumes the victim's body, transforming the act into one of incorporation rather than simple destruction. The context is therefore not one of detached violence, but of intimate physical engagement, where the act itself becomes central to the subject's experience.



This line foregrounds a disturbing fusion between the self and the other, as the verb “fed” suggests not only survival but absorption. The phrase implies that the subject’s own being is altered through the act, as indicated by “my own silted,” which evokes a sense of internal change or saturation. From a Jungian perspective, this moment can be interpreted as a radical manifestation of the Shadow, in which repressed instinctual drives particularly those associated with aggression and consumption emerge in their most extreme form. (Koetsier & Forceville, 2014: 530).

What is particularly significant here is that the Shadow does not appear as something external or opposed to the self; rather, it operates through the self, reshaping it from within. The act of consumption becomes symbolic of a deeper psychological process, where the boundaries of identity are destabilized. Instead of maintaining a distinction between subject and object, the transformed individual absorbs the other, suggesting a collapse of differentiation that is essential to psychic balance.

This moment reflects a failure of individuation. According to Jung, individuation requires the conscious integration of the Shadow without allowing it to dominate the psyche. In this case, however, the instinctual drive is neither resisted nor mediated; it is fully enacted. The subject does not confront the Shadow as something to be integrated but instead becomes an instrument of it. As a result, the act reveals not psychological wholeness but fragmentation, where identity is reconstituted through uncontrolled instinct rather than conscious synthesis.

“Imbided blood goes molasses-thick. You lug it for a while, awkwardly.” (Duncan, 2011: 82).

The description is presented by Jake as a reflective comment following an act of feeding, where he becomes acutely aware of the physical aftermath of consuming



blood. Rather than focusing on the moment of violence itself, the narration shifts to what happens inside the body afterward, emphasizing the lingering, almost uncomfortable presence of what has been consumed. The context is therefore one of post-action awareness, where the experience of the body continues beyond the act of killing.

The imagery in this line is strikingly material and sensory. The comparison of blood to “molasses-thick” suggests heaviness, viscosity, and resistance, transforming what might be expected as nourishment into something burdensome. The verb “lug” further reinforces this idea, implying effort, weight, and a lack of ease. The body does not seamlessly absorb what it consumes; instead, it carries it awkwardly. This choice of language destabilizes the idea of instinct as something natural or harmonious, presenting it instead as clumsy and excessive.

From a Jungian perspective, this moment can be read as a subtle but significant encounter with the Shadow not in its explosive form, but in its aftermath. The act of feeding represents the eruption of instinctual drives associated with aggression and survival, yet what follows is not resolution but discomfort. The “thickness” of the blood can be understood symbolically as the psychological residue of the Shadow, which cannot be fully integrated into the conscious self. Rather than disappearing, it remains present, felt, and difficult to carry. (Youvan, 2025: 309).

“I had no plan, merely a reflex to get as far away from people as possible.” (Duncan, 2011: 83).

The quotation is voiced by Jake in the immediate aftermath of a violent episode, when he withdraws from any human contact. The context here is not strategic escape but an instinctive retreat; the narration emphasizes that his



movement is driven by impulse rather than deliberation. What follows violence is therefore not engagement with consequences, but a rapid distancing from the social world.

From a Jungian perspective, this moment can be read as a defensive response to the activation of the Shadow. Having enacted instinctual aggression, the subject experiences a split between the conscious ego and the unleashed drives. Instead of integrating these impulses, Jake's psyche attempts to contain them through avoidance. The retreat from "people" signifies more than physical distance; it marks a withdrawal from the social and moral frameworks that constitute the ego's identity. (Koetsier & Forceville, 2014: 543).

Importantly, this withdrawal does not resolve the tension but reinforces it. By refusing contact, the subject also refuses confrontation with what has been revealed. In Jungian terms, individuation requires the recognition and integration of the Shadow into conscious awareness. Here, however, the reaction remains at the level of reflex, indicating that the ego is overwhelmed and unable to process the experience. The result is not balance but further fragmentation.

"Her scent was a hot perversion, a dirty cocktail..." (Duncan, 2011: 160).

The quotation is articulated by Jake in a moment of heightened proximity to a female character, where attraction is experienced not through emotion or social convention, but through an intensified sensory response. The context here is not romantic or reflective; rather, it is immediate, bodily, and dominated by smell as the primary mode of perception. This signals a shift from human modes of interaction to instinct-driven awareness.

From a Jungian perspective, this moment can be understood as a manifestation of the Shadow in its erotic dimension. While the Shadow is often associated with



aggression, Jung also emphasizes that it contains repressed desires and forbidden impulses. Here, attraction is not mediated by the conscious ego or social norms; instead, it emerges as raw, unfiltered instinct. The description of desire as “perversion” indicates that these impulses exist outside acceptable moral structures, reinforcing their status as repressed elements of the psyche. (Koetsier & Forceville, 2014: 547).

“The first horror is there’s horror. The second is you accommodate it.” (Duncan, 2011: 188).

