"Lost" as an example of the orphic mysteries: A thematic analysis

Rachael Wax
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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LOST AS AN EXAMPLE OF THE ORPHIC MYSTERIES:
A THEMATIC ANALYSIS

by

Rachael Wax

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University of Nevada, Las Vegas
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for

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Rachael Wax

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Master of Arts in Journalism and Media Studies

Examination Committee Chair

Dean of the Graduate College

Examination Committee Member

Examination Committee Member

Graduate College Faculty Representative
ABSTRACT

Lost as an Example of the Orphic Mysteries:
A Thematic Analysis

by

Rachael Wax

Dr. Anthony Ferri, Examination Committee Chair
Associate Professor of Journalism
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Lost is a popular television show currently aired on the ABC network. The Orphic mysteries are an intricate component to the religion of Greek Mythology. This thematic analysis will work to investigate if Lost can be interpreted as a modern application of the Orphic mysteries. It will develop a theoretical perspective of Lost based upon the Orphic mysteries by reviewing literature that will uncover possible contemporary adaptations or metaphorical connections between each artifact. In-depth research will be performed on the units of analysis: Lost’s individual characters, their relationships to one another, and their similarity to the characters of the Orphic mysteries. The assumed plot theme that (im)moral decisions during one’s existence on Earth will result in their being fated to either Heaven or a reincarnation to another life on earth, numerology, and the dualities which exist between good and evil and darkness and light within each artifact will be addressed.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background of *Lost*

Most episodes of the ABC network’s critically acclaimed television drama *Lost* begin with the camera focusing on one individual character’s eye. It has long been an old adage that the eyes are the gateway to the soul, masking what lies within the recesses of one’s mind – their past, present, and future. When combined, these determine the meaning behind and the ultimate fate of one’s existence. *Lost*, a television show currently nearing its fifth season, is a primetime drama on the air since 2004. A series intended to be finalized within six seasons, it is a fictional story with a supernatural premise. Oceanic Flight 815 was a commercial airliner flying from Sydney, Australia, to Los Angeles, California. The plane crashes on an uninhabited, uncharted island thought to be located somewhere in the South Pacific. However, as the series progresses, audiences discover that the concept of a deserted island is furthest from the truth. According to Dunn (2006), *Lost* has changed the narrative of the disaster epic. This is no ordinary plane crash, there is no rescue, and they have been transported to an entirely different place. Nor is there any planned end point to the story or the experience. There is
no rescue, no reckoning, and there appears to be no understanding because the enlightenment project has run aground. Each revelation instead reveals more hidden layers of questions and weirdness. The ‘lost’ of the title is not just a reference to their physical plight, it also eludes [sic] to their being cast adrift epistemologically. It is not just lost innocence but also lost comprehension. (p. 318)

Without rules, regulations, or ethical codes of conduct, the survivors are left to govern themselves and develop a new society. The chance of their physical rescue is doubtful, which leaves the islanders to ponder their spiritual rescue. This causes the characters to reflect upon their lives and the (im)morality behind past decisions that could have resulted in their ending up on the island.

Despite there being approximately 43 survivors, the series focuses upon the lives of only a handful of characters, each with clandestine sins. Every episode presents a unique history or “back story” of an individual character, displaying their relationships, choices, and lifestyles for the audience. The colorful characters include a doctor, a drug addicted musician, a former mental patient, murderers and convicts, adulterers, and an ex-soldier (Douthat, 2007). Nationalities range from American to Iraqi to Korean to African. Religions range from Christian/Catholic to Islam to Atheism.

The island was previously home to a group of scientists known collectively as the Dharma Initiative. There are empty hatches, empty cages, and empty laboratories hidden throughout the lush landscape of the island’s jungle. They have been used for anything and everything scientific, ranging from “genetic engineering and radical life extension to parapsychology and magnetism” (Douthat, 2007, para 17). There is a group of savages that inhabit the island who have kidnapped and killed several of the survivors. They are
referred to cryptically as "the Others." They occupy the buildings used by the Dharma Initiative to conduct new experiments, also using these areas as prisons for the survivors they apprehend. However, the viewers and the survivors are not yet fully aware of all of the details which surround the Others (Douthat, 2007).

There is a recurring karma-like notion within each episode that the (im)morality of the characters has led to the (mis)fortune of their ending up on the island. According to Dunn (2006), "Fate and destiny, faith and trust are ideas woven into the fabric of the drama but they remain, at this stage, undeveloped. They are though, presented as counterpoints to the supernatural threats, events, and circumstances the survivors face" (p. 321). *Lost* is widely successful, I believe, because it deeply explores the human condition: "all of the experience of being human...the joy, terror and other feelings or emotions associated with being and existence." The show explores the struggle to understand the meaning of existence: why we are born, why we are here, why we do the things we do, why our life delivers chance circumstances that are out of our control, and where we go when we die ("Human condition," para. 1-2).

**Background of the Orphic Mysteries**

It is the common foundation of many religions that character is defined by how you act and will eventually decide your fate upon death. This is true of the Orphic mysteries, one of the most popular and most followed religions of Greek Mythology existing throughout the early Christian era (Mylonas, 1961). According to Burkert (1987), "In religious terms, mysteries provide an immediate encounter with the divine" (p. 90). Ancient mysteries involve "religious ideals and moral conduct...they race after the
elusiveness of knowledge, as found in imagination, feelings of greatness, immortality...the survival of one’s being” (Conway-Marmo, 1978, p. 24). Mysteries promote working to better oneself to reach Heaven or suffer the fate of living another earthly life via reincarnation. “Mysteries are a form of personal religion, depending upon a private decision and aiming at some sort of salvation through closeness to the divine” (Burkert, 1987, p. 12). The Orphic religion is referred to as a “mystery” because the premise – the meaning of the religion itself and its rituals – are unfortunately not fully understood, even today. Mystery religions are magical and fragile, yet unfortunately inconsistent.

Orphism, a religious sect originating in ancient Greece during the sixth century B.C. is believed to contain the stealthy theories behind the evolution of the universe and the relationship between nature and man. The hope is to “restore the soul to its primordial purity, the state of perfection from which it had fallen” (“Ancient Landmarks, 1939, p. 147). The legend states that Orpheus was the author of various sacred, religious poems. Those who followed Orphism – an aesthetic way of life with many customs – believed Orpheus was their prophet or high priest; they would call themselves Orphies, and their rites were called Orphica (Guthrie, 1966). Orpheus is said to be the “founder of theology among the Greeks; the first of prophets and the prince of poets; who taught the Greeks their sacred rites and mysteries” (“Ancient Landmarks,” 1939, p. 148). According to tradition, Orpheus was a religious poet and singer who sang about the gods and the origin of all things, and could coax all animate and inanimate things to dance (Guthrie, 1966). He was said to have “magic in his notes” and “was associated with charms, spells, and incantations” (Guthrie, 1966, p. 39).
It is unknown whether Orpheus was a real living man, a god, or a demi-god, but Orphism was literature, and “a genuine living religion may well be founded on a collection of sacred writings, as Orphism undoubtedly was” (Guthrie, 1966, p.10). He had relationships with the gods and had some superhuman powers, yet lived life as a mortal man with a regular life span and would eventually die (Guthrie, 1966). Orpheus created the Orphic doctrines that birthed this mystery religion after his heartbreak due to the loss of his wife, Eurydice.

Eurydice was, according to tradition, killed by a snake bite as she ran away from an unwanted suitor. After her death, Orpheus traveled to Hades (the underworld) to play his sad music, and of this story, two traditions persist: One, that he came back without Eurydice after only being able to view her apparition, and the other, that she was allowed to follow him out of the underworld on the condition that he not turn to look at her – which he unfortunately did, and she perished once again (Guthrie, 1966). Orpheus rejected the attention of all women after the death of his wife. His poor treatment of women is said to have ultimately resulted in his death, combined with his worship of Apollo, the sun-god. According to tradition, Orpheus’ death was either the result of Dionysus allowing savage women to tear him to pieces or the Lesbians tearing him to pieces and throwing his head into the river Hebros, allowing it to float away because Orpheus refused to remarry (Guthrie, 1966).

Dionysus was the god of the Orphic religion and the Orphics prayed and sacrificed in his name. According to The Columbia Encyclopedia (2001-2007), the Orphic mysteries’ traditions were based upon a myth of this main god, who was the son of Zeus. When Zeus chose his son as his successor, the Titans were angered and devoured him. Zeus
therefore destroyed the Titans and swallowed his slain son’s heart, which birthed the second Dionysus, Zagreus Dionysus. It was from the ashes of the destroyed Titans that the human race grew into existence. Humans, according to the Orphic religion, are therefore considered part divine (Dionysus) and part evil (Titan). This double aspect of human nature, the Dionysian and the Titanic, is essential to the understanding of Orphism. The Orphies affirmed the divine origin of the soul, but it was through initiation into the Orphic Mysteries and through the process of transmigration that the soul could be liberated from its Titanic inheritance and could achieve eternal blessedness. (para. 1)

The Orphic religion was based upon the fate of one’s soul and the ability to behave in a chaste, divine way. The goal was to make your soul the most perfect as possible to achieve the promise of a good afterlife. Orpheus stressed the ability to live in a peaceful, civilized manner (Guthrie, 1966). The Orphic religion consisted of dogmatic rules that the Orphies were to faithfully and consistently adhere to in order to experience a conversion to a new way of life and strive towards perfect union with the god who is in us all the time but stifled by the elements of impurity...we find there the belief that purity of life (was) ultimately rewarded by the gift of that to which they strove, namely an immortality consisting in the shedding of everything but the divine element.... Before this perfection of bliss could be reached, we remember that a cycle of births and deaths was necessary as a period of trial and purgation.... Punishment awaited the uninitiated and impure, and in some exceptional cases was eternal, so that the incurably wicked might serve a useful purpose as examples. (Guthrie, 1966, pp. 204-206)
The Orphic mysteries can be summarized by saying that it is human and earthly to consist of evil components, with the impurity or evil within a human being acting as a type of original sin. One’s mission is to journey through several lives, purging one’s self of this evil nature through knowledge and experience. The hope is to eventually reach perfection and divinity by becoming closer to God. If this is achieved, one is allowed into an afterlife like Heaven – the prize to the pure was an everlasting existence with God (Guthrie, 1966). If not, one is fated to reincarnate into another life until it can be proven that their existence is worthy enough to be with God.

Significance of Study

This thesis creates the theoretical framework for future thematic analyses with specific regard to the medium of television. It helps to develop the foundation for potential research involving television adaptations of a classical religion and brings to light the growing need to investigate the characters and plot themes of morality and/or spirituality within popular television programming. According to Kieser (1997), “Many contemporary series...are delving into the hunger of their characters for spiritual connectedness and they are dramatizing their search for a transcendent ground and a spiritual center” (p. 20). Even if contemporary television does not contain such thematic elements as classical religion, morality, or spirituality, it is still significant to study both the possibilities and the limitations of such a popular and influential medium.
Purpose of Study

ABC’s popular television show Lost is noticeably full of several famous literary allusions, such as *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord of the Flies*, *Carrie*, *Turn of the Screw*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan*, *The Odyssey*, 1984, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Panopticon*, and even the Bible ("Literary Allusions," n.d.). However, this thesis explores a new avenue. The purpose of this paper is to compare Lost to the Orphic mysteries within Greek Mythology.

