English Literature
Semester-IV

MYTHOLOGICAL AND ARCHETYPAL APPROACHES

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Mythological and Archetypal Approaches

I. DEFINITIONS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

In *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* (New York: Viking, 1959), Joseph Campbell recounts a curious phenomenon of animal behavior: Newly hatched chickens, bits of egg-shells still clinging to their tails, will dart for cover when a hawk flies overhead; yet they remain unaffected by other birds. Furthermore, a wooden model of a hawk, drawn forward along a wire above their coop, will send them scurrying (if the model is pulled backward, however, there is no response). "Whereas," Campbell asks, "this abrupt seizure by an image to which there is no counterpart in the chicken's world? Living gulls and ducks, herons and pigeons, leave it cold, but the work of art strikes some very deep chord!" (31: our italics).

Campbell's hinted analogy, though only roughly approximate, will serve nonetheless as an instructive introduction to the mythological approach to literature. For it is with the relationship of literary art to "some very deep chord," in human nature that mythological criticism deals. The myth critic is concerned to seek out those mysterious elements that inform certain literary works and that elicit, with almost uncanny force, dramatic and universal human reactions. The myth critic wishes to discover how certain works of literature, usually those that have become, or promise to become,

"clastics," image a kind of reality to which readers give perennial response—while other works, seemingly as well constructed, and even some forms of reality, leave them cold. Speaking figuratively, the myth critic studies in depth the "wooden hawks" of great literature: the so-called archetypes or archetypal patterns that
the writer has drawn forward along the tensed structural wires of his or her masterpieces and that vibrate in such a way that a sympathetic resonance is set off deep within the reader.

As obviously close connection exists between mythological criticism and the psychological approach discussed in chapter 3: both are concerned with the motives that underlie human behavior. Between the two approaches are differences of degree and of affinities. Psychology tends to be experimental and diagnostic: it is closely related to biological science. Mythology tends to be speculative and philosophic; its affinities are with religion, anthropology and cultural history. Such generalizations, of course, risk oversimplification: for instance, a great psychologist like Sigmund Freud ranged far beyond experimental and clinical study into the realms of myth, and his distinguished sometimes protege, Carl Gustav Jung, became one of the foremost mythologists of our time. Even so, the two approaches are distinct, and mythology is wider in its scope than psychology. For example, what psychoanalysis attempts to disclose about the individual personality, the study of myths reveals about the mind and character of a people. And just as dreams reflect the unconscious desires and anxieties of the individual, so myths are the symbolic projections of a people's hopes, values, fears, and aspirations. According to the common misconception and misuse of the term, myths are merely primitive fictions, illusions, or opinions based upon false reasoning. Actually, mythology encompasses more than grade school stories about the Greek and Roman deities or clever fables invented for the amusement of children (or the harassment of students in college literature courses). It may be true that myths do not meet our current standards of factual reality, but then neither does any great literature. Instead, they both reflect a more profound reality. As Mark Schorer says in William Blake: The Politics of Vision (New York: Holt, 1946), "Myth is fundamental, the dramatic representation of our deepest instinctual life, of a primary awareness of man in the universe, capable of many configurations, upon which all particular opinions and attitudes depend" (29). According to Alan W. Watts in Myth and Ritual in Christianity (New York: Vanguard, 1954), "Myth is to be defined as a complex of stories—some no doubt fact, and some fantasy—which, for various reasons, human beings regard as demonstrations of the inner meaning of the universe and of human life" (7).

Myths are by nature collective and communal; they bind a tribe or a nation together in common psychological and spiritual activities. In The Language of Poetry, edited by Allen Tate (New York: Russell, 1960), Philip Wheelwright explains, "Myth is the expression of a profound sense of togetherness of feeling and of action and of wholeness of living" (11). Moreover, like Melville's famous white whale (itself an archetypal image), myth is ubiquitous in time as well as place. It is a dynamic force everywhere in human society; it transcends time, uniting the past (traditional modes of belief) with the present (current values) and reaching toward the future (spiritual and cultural aspirations).