The reflection is articulated by Jake at a moment of retrospective awareness, where he reflects not on a single act of violence, but on his gradual adaptation to it. The context here is not immediate action but psychological realization, as the narrator looks back on the process through which the initial shock of transformation gives way to a more disturbing form of acceptance.

The structure of the sentence itself is highly significant. The repetition of “horror” establishes it as both an external reality and an internal experience. The first clause “there’s horror” suggests recognition, a moment in which the subject becomes aware of the existence of something fundamentally disturbing. However, the second clause “you accommodate it” introduces a shift from perception to adaptation. The verb “accommodate” implies adjustment, normalization, and even acceptance, indicating that what was once unthinkable becomes integrated into everyday experience.

From a Jungian perspective, this moment can be interpreted as a crucial stage in the encounter with the Shadow. Initially, the Shadow appears as something alien and threatening, provoking fear and rejection. This corresponds to the “first horror,” where the subject recognizes the presence of repressed instincts and impulses.



However, the second stage accommodation marks a transition in which these elements are no longer resisted but gradually incorporated into the psyche. (Bernhardt-House, 2016: 122).

Yet, what makes this moment particularly significant is that this incorporation does not lead to healthy integration. According to Carl Gustav Jung ‘individuation requires conscious engagement with the Shadow, where the individual acknowledges and balances these darker aspects without being dominated by them. In this case, however, “accommodation” suggests passive acceptance rather than active integration. The subject does not confront or understand the Shadow; instead, he adjusts to it, allowing it to reshape his perception and behavior.

“You do what you do because it’s that or death.” (Duncan, 2011: 188).

The statement is articulated by Jake in a moment of justification, where he frames his actions particularly acts of violence as necessary for survival. The context here is not impulsive aggression, but a reflective attempt to explain behavior that would otherwise be morally indefensible. By presenting his actions as a matter of necessity, the narrator shifts the focus from choice to compulsion.

From a Jungian perspective, this moment reflects the rationalization of the Shadow. Rather than appearing as an uncontrollable eruption, instinctual drives are here integrated into a narrative of necessity. The Shadow associated with aggression, violence, and survival is not rejected, but justified. This represents a shift from repression to acceptance; however, this acceptance does not constitute true individuation. (Du Coudray, 2002: 40).

“I fought against a new violent force of desire.” (Duncan, 2011: 41).

The statement is articulated by Jake at an early stage of his experience, when the emergence of instinct is still perceived as something external and threatening.



The context here is one of resistance, as the subject attempts to maintain control over impulses that have not yet been fully accepted as part of the self.

From a Jungian perspective, this passage represents the initial confrontation with the Shadow. The “violent force of desire” can be understood as the eruption of repressed instinctual drives that the conscious ego has previously kept under control. At this stage, the Shadow is experienced as something alien, something that must be resisted rather than understood. The subject does not recognize this force as part of his own psyche, which explains the reaction of “fighting” against it. (Du Coudray, 2002" 100).

What is particularly important here is that the conflict is still active. Unlike later moments in the narrative where the subject begins to accommodate or justify instinct, this passage reflects a psychological division in its early form. The ego and the Shadow exist as opposing forces, each attempting to assert dominance. This tension is central to Jung’s theory, where the emergence of the Shadow often begins as a disturbing encounter that threatens the stability of conscious identity.

“I lived in fear that... I was completely losing my mind.” (Duncan, 2011: 41).

The statement is expressed by Jake at an early stage of his experience, when the transformation is still perceived as a threat to his psychological stability rather than a condition to be accepted. The context here is one of anxiety and uncertainty, as the subject struggles to understand what is happening to him. This moment occurs before any form of accommodation or justification, and therefore reflects a raw and immediate response to internal change.

From a Jungian perspective, this passage can be interpreted as a moment of ego destabilization in response to the emergence of the Shadow. The fear of “losing his mind” does not simply indicate confusion; it reflects a deeper anxiety that the



boundaries of the self are breaking down. The conscious ego, which normally organizes perception and maintains a sense of identity, begins to lose its authority as unconscious forces rise to the surface. (Franck, 2017" 94).

This fear is also linked to the collapse of rational control. The subject's inability to interpret his own experience produces a sense of fragmentation, where thoughts, impulses, and perceptions no longer form a unified whole. Rather than integrating these elements, the psyche enters a state of instability, where the distinction between sanity and loss of control becomes uncertain. (Franck, 2017: 94).

Ultimately, this research demonstrates that metamorphosis in *The Last Werewolf* functions as a representation of psychological fragmentation and the instability of postmodern identity rather than a purely physical transformation. Through a Jungian framework, the analysis reveals how the emergence of the Shadow, instinctual drives, and unconscious desires gradually destabilize the conscious self and lead to the failure of individuation. The chapter further concludes that the novel portrays identity as divided, fluid, and internally conflicted, where the inability to reconcile the human and instinctual aspects of the psyche results in alienation, moral disintegration, and existential exhaustion.

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