This thematic analysis uncovers whether Lost can be interpreted as an application of the Orphic mysteries as a modern television show. The television show Lost contains some religious elements throughout the series not unlike the Orphic mysteries. If this is the case, the program is more than simple entertainment – it is a form of education or enlightenment.

This thesis develops a theoretical perspective of Lost based upon a religion, the Orphic mysteries, by reviewing literature that will expose possible modern adaptations or metaphorical connections between each artifact. I researched Lost’s most prevalent themes: dualities; numerology; reincarnation and life after death; and redemption. All are heavily present throughout the show. I then analyzed the characters of Lost and the Orphic mysteries.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

For this thesis, I reviewed literature discussing other popular television shows which had mythological and/or spiritual and moral themes. A study of the television show *Joan of Arcadia* by Elliott (2005) discussed how characters learn to grow spiritually or morally after they experience the difficult repercussions of poor actions. Simply, a person lives an ordinary, average, and everyday life. But one day, everything changes, forcing the characters to reassess their role in life.

This disparity creates a disunity that forces the protagonist to make a decision.... It is not until after the action, during the stasis, that there is a possibility for an epiphany. That epiphany comes when the protagonist and viewer look at the everyday differently because of the knowledge gained and decisions made during the moment of disparity. (pp. 3-4)

I believe this summarizes the premise of *Lost*. One type of disparity is each character’s spiritual crises. This comes from a lack of understanding toward their new place in the world – disunity between the individual and their environment – causing them to struggle to find themselves spiritually (Elliott, 2005).
Characters live everyday of their lives without much of a conscious effort to make
good, moral decisions. A second disparity, the plane crash and being stranded on a
deserted island, forces the characters to reflect and make new decisions. If positive
decisions are made and their actions are for the good of everyone, an epiphany toward
salvation occurs. The more knowledge that is gained leads the characters toward spiritual
perfection. In addition, the more each individual works to connect with the other
survivors on the island during their simultaneous adversity, the closer they will grow to
the divine as a community. Therefore, the survivors need to develop the ability to
recognize "the interconnectedness of all things...you cannot hurt a person without
hurting yourself; all of your actions have consequences." Each survivor needs to learn
and grow from every experience (Elliott, 2005, p. 8).

Furthermore, Elliott (2005) discusses sparseness and abundance. Abundance means
being "concerned with practicality, physical goods, and sensual feelings." Sparseness
means "not ordered toward tangible success but toward the elevation of the spirit...the
more a work of art can successfully incorporate sparse means within an abundant society,
the nearer it approaches its transcendental 'end'" (p. 4). The survivors, stranded on a
deserted island, need to develop new survival devices, function within their new savage
society, and identify themselves without a dependence upon the material. The islanders
have retreated to a life of simplicity because they are now forced to exist without new
clothes, cars, or wealth of any sort. The sparseness within their new lives allows them to
disregard the need for security once provided for by material items, and instead focus
upon spiritual matters and their moral values. The survivors have been stripped of all they
know, all that defined them – identity, possessions, and loved ones.
A second study by Taylor and Upchurch (1996) discusses that the purpose of mythology is “to allow us to make sense of the world and our experiences in it...to find a way to the ‘spiritual potentialities of the human life’...myths of all time have dealt with the maturation of the individual from birth to death” (p. 75). Taylor and Upchurch (1996) believe that television is a thriving medium with which to effectively translate modern myths by teaching individuals how to successfully find their place in society. They argue that Greek myths and mythological elements are being used as the plot for the television show *Northern Exposure*. The show applies “the same themes, sometimes using various mythic tales with similar plots but ultimately for a different end...experiment(ing) with an ideal place where we can find unity in cultural diversity, individual freedom in community cooperation, and individual growth through social participation” (Taylor & Upchurch, 1996, p. 76). The show is also heavily focused upon the life choices of the characters. It is a show about regular, every day human beings with character flaws. But despite those flaws, they are still good people:

People are good and bad and everything in between....While we might look upon missteps and errors as ‘bad,’ these characters grow beyond their problems and their errors, learning and applying the lessons as they move to the next trial. The focus is on the process, the continuum, the movement toward rapture. (p. 79)

Taylor and Upchurch (1996) also address the theme of resurrection, describing it as an old life growing into a new life, connecting the past, present, and future:

the writers have woven the death and resurrection theme from myths of all societies into a new pattern. Rituals marking the pattern of birth leading to a new life exemplify that ‘the nature of life itself’ must be ‘realized in the acts of life’....We
need to let go of whatever prevents us from finding freedom within ourselves.... Life becomes a series of human opportunities to create and destroy, and life – not death – becomes the goal and the good. (pp. 81-84)

We see the theme of resurrection and the connection of the past and the present as a theme of *Lost*. The islanders are believed to be dead, so they see the island as a chance at a new life. However, they are constantly confronted by, and therefore must resolve, their pasts. This gives them a chance to recreate their present and, therefore, their future. The islanders, defying death, only yearn to return to “life,” hoping to do things differently and atone for their sins during their second chance.

A third study conducted by Goldberg (2005) researched the moral philosophy within the movie *Groundhog Day*. Although my study focuses on a television show, I found this study to be useful because it discusses the metamorphosis of the lead character in the movie, who is forced to endure the same day, *Groundhog Day*, over and over again until he learns to transcend morally and spiritually. He changes from being a selfish man who lives without consequence to a loving man who enjoys life and enriching the lives of those around him. Only upon his epiphany can his life progress forward from this one particular day. Goldberg (2005) envisioned the setting of the movie, Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, to be purgatory. Connors, the lead character played by actor Bill Murray, goes to his own version of hell, but since he’s not evil, it turns out to be purgatory, from which he is released by shedding his selfishness and committing to acts of love.... Connors is saved only after he performs mitzvahs (good deeds) and is returned to earth, not heaven, to perform more.... That was Nietzsche’s idea – metaphorical or literal – to imagine life as an endless repetition of the same events.
over and over. How would this shape your actions? What would you choose to live out for all eternity? (p. 4)

I feel that this idea of purgatory is related to Lost because the deserted island is a purgatory-like state of being for the survivors. They are forced to repent for their past actions and learn to perform good deeds in order to ascend to Heaven or reincarnate and return to a new life. Only on the island can they question how their new fate determines their actions and how they want to live out the remainder of their “existence.”

In addition, several of the characters spiritually reside in purgatory within themselves. They ponder what their lives used to be, punish themselves for their mistakes, and have regrets over not rectifying their wrong doings before they “died.” They are forced to confront their pasts mentally and spiritually, and to attempt to rise above and live a better life for the future. The main characters continuously ruminate over what they feel are their most awful sins, all of which are considered the most mortal sins that any human can ever commit. For example, Jack dishonors his father, Kate steals, Sawyer lies, Hurley is consumed by greed, and Sayid tortures and kills people (Reid, 2005).

For this thesis, I reviewed literature describing the Orphic mysteries’ customs, rituals, beliefs, and traditions in great detail. Unfortunately, there is no modern text comprised of just the Orphic mysteries, so I reviewed literature critiquing and explaining the Orphic mysteries. DVDs of Lost seasons one through three were purchased in order to search for any possible associations to the Greek mysteries. The research performed for this thesis begins with the pilot episode of season one and ends with the finale of Lost season three. There are 71 episodes total.
Research Questions

I studied the themes and characters of Lost in hopes to show that they resemble the religious doctrine of the Orphic mysteries. This provides a context for understanding what I believe is the meaning of Lost – one’s morality on earth and how well one fares through the quest of life determines one’s fate: Heaven, Hell, or reincarnation.

Research Question 1: Based upon its major plot themes, can television’s Lost be interpreted as an application of the Orphic mysteries as a contemporary television show?

Research Question 2: How do the unique personalities of the characters of Lost relate to the characters within the Orphic mysteries?

The research questions will specifically be answered in this thesis by comparing the characters, defined as “the set of qualities that make somebody or something distinctive, especially somebody’s qualities of mind and feeling” (Microsoft Encarta, 2006); dualities, defined as “something consisting of two parts: a situation or nature that has two states or parts that are complementary or opposed to each other” (Microsoft Encarta, 2006); numerology, defined as “the interpretation of the occult by means of the symbolism of numbers, which is based on the doctrine of the Greek philosopher and mathematician Pythagoras that all things are numbers and consist of geometrical figures in various patterns” (Microsoft Encarta); life after death and reincarnation, defined as “transmigration: the passing of the soul at death into a new body or new form of being, or the rebirth of a soul in a new body (especially in a new human body)” (Microsoft
Encarta, 2006); and redemption, "the idea of one’s making up for a bad performance; the act of regaining possession of something from an outside source through a payment; the act of making good on a promise" ("Themes of redemption in ABC-TV’s ‘Lost’ Television Drama," 2008, pp. 5-6) in both Lost and the Orphic mysteries.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

My samples are the 71 episodes of seasons one through three of Lost and Greek Mythology's Orphic mysteries. I applied Boyatzis' (1998) method of thematic analysis, which he refers to as "a process for encoding qualitative information" (p. vi). According to Boyatzis (1998), this requires a clear "code," which is something that captures the "qualitative richness" (p. x) of the text. A code can be a "list of themes; indicators and qualifications that are casually related; or something in between these two forms" (Boyatzis, 1998, p. vi-vii). The codes taken from the texts are then analyzed, interpreted, and presented as a theme. Boyatzis (1998) describes a theme as "a pattern found in the information that at the minimum describes and organizes possible observations or at the maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon" (p. vii), created from raw information or from another theory (theories) and previous research. The thematic analysis is a method used to achieve either one or a combination of the following:

- a way of seeing; a way of making sense out of seemingly unrelated material; a way of analyzing qualitative information; a way of systematically observing a person, an interaction, a group, a situation, an organization, or a culture; (and) a
way of converting qualitative information into quantitative data. This enables scholars, observers, or practitioners to use a wide variety of types of information in a systematic manner that increases their accuracy or sensitivity in understanding and interpreting observations. (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 4-5)

Once the codes are produced, observations will be made into the organization, actions, situations, groups, and culture of *Lost* and the Orphic mysteries. From this, the themes are firmly established and the information is analyzed. According to Stone (2006), there are several limitations to the method of thematic analysis, which include the idea that it “violates the text” (p. 37). Stone (2006) says this is because it makes inferences which might never have been intended by the author, it can most often lack consideration with regard to where the text originated, and it can reduce the connection of the analysis to the textual record. This means that extra questions, which could be brought up by the setting or nonverbal communications, might not be addressed.

I first watched the three seasons (71 episodes) of *Lost* in their entirety multiple times, searching for redundant plot developments by way of the lived experience. I first began with the logo of the Dharma Initiative, recognizing the dualities heavily illustrated by the Yin-Yang symbol. I then went back and re-watched the series, searching for other instances of dualities, which led me to identify light versus dark, good versus evil, and faith versus science. The theme of numerology was relevant right away, with the Numbers being such an immense part of Hurley’s back story and on the island itself. An entire *Lost* episode, Episode 18 – “Numbers,” was also donated to the mysteries behind the Numbers. The theme of reincarnation and life after death was also easy to identify because it was highly prevalent throughout the series. As an avid audience member, I
myself contemplated whether the survivors were in purgatory and whether “going home” was actually a reference to Heaven. Redemption was a more difficult theme to uncover at first, and I only chose to explore it further once I began reading information about the Orphic Mysteries. Once I discovered how important redemption and sacrifice were to the initiates of the Orphic religion, I went back through the *Lost* episodes searching for associations. Of the myriad codes developed throughout the show, these were the ones which were recurring and I felt they deserved to be more deeply explored via my thesis. Applying Boyztzis’ method of thematic analysis, I then analyzed, interpreted, and compared these codes and presented them as my themes. The themes are dualities, numerology, reincarnation and life after death, and redemption. I then analyzed, interpreted, and compared the characters.