II. SOME EXAMPLES OF ARCHETYPES

Having established the significance of myth, we need to examine its relationship to archetypes and archetypal patterns. Although every people has its own distinctive mythology that may be reflected in legend, folklore, and ideology—although, in other words, myths take their specific shapes from the cultural environments in which they grow—myth is, in the general sense, universal. Furthermore, similar motifs or themes may be found among many different mythologies, and certain images that recur in the myths of people widely separated in time and place tend to have a common meaning or, more accurately, tend to elicit comparable psychological responses and to serve similar cultural functions. Such motifs and images are called archetypes. Stated simply,

archetypes are universal symbols. As Philip Wheelwright explains in Metaphor and Reality (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), such symbols are

those which carry the same or very similar meanings for a large portion, if not all, of mankind. It is a discoverable fact that certain symbols, such as the sky father and earth mother, light blood, up-down, the axis of a wheel, and others, recur again and again in cultures so remote from one
another in space and time that there is no likelihood of any historical influence and causal connection among them (111)

Examples of these archetypes and the symbolic meanings with which they tend to be widely associated follow (it should be noted that these meanings may vary significantly from one context to another):

A. Images

1. Water: the mystery of creation; birth-death-resurrection; purification and redemption; fertility and growth. According to Jung, water is also the commonest symbol for the unconscious.
   a. The sea: the mother of all life; spiritual mystery and infinity; death and rebirth; timelessness and eternity; the unconscious.
   b. Rivers: death and rebirth (baptism); the flowing of time into eternity; transitional phases of the life cycle; incarnation of deities

2. Sun (fire and sky are closely related): creative energy; law in nature; consciousness (thinking, enlightenment, wisdom, spiritual vision); father principle (moon and earth tend to be associated with female or mother principle); passage of time and life.
   a. Rising sun: birth; creation; enlightenment.
   b. Setting sun: death.

3. Colors
   a. Red: blood, sacrifice, violent passion; disorder.
   b. Green: growth; sensation; hope; fertility; in negative context may be associated with death and decay.
   c. Blue: usually highly positive, associated with truth, religious feeling, security, spiritual purity (the color of the Great Mother or Holy Mother).
   d. Black (darkness): chaos, mystery, the unknown; death; primal wisdom; the unconscious; evil; melancholy.
   e. White: highly multivalent, signifying, in its positive aspects, light, purity, innocence, and timelessness; in its negative aspects, death, terror, the supernatural, and the blinding truth of an inscrutable cosmic mystery (see, for instance, Herman Melville's chapter "The Whiteness of the Whale" in Moby-Dick).

   a. Mandala (a geometric figure based upon the squaring of a circle around a unifying center; [image] Note that in its classic Asian forms the mandala juxtaposes the triangle, the square, and the circle with their numerical equivalents of three, four, and seven.
   b. Egg (oval): the mystery of life and the forces of generation.
   c. Yang-yin: a Chinese symbol [image] representing the union of the opposite forces of the yang (masculine principle, light, activity, the conscious mind) and the yin (female principle, darkness, passivity, the unconscious.)
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d. Ouroboros: the ancient symbol of the snake biting its own tail,signifying the eternal cycle of life, primordial unconsciousness, the unity of opposing forces (cf. yang-yin)

5. Serpent (snake, worm): symbol of energy and pure force (cf. libido): evil, corruption, sensuality, destruction; mystery; wisdom; the unconscious.

6. Numbers:
a. Three: light; spiritual awareness and unity (cf. the Holy Trinity): the male principle (<Graves would question this>)

b. Four: associated with the circle, life cycle, four seasons; female principle, earth, nature; four elements (earth, air, fire, water).

c. Seven: the most potent of all symbolic numbers—signifying the union of three and four; the completion of a cycle, perfect order.

7. The archetypal woman (Great Mother—the mysteries of life death, transformation):
a. The Good Mother (positive aspects of the Earth Mother): associated with the life principle, birth, warmth, nourishment, protection, fertility, growth, abundance (for example, Demeter, Ceres).

b. The Terrible Mother (including the negative aspects of the Earth Mother): the witch, sorceress, siren, whore, femme fatale—associated with sensuality, sexual orges, fear, danger, darkness, dismemberment, emasculation, death; the unconscious in its terrifying aspects.

c. The Soul Mate: the Sophia figure, Holy Mother, the princess or "beautiful lady"—incarnation of inspiration and spiritual fulfillment (cf. the Jungian anima).

