

English 2332: Brit/World Lit.
David Glen Smith, Instructor

LITERARY CRITICISM

The paradigms and the possibilities—



- ▶ **Joseph John Campbell** (March 1904 – October 1987) was an American mythologist who worked in comparative mythology and comparative religion. His work covers many aspects of the human experience. Campbell's book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949) discusses his theory of the journey of the archetypal hero found in world mythologies. Since the book's publication, Campbell's theory has been consciously applied by a wide variety of modern writers and artists. (www.wikipedia.org)
- ▶ **Mythic (Archetypal) criticism** deals with what Joseph Campbell called a “very deep chord” shared by all humans; the myth critic seeks out those mysterious elements that inform literary works and elicit near-universal human reactions, though there is no completely universal symbol.

MYTHIC CRITICISM-DEFINITION

- ▶ **Images:** Water, sun, colors, circle, serpent, apple, pomegranate, numbers, demon lover, wise old man, trickster, garden, tree, desert, mountain, soulmate archetypal woman (Good Mother, Terrible Mother)
- ▶ **Archetypal Motifs:**
Creation, immortality
hero/heroine > quest, initiation, scapegoat)

MYTHIC CRITICISM-ARCHETYPES

▶ **Seasonal Tropes:**

- ▶ Spring—comedy, lust, birth
- ▶ Summer—romance
- ▶ Autumn—tragedy, murder
- ▶ Winter—irony, death

▶ **Archetypes** in William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*

MYTHIC CRITICISM-ARCHETYPES

▶ **Typical Archetypes:**

- | | | |
|---------------|--------------------|------------------|
| ▶ The Hero | The Warrior | The Mentor |
| ▶ The Child | The Mother | The Trickster |
| ▶ The Herald | The Shapeshifter | The Anima/Animus |
| ▶ The Self | The Shadow | The Maiden |
| ▶ The Creator | The Twins (Gemini) | The Original Man |

MYTHIC CRITICISM-ARCHETYPES

▶ **The HERO**

- ▶ In it's Greek origin, the hero/heroine represented any character that was half god and half human.
- ▶ Later **hero** and **heroine** came to refer to characters that, in the face of danger and adversity or from a position of weakness, display courage and the will for self-sacrifice.
- ▶ Began as exemplifying courage/prowess later shifted to demonstrate good morality.
- ▶ Mythological examples of the hero include: Hercules, Achilles, Beowulf, Gilgamesh, Noah, Psyche
- ▶ Present fictional examples include Harry Potter, Luke Skywalker, Percy Jackson, Katniss Everdeen

EXAMPLE ARCHETYPES

- ▶ **The Mentor (Wise Old Man/Woman)**
- ▶ Also called the Old Man or Wise Old man or Woman.
- ▶ This type of character is typically represented as a kind and wise, older **father-type figure** who uses personal knowledge of people and the world to help tell stories and offer guidance.
- ▶ He may occasionally appear as an **absent-minded** professor, losing track of his surroundings because of his thoughts.
- ▶ The wise old man is often seen to be in some way "foreign", that is, from a different culture, nation, or occasionally, even a different time, than those he advises.

EXAMPLE ARCHETYPES

- ▶ **The Mentor (Wise Old Man/Woman)**
- ▶ In mythology, this characteristic is generally given when one of the gods comes to speak to a mortal.
- ▶ Zeus, Odin, Hera, are all examples of mentor gods/goddesses in different contexts.
- ▶ In modern fiction, we see the mentor in characters like Yoda, Obi-Wan, Dumbledore, and Gandalf.

EXAMPLE ARCHETYPES

▶ **The Warrior**

- ▶ The Warrior is that part of ourselves that protects emotional boundaries and asserts our needs in the world.
- ▶ Stands where the King tells it to stand.
- ▶ The King initiates it, gives it a cause, a mission -- as a general gives the soldier his mission.
- ▶ The Warrior serves the King and follows the King's instructions to the letter.

EXAMPLE ARCHETYPES

▶ **The Warrior**

- ▶ Key words to describe the Warrior are *duty, honor, loyalty, discipline, boundaries*.
- ▶ The Warrior's tool is the sword (or any equivalent weapon of protection and assertion, including, in martial arts, the human body).
- ▶ Mythological examples include Mars, Athena, Thor, Launcelot.
- ▶ Modern fictional examples include too many to mention. Anyone who functions as a protector to the Hero. Han Solo, Captain America, Okoye (from *Black Panther*).

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EXAMPLE ARCHETYPES

▶ **The Literary Theory**

- ▶ New Historicism is a relatively new theory set up in the 70s.
- ▶ Historicism concentrates on how events, places, and culture within a society affect or influence a work.
- ▶ Stephen Greenblatt is credited with formation of this approach of examining literature and culture.
- ▶ Michael Foucault, of the Deconstructionist Criticism, is considered a major influence on the Historicism process.

NEW HISTORICISM

▶ **Key Concepts**

- ▶ Unlike Mythic Literary Criticism, a critic of Historicism believes there are no “universal” qualities to literature.
- ▶ Creativity and insight are a product of a societal attitude and historical moment in time.
- ▶ Also, unlike Formalism, both the author and the reader are affected by the culture he/she works within—and therefore both roles need addressing in critical essays.
- ▶ Readers, like authors, are subject to ideologies that impact literature with their own confirmation of experience.

NEW HISTORICISM

- ▶ **Recognizable Examples**
- ▶ Any Shakespearean play
- ▶ *Great Expectations*, Charles Dickens
- ▶ *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee
- ▶ *Fahrenheit 451*, Ray Bradbury

NEW HISTORICISM