Because modern religions are heavily used for scholarly studies, I chose to explore another type of religion – an ancient religion – not widely consulted. I wanted to add new interests, which led me to the mystery religions of Greek Mythology. I did not think that a modern or typical religion could properly explain *Lost* because the show is so strange, leaving me to think that perhaps a different form of religion could. Greek Mythology seemed relevant because its mysterious and fantastic aspects closely relate to *Lost*. Both contain many unexplainable occurrences; the only way to accept these occurrences is through faith. I also studied the Orphic mysteries during my undergraduate career as an English major and thought the subject was interesting.

Lastly, I read books specifically about the Orphic mysteries’ customs, beliefs, and rites for connections to the themes of dualities, numerology, reincarnation, redemption, and the characters. As I found associations, I was able to compare the meaning behind
these parallel textual themes and develop my thesis. I applied Boyatzis' method to perform an analysis of these themes by comparing the two units of analysis, and the thesis is the presentation of the analysis.

The goal of this thematic analysis is to provide insight and interpretation into the themes, resulting in “an exclusively qualitative and verbally descriptive approach to the phenomenon under investigation” (Boyatzis, 1998, p. xii). In this thesis, I will prove whether Lost is an application of the Orphic mysteries as a modern television show.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The most prominent themes of *Lost* are dualities, numerology, reincarnation and life after death, and redemption. As reflected in my methodology, they have been established as my explicit “code,” or recurring themes which emerged from the context of the television show. I analyzed these themes and looked for associations within the Orphic mysteries, seeking out the same recurring patterns within the religion. I also analyzed some of the main characters of *Lost* and researched whether their personalities were related to some of the characters within the Orphic mysteries. Uncovering whether *Lost* can be interpreted as an application of the Orphic mysteries as a modern television show is based upon the common themes, or “code,” within each.

The results section therefore consists of my analyzing these themes within *Lost* and then comparing the same themes to the Orphic mysteries for any noticeable associations. Then, like the themes, I compared the characters of *Lost* to the Orphic mysteries to see if there were any noticeable associations.

Dualities

Lessons, morality tales, and experiences throughout all of life are intended to teach humanity the importance of the difference between right (good) and wrong
It is understood that both good and evil exist diametrically within nearly every single aspect of life, especially the essence of humans. Part of the purpose of life is to develop the ability to distinguish between the two. This continuously adds to the fiber of our humanly being. According to Gilbert (2006),

Man is a demon, man is a god.... The notion is that human beings are born...with the equivalent potential for both contraction and expansion. The ingredients of both darkness and light are equally present in all of us, and then it’s up to the individual...what will be brought forth – the virtues or the malevolence. The madness of this planet is largely a result of the human being’s difficulty in coming into virtuous balance with himself. (p. 251)

A common theme throughout Lost is contrasting dualities: light versus dark, good versus evil, right versus wrong, life versus death, faith versus science. The Dharma Initiative’s logo is the Yin and Yang sign of Chinese philosophy. It represents opposite yet balanced energy forces, merging what represents dark negativity with white positivity. The Yin and Yang sign, called Ba-Gau, is found in the middle of the octagonal shape of the Dharma Initiative’s logo (Brown, 2005). According to Browne (2005), the concept of dharma is:

a principal element of the great religions of Buddhism and Hinduism, and at its most basic, it means ‘protection’...dharma dictates absolute honor for all living things and the land that nourishes them, and the belief that until each of us finds our own inner peace, there aren’t enough marches, protests, and demonstrations in the world to achieve peace among the nations of the earth. (p. 94)
The Dharma Initiative on the island symbolizes each character’s growth toward spiritual completeness. Being in the jungle, the islanders must respect the land and the individuals with whom they are stranded. If bad choices or destiny landed them on the island, the Dharma Initiative could help the islanders make better moral decisions and help them progress along the path to spiritual salvation and virtue. According to Reid (2005), the Dharma Initiative is admittedly interested in human behavior, and could be responsible for each of these people being on the island in the first place. The project could be trying to reward people for learning to follow the tenets of dharma, and punishing those who refuse to change their unpure [sic] ways. Effectively, the project could be seen as a god, providing final judgment on the actions and characters of each person on the island.

(para. 1)

The Dharma Initiative is therefore a metaphorical tool aiding the islanders during their journey toward transcendence. With hidden cameras in each of its centers on the island, the Dharma Initiative is always watching the islanders – recording and interpreting their actions much like a conscience or an omniscient, omnipresent force – like the watchful eye of God.

According to Browne (2005), the symbol of Yin and Yang is a loop in which two fish, one black and one white, are encircling each other. The eyes of the fish stand out because the black fish has a white eye, and the white fish has a black eye. “The two fish...represent the opposite, equal and complementary nature of the male/female principle...wrapped around each other and interdependent as they are, neither of them more dominant than the other” (Browne, 2005, pp. 327-328). Thus, both aspects must
work together harmoniously in order to ensure survival. When the soul experiences a happy, equal medium of dualities, knowing and accepting both the good and evil of existence and living a balanced life, the soul can transcend.

Each fish’s eyes signify that, “being open and visible represents the Yin/Yang belief that both...points of view are essential in the fullest possible understanding of life and its mysteries” (Browne, 2005, p. 328). Can we assume that the islanders must act in accordance with the Others as two parts of one whole in order to successfully sustain life in a positive, co-existent manner? Or must the islanders find a happy medium between what occurs in the outside earthly world and what exists within themselves? The use of the Yin and Yang symbol as the center for the Dharma Initiative logo communicates and solidifies that the island itself is a place of dualities: land and water, good and evil. Lost tries to show that achieving this balance will lead to an unquestionable, complete existence.

The past coming full circle to interact with and affect the present and future is a recurring theme of the show. Each episode includes a character’s back story; the immoral choices each character has made, in some way or another, has led to their being stranded on the island or the destitute state of their spirituality. The island, therefore, can be deemed a metaphor that bad choices isolate you from a sense of community and from God, while good choices lead to freedom, salvation, and togetherness. Only a balanced life can truly bring you to a full and complete understanding of existence: The evil in life is earthly and human, while the good in life is perfect and divine. According to the online web blog “Lost on Earth’s mirror matter moon,” Carlton Cuse, a producer of the show, reaffirms that,
We (the show’s producers/creators) are interested in exploring how good and evil can be embodied in the same characters and the struggles we all have to overcome the dark parts of our souls. It's as though the island forces you to look at your true self in the mirror. (http://mirrormattermoon.blogspot.eom/#self_reflection)

The colors of black and white appear several times, sometimes even minutely, throughout the series. The title screen of the show displays a black screen with the word “LOST” in white letters. As mentioned earlier, the Dharma Initiative’s Yin and Yang logo is black and white. In Episode 1, “Pilot – Part One,” Kate stitches a wound of Jack’s with black thread. Episode 5 is called “White Rabbit.” In Episode 6, “House of the Rising Sun,” Jack finds a pouch on two dead bodies with one white stone and one black stone. Interestingly, the survivors named these dead bodies Adam and Eve. The names symbolize the beginning of human life – it was created by God to be good, but was corrupted by evil. Humanity then spends the rest of eternity learning to recognize the difference between good and evil, seeking forgiveness after sinning, and living a balanced life. Succumbing to evil brought shame to Adam and Eve; the survivors therefore represent how all of humanity must fight to overcome evil in order to get to Heaven.

In Episode 19, “Deus Ex Machina,” Sayid fashions a pair of glasses for Sawyer by fusing one black frame and one white frame together. In Episode 25, “Man of Science, Man of Faith,” a mural inside of the hatch has a black face and a white face at the top. In Episode 26, “Adrift,” the countdown timer in the hatch (where the islanders enter the numbers every 108 minutes into a computer) has white digits on a black background and black digits on a white background. In Episode 52, “Every Man for Himself,” Ben shows
Sawyer a white bunny with the black number eight on it while he is holding Sawyer captive. In Episode 61, “The Man From Tallahassee,” Ben feeds Locke the white meat from a chicken while he eats the dark meat in a kitchen that is black, white, and red. In Episode 69, “Greatest Hits,” Charlie loses one black shoe and one white shoe when he dives into the ocean. Episodes 70 and 71, “Through the Looking Glass, Parts One and Two,” are named after the Lewis Carroll book. In the story, the main character Alice meets an ill-behaved black cat which is blamed for all of the anarchy in her dream, and a white cat, deemed innocent. Ben is often shown with his face being displayed half light and half dark, illustrating the uncertainty and vagueness of his role on the island. These are just some of the myriad examples of black and white, light and dark throughout the show (“Black and White, n.d.).

In a more important incident during Episode 2, “Pilot – Part 2,” Locke is playing backgammon – the most frequently played game on the island. He describes it as “two players, two sides, one is light, one is dark.” I believe this interpretation means that the ultimate battle of good versus evil is being fought between the islanders and the Others. This is the only moment in the show when the “goodness” of the survivors is compared to the “evilness” of the Others. This incident foreshadows the remainder of the series to the audience.

Another demonstration of light versus darkness is displayed by what the islanders refer to as the “smoke monster”: a black cloud of smoke which is a “living, breathing entity” that “swirls around in the jungle tearing up trees, and generally striking fear into the hearts of the islanders who encounter it” (“The smoke monster,” n.d.). Thought to be an island security system, the smoke monster has made periodic appearances throughout
the series beginning in Episode 24, “Exodus – Part Two.” It usually indicates death or destruction. However, Locke’s experience with the smoke monster took on a different meaning.

Locke claims the smoke monster appeared to him as a bright light when he saw it in Episode 34, “The 23rd Psalm” (“Black and White, n.d.). After John saw the smoke monster, he told Jack “I’ve seen the eye of the island, and what I saw...was beautiful.” Locke’s feelings regarding being marooned on the island were altered. He began to feel as if each individual were brought there for a reason – by destiny or fate – and should not work to return home because this is their new journey in life; it’s where they are meant to be.

When the smoke monster confronts Mr. Eko, a war guerilla turned “minister” in Episode 53, “The Cost of Living,” it showed him images of his past, flashing his life before his eyes. Mr. Eko was called for judgment by an apparition of his brother inside of the smoke monster. After Eko refuses to confess his sins to his brother’s spirit, the smoke monster violently murders him. It is a theory of the show that the smoke monster takes its shape and form depending upon the island character it is confronting. The smoke monster is a mirror or an amalgamation of consciences that when people look into it, it shows them the true essence of their soul and the sins for which they need to atone.

The smoke monster could be a manifestation of fears and immoral actions the survivors performed before the crash, an entity that delivers judgment to individuals. Some believe it enforces faith and if you do not have faith, you will perish (Reid, 2005). When the smoke monster confronted Mr. Eko before his death, perhaps it was a sign of the last opportunity for him to face his fears, accept his sad past, and atone for his sins.
Therefore, he would be able to die and finally be at peace in Heaven ("The smoke monster," n.d.). Unfortunately, Mr. Eko chose narcissism over confession and redemption. This is discussed later in this thesis.

The smoke monster could be Hell, also. If the island is purgatory, then one could be brought before the smoke monster for judgment. If one atones, then they “die” on the island and are allowed to either reincarnate or go to Heaven. If not, like in the case of Mr. Eko, the smoke monster could take them to Hell. The sentencing of either Heaven or Hell is a duality as well, yet is underdeveloped at this point in the series.

A major duality woven throughout the entire series is faith, represented by the character Locke, versus science, represented by the character Jack. Locke believes in the supreme, absolute power of the island – after all, he was confined to a wheel chair before the plane crash. Because he is able to walk on the island, he knows it is full of magical powers and that he was brought there for some reason – the island is where he is meant to fulfill his destiny. Jack disagrees and just believes its mere bad luck that they are on the island, vowing to do whatever it takes to get all of the survivors home safely. However, as the main leaders on the island, these two men must learn to co-exist in some sort of peaceful manner despite their differences.

Four episodes in particular are donated to this convergence of opposites. The first is Episode 5, “White Rabbit.” This is the episode where the conversations between Jack and Locke regarding science and faith first begin. Jack has a vision that he believes resembles his dead father, so he tears through the jungle chasing the “ghost.” When Jack reaches a clearing, he finds Locke. He confides in Locke about the fact that he can’t possibly be...
seeing the things he is seeing, yet Locke counters, “But what if you were?” (Malcolm, 2008).

The second is Episode 24, “Exodus – Part Two,” when Jack and Locke argue over the smoke monster grabbing Locke. Locke claims that he would not have died because his destiny is to open the hatch; the smoke monster showed Locke that this was his purpose on the island. Jack doesn’t take much stock in that answer because he does not believe in destiny. Locke tells Jack that they couldn’t possibly see eye-to-eye on anything because he is a man of faith and Jack is a man of science – but adds that Jack believes in destiny, he just doesn’t know it yet. Locke says,

Do you really think all this is an accident – that we, a group of strangers survived, many of us with just superficial injuries? Do you think we crashed on this place by coincidence – especially, this place? We were brought here for a purpose, for a reason, all of us. Each one of us was brought here for a reason. (Episode 24, “Exodus – Part Two”)

The third is Episode 25, “Man of Science, Man of Faith.” In this episode, Jack and Locke disagree over whether to open the hatch the survivors find in the jungle and allow them to enter inside. Once the hatch is opened, Jack doubts its safety and dissuades the islanders from entering, telling them to stay away from it because they can’t confirm its security. But Locke can’t wait – he feels that the island is drawing him to it – and he openly defies Jack’s orders by returning to the hatch that night, pleading for the island to show him the way (“Lost Episode Recaps,” n.d.).

Also in Episode 25, we witness Jack’s back story; he is in full hero-mode as he works to save the life of his future wife Sarah after she badly damages her spine in a car.
accident. While Jack wholeheartedly trusts his capabilities as a surgeon and trusts science, he understands that even his skills have restrictions. Jack goes for a late-night run to clear his head, where he finds a man at the running track. They engage in conversation and the man tells Jack that he, too, wanted to be a doctor. But the man says he realized there was more to life than he could learn in medical school. Before leaving, he adds that miracles can happen as long as you just believe – which is what Locke has been trying to teach Jack all along (Reid, 2005).

In Episode 27, “Orientation,” Jack and Locke have yet another discussion about faith versus science. When the survivors finally enter the hatch, they find a button they are instructed to must push every 108 minutes after entering a series of numbers into a computer. While the reason is unknown as to why this must be done, Locke senses it is to help save the world. Locke wants Jack to be the one to do it, but Jack refuses and thinks it is comical that Locke, due to his “blind faith,” could truly believe that the act of pushing one button could save the world. Locke says it’s never easy to believe in anything, and in order to, Jack would need to make a “leap of faith.” Eventually, Jack does take the leap and pushes the button (Reid, 2005).

Dualities are the foundation of the Orphic mysteries: a “dynamic paradox of death and life…associated with the opposites of night and day, darkness and light, below and above” (Burkert, 1987, p. 101). Basic myths are rooted in the concept of “good over evil” (Conway-Marmo, 1978, p. 33) and Orphic doctrine states that man has a double nature. The dualities of good and bad exist simultaneously because the body (physical) and the soul (spiritual) are the antitheses of one another. The Orphics must learn to live as both – simultaneously yet separately – part divine and part earthly (Guthrie, 1966).
According to Orphic doctrine, man has a double nature: he is good and bad at the same time. Through progressive purifications and more and more advanced initiations, he is able to free himself of the material, evil elements of his nature. He who shows himself unworthy of divine grace will be punished, unless he obtains forgiveness through repentance and atonement. (Luck, 2000, p. 10)

These initiations can only be accomplished when one becomes devoted to Orphic doctrine; only then can a person be purified of their evil elements. They must then work toward deliverance so they can be rewarded in the afterlife. Otherwise, they are fated to suffer another earthly life until they come to the realization of the true, divine path. The Orphics believe in the divine origin of the soul, but believe that via transmigration, the soul is liberated from its wicked inheritance to achieve eternal salvation and redemption (The Columbia Encyclopedia, 2001-2007).

According to the laws of Orphism, the human race is part divine (Dionysus) and part evil (Titan). This creates a duality within the nature of human beings which consists of both earthly and heavenly components. This concept is based upon the dismemberment and death of Dionysus, a god to the Orphics, at the hands of the Titans:

Our nature...is twofold. We are born from the Titans, the wicked sons of Earth, but there is in us something of a heavenly nature too, since there went to our making fragments of the body of Dionysus, son of Olympian Zeus, on whom the Titans had made their impious feast. (Guthrie, 1966, p. 83)

Those who are initiates of the Orphic religion, embracing the “Dionysus” within themselves, are seen as residing in “pure regions and meadows”...form(ing) a ‘divine communion’ consorting ‘with pure and holy men’” (Mylonas, 1961, p. 266). Conversely,
those who do not thrust themselves into the Orphic tradition – the unrighteous or uninitiated who reside in the darkness – are viewed as “an uncleaned horde, trodden under foot...and huddled together in mud and fog” with their existence resulting in “a Hades filled with horror and punishment for the morally unclean” (Mylonas, 1961, pp. 266-267).

While the ancient mystery cults of Greek Mythology do not provide much hard evidence regarding their true, real meaning, they do help the audience to understand what their practices and rites meant to participants. The experience within an ancient mystery cult

is patterned by antithesis, by moving between the extremes of terror and happiness, darkness and light...‘the most frightening and the most resplendent of all that is divine for men’...they bring at first some kind of terror and danger, but then nevertheless, they bring to perfection what is good. (Burkert, 1987, p. 93)

This antithesis is also an integral component of the ancient mystery festival. When taught the mystery religion, initiates become overwhelmed by the mystic views and sounds, “with darkness and light appearing in sudden changes and other innumerable things happening” (Burkert, 1987, p. 89). Burkert (1987) believed that the meaning of this was to help a man experience the duality between being human and of the earth with the cosmos (sun, stars, and nature), which were created by God. The unity of these dualities within the soul is meant to create an experience that will change one’s spiritual awareness, beginning the enlightenment process toward spiritual transcendence beyond anything which can be conceptualized on earth. Therefore, the foundation of the physical initiation ritual is meant to spiritually symbolize death followed by a rebirth, or
reincarnation, into a new life of divine consciousness: “the day following the night of initiation is reckoned as a new birthday...to change fate and grant a new life” (Burkert, 1987, p. 99).

The initiation experience within an ancient mystery cult can therefore be surmised as such: When living a physical life, humans are encompassed by darkness and consumed by confusion, anxiety, depression, etc. This uncomfortable experience, however, enlightens and raises a person to divinity. As one reincarnates – gaining knowledge and experiencing life – they realize what constitutes good moral decisions. One must learn to act on “the instinct to let oneself go and in the process be exalted out of one’s own nature and caught up in the nature of a higher, more universal being” (Guthrie, 1966, pp. 117-118). When the afterlife (Heaven) is reached, you become part of the light of the divine (God). At this point, perfection and joy are realized.

Life is intended to show human beings that if they follow the ideals (good moral pathways) laid out for them, the return to the gods will be that much more tangible and final. If not, humanity is punished with the curse of sin and guilt via another life on earth (Conway-Marmo, 1978). Beautifully, the traditions of the mystery religions give its believers “divine awe...(to) leave their own identity, become at home with the gods, and experience divine possession” (Burkert, 1987, p. 114).

Numerology

The Numbers of *Lost* appear several times throughout the series. They are powerful, yet the islanders don’t yet know what they fully represent or understand the depth of their influence. The Numbers are six digits: 4, 8, 15, 16, 23, and 42.
They appear, both individually and in their entire sequence...continuously throughout the entire series. There are six of them, a multiple of the number three, and they each add up to the number 108, which also appears several times throughout the series. The sum of the numbers 4, 8, 15, 16, 23, and 42 are the Valenzetti Equation, which is thought to predict the number of years and months before humanity extinguishes itself. ("About the numbers," n.d.)

In *Lost*, we first learn of the Numbers in their entire sequence during Hurley's back story in Episode 18, "The Numbers." Hurley first hears them from a man named Leonard while in a mental institution. When Hurley asks Leonard where he heard the Numbers, he says from a man who was stationed in the South Pacific while in the Navy.

Hurley uses the Numbers to play the lottery and wins the Mega Lotto Jackpot. But when a series of catastrophes occur in his life after winning the lottery, he believes the Numbers are cursed. He ended up in the plane crash when he decided to travel to Australia with the hope of having the curse of the Numbers reversed. The Numbers have been woven into each character's life prior to the crash and again appear to have a symbolic meaning while they reside on the island. This demonstrates that the crash was a predetermined event of each character's life that they could not escape – just another aspect of their destiny.

One experiment being conducted in a Dharma Initiative hatch includes punching the Numbers into computer. In Episode 26, "Adrift," the audience sees that every 108 minutes, someone must enter the Numbers in their entire sequence into a computer program. The only time the Numbers are not entered into this computer is the exact moment when Oceanic Flight 815 falls from the air and crashes on the island.
audience sees this connection, but at this point in the series, does not understand its profundity. Each individual Number, the entire sequence of the six Numbers, and their sum are continuously found throughout the entire *Lost* series ("About the numbers," n.d.).

Unfortunately, at this point in the series — after 71 episodes and the end of season three — the audience does not yet know what the Numbers mean to the Dharma Initiative or the Others, or why the Numbers seem to bring bad luck to any person or situation associated with them. But the Numbers do reappear throughout the entire series: engraved on the outside of the Others’ hatch in the jungle, the title of Episode 10 — “The 23rd Psalm,” the mileage on a car odometer, players’ numbers on their soccer jerseys, a vaccine one of the survivors was given, Locke spent four years in a wheelchair before the plane crash, and the fact that by chance, they were all on Oceanic Flight 815, which boarded at Gate 23 ("Numerology," n.d.).

Numerology is also a prevalent aspect of the Orphic mysteries as well. Orphic cosmogony, the creation story of the origin of the universe, is rooted in the number seven and the number three ("Orphism, Orphic mysteries," n.d.). With regard to number three, the rise of the Orphic worship of Dionysus is the most important fact in the history of Greek religion, and marks a great spiritual awakening. Its three great ideas are (1) a belief in the essential divinity of humanity and the complete immortality or eternity of the soul, its pre-existence and its post-existence; (2) the necessity for individual responsibility and righteousness; and (3) the regeneration or redemption of man’s lower nature by his own higher Self. ("Orphism, Orphic mysteries," n.d., para. 2)

In order to gain entry into Elysium (Heaven), Orphics must live a good, ascetic life in three separate incarnations (Joe, 1999). Furthermore, there were three Orphic mystery-
gods, referred to as a trinity: Zeus, the divine All-father; Demeter-Kore, the earth goddess as mother and maid simultaneously, and Zagreus Dionysus, the divine son.

With regard to the significance of the number seven:

Orphism...postulated seven emanations from the Boundless: aether (spirit) and chaos (matter), from which two spring the world egg, out of which is born Phanes, the First Logos; then Uranus and (Gaia) the Second Logos, with Cronos (and Rhea, mother of the Olympian gods) a later phase of the Second Logos; and Zeus, the Third Logos or Demiurge — who starts a minor sevenfold hierarchy of emanation by begetting Zagreus Dionysus, the god-man, the divine son. (“Orphism, Orphic mysteries,” n.d., para. 1)

Although none of the numbers from *Lost* or the Orphic mysteries are the same, it is interesting that the sum of *Lost*’s Numbers (108) is a multiple of three, which is sacred to the Orphics. Also, *Lost* Episode 46 is titled “Three Minutes.” It is out of the ordinary that both works are so heavily focused on the importance of numbers.

**Reincarnation and Life after Death**

According to Damon Lindelof, one of *Lost*’s creators, life and death is a major theme on the island: “life has often been shown to juxtapose with death, creating an intricate balance” (“Life and Death,” n.d.). *Lost* has yet to come to its close, so one can only theorize that each episode is a step through the moral journey of each character as they strive for spiritual perfection. The experience of the plane crash did not result in the actual death of the characters per se, but with the beginning of their new lives on the island. The theme of reincarnation “is the same as purgatory...except that the sinners are
not condemned to live and die on the island – rather, they are given a chance to atone for their sins and cleanse their spirits” (Reid, 2005, “Lost” in religion).

In Episode 3, “Tabula Rasa,” Locke comments to another survivor that a miracle happened to all of them: they survived the plane crash. Locke also says, in Episode 13, “Hearts and Minds,” that “Everyone gets a new life on this island.” And during a conversation between Kate and Jack in Episode 3, “Tabula Rasa” – which literally means “blank slate” – Kate states, “It doesn’t matter who we were, what we did before the crash. Three days ago we all died. We should be able to start over.”

Just like initiation into the Orphic religion, the survivors symbolically crossed the threshold of death. Because the rest of the world perceives them to have perished, they experience a rebirth. It is a common, popular theme of Greek mythology for the hero to descend to the underworld and return from it (Luck, 2000), as Orpheus is thought to have done for Eurydice. The survivors traveled to the island, which viewers have long believed to be purgatory. A death sentence for some characters but a second opportunity for others, the island only communicates that destiny rules over their lives while the islanders remain virtually out of control of their own fate (Reid, 2005). The islanders are left to ponder why chance delivers some situations and how they can properly grow from such a fate.

All 71 episodes provide a different character’s “back story.” This gives the viewers a chance to see who they are, where they came from, and which actions, if any, resulted in their being stranded on the island. As the episodes progress, the more information the audience receives on any one specific character. Each character is featured several times.
I believe that the character’s channeling of their past is a reflection/revelation process or mental confession for absolution from their sins. As they recount their past, they can internalize a lesson and learn from the experience. They have been given a chance at a second life to make better choices and live righteously, bringing them closer at each chance to divinity or blessedness. Furthermore, the title indicates that what was once a “lost” – faith, happiness, equality, hope – now is “found.” The island symbolizes a rebirth, renewal, or reincarnation of the soul toward salvation. The island is meant to symbolize just how closely the physical and the spiritual are connected.

Two main characters who have been given a second chance or a “new birth” are Locke and Kate. Kate spent her adult life running from the law as a fugitive, but now on the island, she doesn’t have to hide who she really is – no one knows, nor do they care. She has become an almost secondary leader to Jack and has worked through a lot of her feelings from her past. Locke spent four years in a wheelchair prior to crashing on the island. Once there, he is no longer paralyzed, therefore believing that the island has healing powers. His devotion to the strength and abilities of the island, and his protection of it at any and all costs, has made Locke a pseudo-ally to the Others. Ben had Locke’s father brought to the island, who is responsible for Locke’s paralysis. His father’s death on the island was symbolic of Locke finally being able to let go of his past life and fully be reborn into his new one on the island (“Rebirth,” n.d.).

The survivors on the island also frequently have “visions” or see apparitions of people from their old lives who have passed on. While the audience doesn’t yet know if these are mere hallucinations or actual ghosts, they are symbolic of reincarnation. Jack has visions of his dead father Christian, Mr. Eko has visions of his dead brother Yemi,
Hurley has visions of a man named Dave he knew while in the mental institution, and Ben has visions of his dead mother Emily ("Rebirth," n.d.).

In the Greek world at the end of the sixth century B.C., a doctrine of the soul regarding transmigration, or the passage of a soul into another body after death (reincarnation), became associated with the Orphic mysteries. Orphics believe that "a cycle of repetitions will perpetuate a prosperous life in this world" (Burkert, 1987, p. 18). This is based upon the Orphics' "belief in the essential divinity of humanity and the complete immortality or eternity of the soul, its pre-existence and its post-existence" ("Orphism, Orphic mysteries," n.d., para. 2).

According to "Ancient Landmarks" (1939), "Orpheus declares that man's evolution is accomplished by means of innumerable reincarnations" (p. 148). Orpheus felt that the purpose of many lives on earth was to help humans reach perfection. Each incarnation into a new life helps a human to grow, learn, and experience—until the point in time that they have reached the pinnacle of perfection or divinity and then are allowed to progress to Heaven. Conversely, Burkert (1987) states that there is nothing which affirms that transmigration was a significant or necessary aspect to the Orphic mysteries.

A gloomy outlook regarding death is meant to help people cope with the difficulties associated with life. Life, because it is granted by the gods, is sacred, and the ancient mysteries—synonymous with religion—helps human beings to endure life until the gods choose to take them out of their "misery." The purpose of life is to be granted with the gift of death, which is why acts of death and rebirth are part of all of the greatest mystery religions. As part of their initiation in the Orphic religion, initiates
cross the threshold of death symbolically, and symbolically they experience new birth.... The initiation might have been conceived as a spiritual rebirth...(dying) symbolically and experiencing symbolically the horrors of Hell, probably as punishment for the sins he had committed before his initiation. (Luck, 2000, pp. 12-34)

This “new birth” leads to more human experience and knowledge on earth. This elevates a person to a higher level of perfection and keeps them away from an eternity in Hell. In addition, the sacrament of confession allows the initiate to cleanse himself, atone for his sins to later be rewarded with redemption, and to have the permission to forge ahead throughout existence clean from offense.

According to Luck (2000), the character Psyche within Greek mythology is the human soul and “becomes immortal through the love of a higher being (Orpheus) and through trials and sufferings undergone in the search for the beloved” (p. 226). Suffering through a life on earth helps to achieve the ultimate goal: the ascendance to Heaven and a rescue from earthly life. This, for the Orphics, is salvation and is referred to as “blessedness” (Burkert, 1987, p. 21). This symbolizes how much the Orphics dislike their physical form yet endure the pain of life to eventually experience their spiritual form.

The purpose of the mystery religions, therefore, was to prepare oneself for the expectation of death and to meet the requirements which were needed to promise a successful afterlife. The goal is “bliss after death” (Burkert, 1987, p. 23).
Redemption

The goal of the islanders is salvation: to be saved. The islanders want to be rescued from the island and the Others, but the audience knows that in order for this to happen, they first must be saved from themselves and their pasts. A sound way to reach salvation is through redemption. When they repent for their sins, ask forgiveness, and are redeemed, they can ascend to Heaven. If not, the sinners are fated to reincarnation or possibly even Hell. The executive producer of *Lost* stated that the show is principally about redemption and that “redemption has been an overriding theme of the series since day 1 [sic]” (Keck, 2006).

The characters are continuously confronted by their pasts and are forced to deal with issues that are at the core of their being. They can either learn to surrender and seek redemption, or turn their back against it and continue to suffer:

Each of the characters face situations on the island that closely resemble those of their past. In a way, the island lets them right the wrongs of their past, whether they do or not is up to them, but some have embraced the idea. Kate no longer had to run and can be seen as something other than a fugitive.... Others have not given up their pasts yet. Sayid has tortured two men since being on the island. Sawyer is still conning people. Jack still lacks faith and refuses to fail. (Smith, 2006, para. 10)

In the Jewish tradition, redemption is “the simultaneous deliverance from enemies and forgiveness of sins – as being accomplished through appropriate sacrifices.” In the Christian tradition, redemption is “the replacement of a doomed afterlife with a new one of salvation because of a payment made to God the Father...(and) the notions of substitution, punishment, and payment are forefront.” In a secular sense, redemption is
three-fold: “the idea of one’s making up for a bad performance, the act of regaining possession of something from an outside source through a payment, or the act of making good on a promise” (“Themes of redemption in ABC-TV’s ‘Lost’ Television Drama,” 2008, pp. 3-6). Redemption is therefore accomplished by the acts of confession and repentance, forgiveness, and restoration.

Going home is the series-long battle the survivors are fighting. If the islanders repent and are redeemed of their sins, they are allowed to leave the island and go home; what “home” actually is, is decided upon by their life. The lessons to be learned while in isolation on the island are selflessness, the ability to recognize a poor decision, and working hard to refrain from making the same mistakes in the future. According to Bianco (2007),

For the lost souls on Lost, efforts at salvation vary from small acts of kindness that promote forgiveness to sudden acts of violence that promise freedom. For the show itself, redemption consists of a string of solid, and sometimes superb, episodes. (p. 1)

The first example of a character’s redemption within Lost involves the aforementioned cryptic war guerilla and drug smuggler Mr. Eko. His journey of redemption is to overcome his violent past and his brother’s death at the fault of his own hand. Mr. Eko, in Episode 31, “The Other 48 Days,” first takes a 40-day vow of silence to repent for two Others that he killed. Mr. Eko’s back story during this episode includes past tales of redemption that he had heard when masquerading as a minister (“Redemption,” n.d.). He told another islander:

Every Sunday after Mass, I would see a young boy waiting in the back of the church...the boy confessed to me that he had beaten his dog to death with a shovel.
He said that the dog had bitten his baby sister on the cheek; and he needed to protect her. And he wanted to know whether he would go to Hell for this. I told him that God would understand - that he would be forgiven, as long as he was sorry. But the boy did not care about forgiveness. He was only afraid that if he did go to Hell, that dog would be there waiting for him. (Episode 46, “Three Minutes”)

Eko, deep down, felt that this symbolized his own childhood. The boy protected his sister as Eko had protected his brother. Eko had convinced himself that upon death, he too would be forgiven his sins due to the circumstances fate had brought to his life. In season three’s Episode 53, “The Cost of Living,” Mr. Eko begins to build a church on the island in honor of his brother’s church where Eko committed murder. This illustrates that Mr. Eko had begun to make a spiritual conversion while on the island, even carrying a large stick inscribed with scripture. After 71 days, he is called to confess his life’s sins and repent to an apparition of his brother Yemi, whom was murdered by Mr. Eko’s gang (“Redemption, n.d.). Mr. Eko states,

I ask for no forgiveness, for I have not sinned. I have only done what I needed to do to survive...I did not ask for the life that I was given, but it was given nonetheless. I admit it, I did my best.

Mr. Eko refused to accept responsibility for his poor, sinful actions during his violent life. Although Eko was born into a difficult life, he did not have to succumb to it. He did not see himself as a sinner for the things he had done, but thought that his actions were the fault of fate and justifiable since he only lived life according to the hand he was dealt. As a result, Mr. Eko was killed by the island’s mysterious smoke monster. His destiny was to die as a sacrifice to the island, becoming a lesson for the other survivors to learn from.
Hurley’s journey toward redemption includes overcoming his eating disorder, his misfortune after receiving his lottery winnings, and his fear of change. In Episode 18, “Dave,” Hurley hides a stash of Dharma Initiative food from the other islanders so he can continue his gluttonous eating habits so far away from home. But later, he divides the food and hands it out to the survivors so they too can eat. Throughout the series, Hurley has also learned to trust people he would normally have avoided, such as Sawyer. In Episode 63, “Left Behind,” Hurley tricks Sawyer into being nice to everyone because he knows Sawyer could be a good leader if given some direction. This action, in turn, helps Sawyer to redeem himself as well. Also, Hurley must overcome the misfortune he believes he experiences as a result of winning the lottery (“Redemption,” n.d.). It has yet to be seen how Hurley can fully escape his misfortune, especially because the Numbers are seen so frequently on the island, and he suffers deeply for this.

Jack must seek redemption by overcoming his fear of failure in both his personal and professional life, and acceptance of the tumultuous relationships he had with those close to him – most importantly with his ex-wife Sarah and his father. His relationship with his wife is very love/hate because he married her out of pity. In Episode 35, “The Hunting Party,” Jack confesses to his wife that he kissed another woman and she confesses to having an affair with another man. Furthermore, his relationship with his father is one of the biggest obstacles Jack must overcome. Jack cost his father his job as a physician because Jack knew his father is an alcoholic. The guilt, however, is something that festers inside of him, even after his father’s death. He also must overcome his lack of faith. Referred to throughout the series as the “man of science” by Locke, Jack needs to search deep inside of himself and reconcile his faith with the way he leads his life, which he
slightly begins to do by pushing the button in Episode 27, "Orientation." Jack also sacrifices himself to the other survivors. While he does not want to be their leader, he becomes one of the main authority figures on the island out of obligation. He knows the survivors need hope and someone to look to for guidance and meaning as to why they are there and what to do next ("Redemption," n.d.).

Kate seeks redemption from the murders she's committed: she burned her step-father Wayne alive and caused a friend of hers to be shot and killed as she fled a U.S. Marshal. She feels guilt over her deceit; she lies about her fugitive identity to the man she marries and leaves him without an explanation. Kate also must learn to overcome the destructive relationship she has with her mother. Her mother is the reason she killed her step-father and the reason she is running from the law – her mother turned her in for the murder. In Episode 3, "Tabula Rasa," Kate learns to sacrifice and offers herself up to authorities to save the life of a man she was staying with while on the run. Running away is another aspect of Kate’s life for which she seeks redemption. After murdering her step-father, Kate spent many years on the run to avoid being sent to prison. After escaping imprisonment by the Others, in Episode 60, "Par Avion," Kate finally stops running and returns to the Others’ compound in order to rescue Jack. She sacrifices her own freedom in order to help Jack attain his ("Redemption," n.d.).

Sawyer seeks redemption from his past as a conman and murderer. In three separate accounts, Episode 8, "Confidence Man," Episode 37, "The Long Con," and Episode 52, "Every Man for Himself," the audience witnesses Sawyer con several different people for money. And in Episode 16, "Outlaws," Sawyer commits murder. Throughout his life he searches for the man who conned his mother, causing his father to kill her. When Sawyer
falsely believes he has found the man, he murders him out of revenge. When on the island, Sawyer slowly begins to sacrifice himself in order to protect or help others. In Episode 63, “Left Behind,” Sawyer is nice to the islanders and seeks their forgiveness by freely offering his hidden stash of found goods to them out of fear of being ostracized. Despite a rivalry from the beginning, Sawyer tells Jack how he met his father in Sydney in Episode 23, “Exodus – Part One.” This partly mends their rocky relationship. Sawyer also falls in love with Kate. It is an honest, genuine relationship – no con involved – and he vows to protect her at any cost. For the first time in his life, Sawyer is selfless and puts his love for Kate before the love he has for himself (“Redemption,” n.d.).

Sayid, an ex-Iraqi Republican Guard Officer, seeks redemption from the pain and torture he inflicted on many people and must overcome his heartbreak over his lost love Nadia. During Episode 14, “One of Them,” we see Sayid’s back story where he vows to never again torture another human being when he leaves the army. However, Sayid tortured Sawyer in Episode 8, “Confidence Man,” and Ben in Episode 14, “One of them.” To repent for his torturing of Sawyer, in Episode 9, “Solitary,” Sayid embarks upon a journey of self-excommunication, reflecting upon the poor choices he has made since coming to the island. In this episode, he turns back to his Islamic roots and begins to pray again. Also, shortly after crashing on the island, Sayid was blamed for the accident due to his Middle Eastern heritage. In Episode 2, “Pilot – Part 2,” he redeemed himself by exercising hard work, and his resourcefulness labels him a valuable member to the other islanders. Sayid, unafraid of death, continuously sacrifices himself with Jack in order to help achieve everyone’s rescue (“Redemption,” n.d.).
Charlie, a musician, seeks redemption from his drug abuse, his greed and materialism, and his inferiority complex. As a famous rock star, Charlie began using heroin. He also became caught up in a negative lifestyle of money and riches, putting his faith in the material instead of the spiritual. Throughout his life, Charlie has always battled with the feelings inside of himself – feelings of not ever being good enough for his father and living in his brother’s shadow. On the island, he frequently tries to save the day and be a leader, yet his attempts almost always end in failure (“Redemption,” n.d.). He becomes a father figure to a single mother’s baby on the island, feeling that it is one of the most honest, genuine relationships he’s ever had. At the end of season three, in Episode 71, “Through the Looking Glass – Part Two,” Charlie is redeemed by making the ultimate sacrifice: himself. While the islanders work to achieve being rescued, Charlie agrees to swim into the ocean and disarm one of the Others’ tracking stations. It’s a suicide mission; Charlie knows that the station will be flooded and he will drown. But he also knows that if he doesn’t complete this task, the other survivors may lose their chance to be rescued. Charlie sacrifices his own life to ensure the safety and survival of those he cares for.

Clearly, some islanders are repentant upon their own and seek redemption at their own will, while some are forced into it by other people or circumstance. The theory that the island is a conduit to providing redemption and a spiritual rebirth is explored by Reid (2005):

this theory is the same as the purgatory theory, except that the sinners are not condemned to live, and die, on the island, rather they are given a chance to atone for
their sins and cleanse their spirits...and what they must do to purify themselves.

(para. 1)

It is previously mentioned that during the earlier episodes of the series, viewers believed the island to be a purgatory-like state of consciousness where the survivors are left to ponder their existence and learn and grow from their lives to, in the end, individually redeem their souls and perfect them. Unfortunately,

The creators of *Lost* have repeatedly denied that their characters are literally in purgatory...and most of the evidence from later episodes suggests that they’re telling the truth. Still, the show’s island is at the least a purgatorial landscape – it’s no coincidence that several of the characters are Catholic, lapsed and otherwise – where the things that the castaways carry from their previous lives provide the raw material for suffering, struggle, and growth. (Douthat, 2007, p. 13)

From a mythological standpoint, redemption, or what the mystery religions refer to as “salvation” in the ancient world, does not always have a religious connotation. Often, salvation implies a previous fall from grace and a sinful condition; to avoid the consequences of this state, a spiritual regeneration of a ritual of purification was considered necessary. (Luck, 2000, pp. 192-193)

The ritualistic traditions within the mystery religions include practices such as taking vows, called votive religion. It benefits “those who are ill, or in danger, or in need of any kind...such individuals make promises to the gods and usually fulfill them by offering more or less precious donations” (Burkert, 1987, p. 12). The road to salvation includes initiation, sacrifice, and abstinence from killing (Guthrie, 1966).
One of the three great ideas of the Orphic mysteries is “the regeneration or redemption of man’s lower nature by his own higher Self” (“Orphism, Orphic mysteries,” n.d., para. 2). To achieve redemption, the initiates would give gifts to the gods they worshipped to attain salvation and receive good fortune in the form of health, wealth, or a long life (Burkert, 1987). According to Mylonas (1961), Orpheus produced a set of books called the teletai, or redemptive purification “ceremonies which free us from the troubles of the other world. If we do not perform their sacrifices an awful fate awaits us...(it is) a means of redemption” (Mylonas, 1961, p. 267). Sacrifice was meant to free the initiates of their sins. These rituals allowed the Orphics to proceed further through the struggle toward enlightenment, which is the true concept of the Orphic mysteries. Conversely, those who do not sacrifice for redemption are fated to suffer terrible things in the afterlife (Burkert, 1987). Some of the teletai of Orpheus also included hymns and prayers sung at a sacrifice as a means to ask a god for a favor. Unfortunately, other than sacrifice and prayer, it is unknown what other elements were included in the teletai (Guthrie, 1966).

Characters

There are very few parallels between the characters of the Orphic mysteries and the characters of Lost. Some associations were easier to uncover while performing my research, yet it was a stretch to compare most of the other characters.

**Ben Linus and Zeus**

I consider Ben Linus to be slightly modeled after Zeus. According to Guthrie (1966), there is
a primitive world-order...which is swallowed with its creator Zeus, out of whom is created the second world-order in which we live...in the Orphic tale there is, as we shall see, a second beginning of all things in the age of Zeus...Zeus is not simply supreme ruler, but creator.... Having created all things anew, Zeus becomes...‘beginning, middle, and end of all.’ (pp. 75-82)

As Zeus was the supreme ruler of the gods and lord of the sky, so was Ben the ruler of the Others. As Zeus created the second world-order by swallowing the heart of Dionysus to birth the second Dionysus Zagreus, Ben “created” that which was considered to be the second Dharma Initiative, or the Others.

The Dharma Initiative consisted of the original scientists and engineers who were living on the island. During what’s called the “purge” on the island in Episode 68, “The Man Behind the Curtain,” Ben murders the majority of the Dharma Initiative by opening a canister of poisonous gas. Ben becomes the leader of any people left alive and forces them to follow his commands. Because Ben had lived most of his life on the island, he is the sole keeper of all of its secrets. He is also the only Other who can see and communicate with Jacob, whom Ben refers to as his master. However, at this point in the show, who or what Jacob is remains undeveloped for the audience. Throughout the series, he also steals the children of anyone who ends up on the island to continue to “birth” more Others.

As Zeus was, Ben is also the beginning, middle, and end of the survivors being confined to the island – he is aware of their connected backgrounds, why each was on Oceanic Flight 815, why those on the island were allowed to live, and is responsible for how and when, if ever, they can leave. Zeus destroyed the Titans with lightning and Ben
yearns to destroy anyone who threatens the purpose or fate of the island and anyone who makes an attempt to leave the island, including each of the survivors.

**Jack Shepherd and Orpheus**

I consider Jack Shepherd to be slightly modeled after Orpheus. As Orpheus was the founder of Orphism and the leader of the Orphics, Jack is the leader of the survivors on the island. Both work to save people: Orpheus worked to teach his initiates the divine way of life so that their souls may be saved, while Jack, as a neurosurgeon, works to save people medically and to save the survivors on the island to ensure their rescue. Both have had wrenching heartbreaks which led, in part, to their failures in life. In the case of Orpheus, Luck (2000) states,

Orpheus…failed a test. In his case it was the overpowering love for a woman that made him fail…Orpheus died a tragic death…. Orpheus, who was able to charm trees and animals with his music, lost his beloved Eurydice and was torn to pieces by a horde of women when he refused to marry again. (pp. 10, 73-74)

Jack, too, lost the love of his life, Sarah. In Episode 25, “Man of Science, Man of Faith,” they met when he performed surgery on her after she was involved in a horrible car accident, vowing to fix her so she could walk again. He took “fixing” her as his life’s purpose and married Sarah. However, as Jack became increasingly more involved in his career and only being concerned with success, he neglects his wife. Sarah confesses to having an affair in Episode 11, “The Hunting Party.” Heartbroken, in Episode 57, “Stranger in a Strange Land,” Jack retreats to Thailand in an alcoholic and promiscuous depression. Sarah marries the man she was having an affair with and creates a family with her new husband. Jack runs his career into the ground due to his dependence upon
alcoholism and prescription pills, thus failing horribly due to the loss of his career and the overpowering love he left for his lost Sarah. The difference between Orpheus and Jack, however, is the issue of faith. Orpheus, ever faithful, created a religion, while Jack continuously maintains the persona of the “man of science.” Science and faith, like Orpheus and Jack, seem to be dualities that will forever remain diametrically opposed. With regard to the faithful/religious aspect, John Locke, known on the island as the “man of faith,” could also be seen as a counterpart to Orpheus, but the similarities end there.

The Smoke Monster and Chaos

There are several other tiny comparisons that can be made between the characters as if they could be a slight inspiration – nothing substantial or concrete – but interesting nonetheless. The idea of Chaos can be thought to mirror the smoke monster in Episode 53, “The Cost of Living.” The smoke monster is unpredictable and disorderly and takes the life of one of the characters, Mr. Eko. Chaos is a formless mass of lifeless matter where nothing can be distinguished, but it does generate Earth. The smoke monster, too, is a black mass of lifeless matter which cannot be understood, yet it does generate people’s apparitions, like that of Mr. Eko’s brother Yemi, and restores faith in people, like Locke.

John Locke and Cronus, Pythagoras and Hurley, the Titans and the Remaining Survivors

John Locke can be slightly compared to Cronus, in the sense that John wants to be the leader of the islanders. However, he later believes he is fated to be the leader of the Others, which is what’s left of the Dharma Initiative. Cronus was the sky god and the chief god of the universe after overthrowing Uranus; John Locke could later become the official leader of the Others if he overthrows Ben, which is why Ben secretly fears Locke.
he knows the power he has on the island and what he is capable of. Pythagoras and Hurley's similarities end after the only commonality of their obsession over numbers. The Titans could be thought of as inspiration for the plane crash survivors, but only because Ben wants to kill those who threaten the island, much like Zeus extinguished the Titans. Also, as the Titans were viewed as wicked and lacking in knowledge and experience, so are the survivors because they haven't yet grown spiritually.

*Dionysus and the Others*

One comparison came in attempting to find associations between Dionysus and the Others. When the second Dionysus was born, he was a reincarnation of the original. And because of Ben's purge in Episode 68, "The Man Behind the Curtain," the Others became a "reincarnation" or secondary form of the Dharma Initiative. The Others grew and gained power from the remnants of the originals and continue to live in their homes, complete their sordid experiments, and keep prisoners in their laboratories. Dionysus is the son of Zeus, and the Others are the "children" of Ben; to the Others, the survivors are to be submissive. To the island, the survivors are to make sacrifices: themselves. The Others also want to kill Jack and the survivors just as Dionysus had Orpheus killed. Burkert (1987) states that those who follow Dionysus are "a special group.... The small groups of men in the caves (that) must have experienced an intimate feeling of togetherness" (p. 47). This is comparable to the way that the community of Others hide in the jungle and caves of the island stalking the survivors.

Lastly, Plutarch believes that "ghosts...take part in the mystery celebrations" of the Orphic's sacrifices for redemption (Burkert, 1987, p. 113), much like the aforementioned ghosts and apparitions that wander the island and live among the Others. For example,
Jack's father Christian is seen wandering around the island despite the fact that he died in Sydney; Eko is confronted by the spirit of his dead brother Yemi; and Ben sees his dead mother Emily and has clandestine meetings with a mysterious man named Jacob, whom only he is able to see. There remains a question with regard to the series at this point whether these visions are hallucination or imagination, if these apparitions are ghosts, or if there is an island secret where the dead are really brought back to life.

Of the many characters within both *Lost* and the Orphic mysteries, these were the only similarities I found to be substantial. As previously mentioned, it was a stretch to compare the characters of each. Therefore, as a result of my research, it is concluded that the characters of *Lost* were not based upon those of the Orphic mysteries. Thus, the characters of the Orphic mysteries do not bring about a deeper understanding of the characters of *Lost*.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This thesis creates the theoretical framework for future thematic analyses with specific regard to the medium of television. It helps to develop the foundation for potential research involving television adaptations of a classical religion and brings to light the growing need to investigate the characters and plot themes of morality and/or spirituality within popular television programming. Even if contemporary television does not contain thematic elements such as classical religion, morality, or spirituality, it is still significant to study both the possibilities and the limitations of such a popular and influential medium.

The Orphic mysteries were too fragile to survive as a religion, despite the strange fascination which they provoked. Although the mysteries' distinction has faded and their strange rituals and customs have been forgotten, they still prove interesting to research. And because Lost is such a strange, mysterious show, applying a modern, typical religion to this thesis just would not have sufficed.

With regard to this thesis, I researched and compared the contemporary Lost with the ancient Orphic mysteries to see if the two artifacts thematically adhere to one another. This study reveals whether the storylines of Lost could be interpreted as an application of the Orphic mysteries as a television show, and if understanding the themes and characters of the Orphic mysteries could lead to a greater understanding of Lost. The application of
a thematic analysis and investigations involving the characters and major plot themes were the tools applied to gain perception on this idea and to generate a valid and reliable conclusion. Based upon the results uncovered in this thesis, it is concluded that *Lost* does not sufficiently support the Orphic mysteries, nor do the characters of the Orphic mysteries bring deeper understanding to the characters of *Lost*. *Lost*, however, does support elements and characteristics of many religions, and this does include the Orphic mysteries.

*Lost* and the Orphic mysteries, at their most simple premise, can both be considered parallel life journeys of the physical versus the metaphysical, the worldly versus the spiritual, and the actual versus the metaphoric. Both are tales of the possibility of a life after death where one strives for redemption through some sort of sacrifice, whether physical or spiritual. Both stories are clearly about the sacred journey of self-actualization: the discovery of what our purpose is here on earth and the epiphany that making the right moral choices will bless and save us.

Though the characters themselves are unaware of the crossing of their paths, the lives of all of the characters are interwoven with one another, leaving the viewer to understand that their fates are all connected. It is part of their destiny to be on this island.

The lessons experienced are all part of the process of spiritual advancement. Each person is purged of their sins by making better moral decisions. This helps them to receive salvation and achieve perfection, thus bringing them closer to God. Each character longs for and battles throughout *Lost* to go home. It can be theorized that this is when the soul transcends spiritually and can then be allowed into the Kingdom of Heaven, or Elysium for the Orphic mysteries. Thus, the island, and being initiated into
the Orphic mysteries, both represent a second chance to obtain knowledge and ultimately reach Heaven at the end of their life journey. Whether this was fully intended by Lost's creators is unknown without speaking with them, but I feel it is safe to assume that since several religious concepts run so deeply within the show, that it either was intended or, to say the least, was an unintended consequence of the creators.

The conclusion of this thesis is that Lost is not an application of the Orphic mysteries as a modern television show. The Orphic mysteries within Greek Mythology should be considered a major thematic influence upon the television show, but per the results of my thesis, I would not suggest that the Orphic mysteries are the sole example with which Lost was created.

Lost is not fully explained by the Orphic mysteries, but by the universalities of many different religions. I think it would be interesting and useful to compare Lost to the Judeo-Christian religions due to the deep themes of redemption, sacrifice, and the quest of learning and acting upon the difference between good and evil in life. In addition, I think it would be interesting and useful to compare Lost to the Buddhist or Hindu religions due to the deep themes of reincarnation and the merging of dualities most often found in Eastern forms of theology.

Future research should include performing a thematic analysis upon Lost and other modern religions. Additional suggestions for future research on this topic could include looking into what type of social statement Lost is attempting to convey about the presence or absence of spirituality and morality in today's society or today's television programming, or how Lost's lack of governance on the island could lead to the development of new societal laws and behaviors.
Regardless of the results of my thesis, I found it interesting that a current popular culture artifact such as television could be identified with something ancient, like the mystery religions of Greek Mythology. There has been countless research conducted upon the negative aspects of television, such as violent behaviors, sexual promiscuity, lack of educational material, and its dissection as a mere money-making venture. But this thesis, I feel, proves that television is so much more than just a form of entertainment; it is also a form of enlightenment that can lead us to a deeper understanding of not only our own individual lives, but the lives of others and the existence of humanity as a whole. The television show *Lost* is clearly polysemic, containing multiple meanings and resulting in a different experience for every viewer every time they watch. The back stories of each character teaches the audience to empathize with the difficult plights of others, helping us to be more understanding of not only the battle we as individuals are fighting, but the battles we are all fighting as one worldwide community. Strangers aren't strangers – they are merely someone living the same experiences as any other person – someone and something we can all learn from. The religious undertone of *Lost* helps the audience to conceptualize that there is an intelligent design to our lives and that our purpose here and our connections to one another do make sense. As a result, I feel this thesis demonstrates that some shows on television can serve a positive purpose for viewers and even society as a whole, which is therefore important to the framework of future thematic analyses with regard to the medium of television.
APPENDIX A

Lost Characters (Reid, 2005; Smith, 2006)

**Benjamin Linus**: The self-proclaimed leader of the “Others.” Unbeknownst to the survivors, Ben knows the background of each Oceanic 815 survivor and all the secrets of the island. He orchestrates the kidnapping, imprisonment, and murders which take place during the series. We know nothing of his past before the island other than he was part of the original Dharma Initiative.

**Charlie Pace**: Charlie was once a passionate musician in the British rock band Drive Shaft, a life that led him to drug addiction and destitution. His new life on the island has given Charlie a second chance: he has kicked his habit and found someone to take care of. Of all of the survivors, Charlie is probably the one most in need of spiritual help. Having been the drummer for a successful band, he found himself surrounded by riches and temptation, which led him down a bad path.

**Hugo “Hurley” Reyes**: A down-to-earth guy, Hurley saw his life go from zero to infinity when he won a major lottery jackpot. Since then he has been haunted on the island by his “lucky” numbers, which are in fact a curse. He does his best to be helpful to Jack and the others on the island.

**Jack Shephard**: A highly trained surgeon from the United States who lost the love of his life, Jack Shepherd came to Australia to find his estranged and alcoholic father. Now he finds himself the reluctant leader of the survivors of Oceanic Flight 815, and is constantly fighting to keep them alive and well. He is known as the man of science.

**James “Sawyer” Ford**: Sawyer is a Southern conman and all around bad-boy, though his callous and sarcastic demeanor hides a seething self-loathing. He is always looking out for his own interests, though he can be uncharacteristically unselfish when the situation demands it.

**John Locke**: Once a paralyzed dreamer working for a box company, the crash gave back Locke his ability to walk. Now he believes that the island holds his destiny and never wants to leave. He is a skilled hunter and tracker, and a leader with mysterious motives of his own. He, in contrast to Jack, is known as the man of faith.

**Kate Ryan**: Always a mystery to her fellow castaways, Kate is a beautiful fugitive who will do whatever it takes to escape the law and keep her secret past to herself.
Kate was arrested by a federal marshal in Australia for killing her step-father. She has a budding relationship with Jack, but also high sexual tension with Sawyer.

**Mr. Eko:** Eko grew up as a war guerrilla in Nigeria. His gang was secretly using his brother Yemi’s (who was a minister) missionary plane, which crashed on the island, to smuggle drugs. One of Eko’s gang cohorts killed Yemi, so Eko traveled as a “minister” in his place. Eko was killed on the island by the smoke monster.

**The “Others”:** The Others are a group of people that live on the island. A first impression of the Others is that they are savage people. However, while exploring the Dharma Initiative bunker, it is shown that many of the Others that have been in the wild are scientists of some sort. Who the Others really are remains a mystery, but they have attacked, kidnapped, and killed many of the survivors of Oceanic 815.

**The “Smoke Monster”:** The monster has only been seen face-to-face by Locke and Mr. Eko. It is thought to be the island security system. When Eko looked into it, images of his past flashed inside. What and where it came from no one knows; however, it is feared.
APPENDIX B

Orphic Mystery Characters (Joe, 1999; “Orphic reform,” n.d.)

Aether: Aether (air) was the personification of the upper sky. In the Orphic myth, Aether was seen as a female being.

Athena: She saved Zagreus’ heart and gave it to Zeus, who thereupon swallowed the heart (from which was born the second Dionysus Zagreus) and destroyed the Titans with lightning.

Chaos: Long after the beginning of time, the void known as Chaos came into existence in the universe. Before the Earth, sea, and Heaven (as well as the heavenly bodies, such as the sun, moon, and stars), before even there was the deathless gods, Chaos existed as a formless mass. It was lifeless matter, where all elements of creation were heaped together, so that nothing could be distinguished from one another. Chaos generated the solid mass of Earth, from which arose the starry, cloud-filled Heaven.

Cronus: Ruler of the universe and the leader of the Titans. He was the youngest son of Uranus and Gaea, the personifications of Heaven and Earth. Cronus was the sky god and the chief god of the universe, after overthrowing Uranus. Cronus was also the god of agriculture and fertility.

Demeter: Goddess of corn or of the Earth and fertility, and daughter of the Titans’ Cronus and Rhea.

Demiurge: The “Artificer,” “Artisan,” “Builder,” or “Craftsman.” Demiurge was the supreme creator of the universe and he created the World Soul, Heaven, Earth, and the seas, as well as the lower deities. In the Orphic Creation Myth, the Demiurge is usually referred to as Zeus. Zeus swallowed Protogonus, the first creator of the universe, as well as the entire universe. With the universe in his belly, Zeus possessed the powers of Protogonus, and Zeus then recreated the world.
**Eurydice:** The wife of Orpheus. Orpheus loved her dearly; on their wedding day, Orpheus played songs filled with happiness as his bride danced through the meadow. Eurydice stepped on a snake and fell to the ground. The venomous snake had bitten her, leaving Eurydice dead. Distraught, Orpheus played and sang so mournfully that all the nymphs and gods wept. In their saddened states, they told him to travel to the Underworld and retrieve her. Orpheus did so, and with his music, softened the hearts of Hades and Persephone. In another version, Orpheus played his lyre to put the guardian of Hades, Cerberus, to sleep. It was then granted that Eurydice be allowed to return with him to the world of the living. But the condition was attached that he should walk in front of her and not look back until he had reached the upper world. In his anxiety, he broke his promise, and Eurydice vanished again from his sight, this time forever. Orpheus, broken hearted, lost the love of his life.

**Gaea:** The personification of Earth and the goddess of the Earth. Gaea was born together with Nyx (“Night”), Erebos, Tartarus, and Eros (“Love”), out of Chaos. She had the ability to foretell the future.

**Logos:** To count, tell, say, or speak; something said; by implication a subject, topic of discourse, or reasoning. Logic and reasoning; if one is capable of speech, then intelligence and reason are assumed.

**Lucius:** He consecrated a monument to his child of four years with these words: “To my sweetest child and personal God who hearkens to my prayers.” More clearly reminiscent of certain characteristic Orphic ideas is a second century A.D. inscription found in a Sabine village. “The soul is immortal for it came from God. The body is the garment of the soul. Honor the God in me.” This was good Orphic doctrine.

**Orpheus:** He became famous because of his poems and his songs, excelling everyone in the beauty of his verse and music, and creator of the Orphic mysteries. He could charm wild beasts, coax the trees and rocks into dance, and even divert the courses of rivers. Orpheus also reached a high degree of influence because he was believed to have discovered the mysteries, purification from sins, cures for diseases, and a means of averting divine wrath. As one of the pioneers of civilization, he is said to have taught humanity the arts of medicine, writing, and agriculture. Closely connected with religious life, Orpheus was an augur and seer who practiced magical arts, especially astrology.

**Plutarch:** Pagan author; wrote to prove the vigorous persistence of Orphic ideas and practices through the early imperial period. Later Christian notices of Orphism are distinctly secondary to these pagan sources and are chiefly valuable in showing the later persistence of Orphism in its active competition with Christianity.

**Phanes/Protogonus:** Protogonus was popularly known as Phanes, the golden-winged god of light and love. As Phanes, he was seen as a sun god or the god of light. Phanes has four eyes, and several heads of various animals. Phanes was depicted as a sexless god or a god with both sexes (an androgynous being) with golden wings. Phanes was also invisible but radiated pure light.
**Pythagoras:** The Orphic cult was known to exist as early as the sixth century B.C., where it was influenced by some of the Eastern religions, as well as from some of the philosophy of that time, particularly that of Pythagoras (c. 580-500 B.C.), the founder of the Pythagorean school (Pythagoreanism). Pythagoras was both a philosopher and mathematician.

**Rhea:** Titaness and Earth-goddess. According to Orphic myth, after Zeus was born, her name was changed to Demeter. As Demeter, she was raped by her son Zeus, and gave birth to Persephone. In turn, Zeus would rape Persephone so that she became the mother of Dionysus.

**Titans:** Means “strainer” because they strained and performed a presumptuous, fearful deed followed by vengeance. The exact number of the Titans varied from author to author, and they often included some of the children of the Titans. For a generation, the Titans shared the world, with Cronus as their leader. It was the Titans who created mankind. According to Orphic myth, Zeus destroyed the Titans with his thunderbolts because the Titans had murdered and devoured his son Zagreus (Dionysus). From the smoldering ashes, mankind was created.

**Uranus:** The sky and the god of the sky. Uranus was the son of Gaea and possibly of Aether. Uranus married his mother and became the first supreme ruler of the world.

**Zagreus (Dionysus):** A surname of the mystic Dionysus whom Zeus, in the form of a dragon, is said to have begotten by Persephone. He was torn to pieces by the Titans, though he defended himself bravely, and assumed various forms, and Athena carried his heart to Zeus. From Zagreus, the second Dionysus was born, who was a reincarnation of the original. According to tradition, Dionysus died each winter and was reborn in the spring, thus representative of the circle of life. To his followers, this cyclical revival, accompanied by the seasonal renewal of the fruits of the Earth, embodied the promise of the resurrection of the dead.

**Zeus:** Supreme ruler of the gods and lord of the sky. As the son of the Titans’ Cronus and Rhea, he was known to the Romans as Jupiter or Jove. According to Orphic myth, after he was born, Rhea changed her name to Demeter. Zeus raped his mother (Rhea/Demeter), and she gave birth to Persephone. Later, Zeus would rape his own daughter, so that Persephone gave birth to the elder Dionysus, otherwise known as Zagreus. However, the Titans killed the infant (Dionysus).
APPENDIX C

Titles of Lost Episodes

Episode 1: Pilot – Part One

Episode 2: Pilot – Part Two

Episode 3: Tabula Rasa

Episode 4: Walkabout

Episode 5: White Rabbit

Episode 6: House of the Rising Sun

Episode 7: The Moth

Episode 8: Confidence Man

Episode 9: Solitary

Episode 10: Raised by Another

Episode 11: All the Best Cowboys have Daddy Issues

Episode 12: Whatever the Case May Be

Episode 13: Hearts and Minds

Episode 14: Special

Episode 15: Homecoming

Episode 16: Outlaws

Episode 17: ...In Translation

Episode 18: Numbers

Episode 19: Deus Ex Machina
Episode 20: Do No Harm
Episode 21: The Greater Good
Episode 22: Born to Run
Episode 23: Exodus – Part One
Episode 24: Exodus – Part Two
Episode 25: Man of Science, Man of Faith
Episode 26: Adrift
Episode 27: Orientation
Episode 28: Everybody Hates Hugo
Episode 29: ...And Found
Episode 30: Abandoned
Episode 31: The Other 48 Days
Episode 32: Collision
Episode 33: What Kate Did
Episode 34: The 23rd Psalm
Episode 35: The Hunting Party
Episode 36: Fire + Water
Episode 37: The Long Con
Episode 38: One of Them
Episode 39: Maternity Leave
Episode 40: The Whole Truth
Episode 41: Lockdown

Episode 42: Dave

Episode 43: S.O.S.

Episode 44: Two for the Road

Episode 45: ?

Episode 46: Three Minutes

Episode 47: Live Together, Die Alone – Part One

Episode 48: Live Together, Die Alone – Part Two

Episode 49: A Tale of Two Cities

Episode 50: The Glass Ballerina

Episode 51: Further Instruction

Episode 52: Every Man for Himself

Episode 53: The Cost of Living

Episode 54: I Do

Episode 55: Not in Portland

Episode 56: Flashes before Your Eyes

Episode 57: Stranger in a Strange Land

Episode 58: Tricia Tanaka is Dead

Episode 59: Enter 77

Episode 60: Par Avion

Episode 61: The Man from Tallahassee
Episode 62: Exposé
Episode 63: Left Behind
Episode 64: One of Us
Episode 65: Catch-22
Episode 66: D.O.C.
Episode 67: The Brig
Episode 68: The Man Behind the Curtain
Episode 69: Greatest Hits
Episode 70: Through the Looking Glass — Part One
Episode 71: Through the Looking Glass — Part Two
BIBLIOGRAPHY


VITA

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Rachael Wax

Home Address:
2224 Chatsworth Court
Henderson, Nevada 89074

Degrees:
Bachelor of Arts, English, 2006
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Special Honors and Awards:
National Scholars Honor Society, 2007
Tau Kappa Alpha Honor Society, 2007
Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society, 2008
Golden Key International Honour Society, 2008

Thesis Title: Lost as an Example of the Orphic Mysteries: A Thematic Analysis

Thesis Examination Committee:
Chairperson, Dr. Anthony Ferri, Ph.D.
Committee Member, Dr. Stephen Bates, Ph.D.
Committee Member, Dr. Gary Larson, Ph.D.
Graduate Faculty Representative, Dr. J. Michael Stitt, Ph.D.