8. The Wise Old Man (savior, redeemer, guru): personification of the spiritual principle, representing "knowledge, reflection, insight, wisdom, cleverness, and intuition on the one hand, and on the other, moral qualities such as goodwill and readiness to help, which makes his spiritual character sufficiently plain. . . . Apart from his cleverness, wisdom and insight, the old man . . . is also notable for his moral qualities; what is more, he even tests the moral qualities of others and makes gifts dependent on this test. . . . The old man always appears when the hero is in a hopeless and desperate situation from which only profound reflection or a lucky idea . . . can extricate him. But since, for internal and external reasons, the hero cannot accomplish this himself, the knowledge needed to compensate the deficiency comes in the form of a personified thought, i.e., in the shape of this sagacious and helpful old man" (C.G. Jung, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, trans. R.F.C. Hull, 2nd ed. (Princeton: NJ: Princeton UP, 1968): 217ff.

9. Garden: paradise; innocence; unsullied beauty (especially feminine); fertility.

10. Tree: "In its most general sense, the symbolism of the tree denotes life of the cosmos: its consistence, growth, proliferation, generative and regenerative processes. It stands for inexhaustible life, and is therefore equivalent to a symbol of immortality" (J.E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols, trans. Jack Sage [New York: Philosophical, 1962]: 328; cf. the depiction of the cross of redemption as the tree of life in Christian iconography). <See also Eliade in Sacred and Profane for an elaboration>
11. Desert: spiritual aridity; death; nihilism, hopelessness.

These examples are by no means exhaustive, but represent some of the more common archetypal images that the reader is likely to encounter in literature. The images we have listed do not necessarily function as archetypes very time they appear in a literary work. The discreet critic interprets them

as such only if the total context of the work logically supports an archetypal reading.

B. Archetypal Motifs or Patterns

1. Creation: perhaps the most fundamental of all archetypal motifs—virtually every mythology is built on some account of how the cosmos, nature, and humankind were brought into existence by some supernatural Being or beings.

2. Immortality: another fundamental archetype, generally taking one of two basic narrative forms:
   - a. Escape from time: "return to paradise," the state of perfect, timeless bliss enjoyed by man and woman before their tragic Fall into corruption and mortality. <See Myth of the Eternal Return>
   - b. Mystical submersion into cyclical time: the theme of endless death and regeneration—human beings achieve a kind of immortality by submitting to the vast, mysterious rhythm of Nature's eternal cycle, particularly the cycle of the seasons. <Eliade would show how b is a version of a>

3. Hero archetypes (archetypes of transformation and redemption):
   - a. The quest: the hero (savior, deliverer) undertakes some long journey during which he or she must perform impossible tasks, battle with monsters, solve unanswerable riddles, and overcome insurmountable obstacles in order to save the kingdom.
   - b. Initiation: the hero undergoes a series of excruciating ordeals in passing from ignorance and immaturity to social and spiritual adulthood, that is, in achieving maturity and becoming a full-fledged member of his or her social group. The initiation most commonly consists of three distinct phases: (1) separation, (2) transformation, and (3) return. Like the quest, this is a variation of the death-and-rebirth archetype.
   - c. The sacrificial scapegoat: the hero, with whom the welfare of the tribe or nation is identified, must die to atone for the people's sins and restore the land to fruitfulness.

C. ARCHETYPES AS GENRES

Finally, in addition to appearing as images and motifs, archetypes may be found in even more complex combinations as genres or types of literature that conform with the major phases of the seasonal cycle. Northrop Frye, in his Anatomy of Criticism (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1957), indicates the correspondent genres for the four seasons as follows:

1. The mythos of spring: comedy
2. The mythos of summer: romance
3. The myths of fall: tragedy
4. The myths of winter: irony

With brilliant audacity Frye identifies myth with literature, asserting that myth is a "structural organizing principle of literary form" (34) and that an archetype is essentially an "element of one's literary experience" (365). And in The Shilling Structure (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1970) he claims that "mythology as a whole provides a kind of diagram or blueprint of what literature as a whole is all about, an imaginative survey of the human situation from the beginning to the end, from the height to the depth, of what is imaginatively conceivable" (102).

III. MYTH CRITICISM IN PRACTICE

Frye's contribution leads us directly into the mythological approach to literary analysis. As our discussion of mythology has shown, the task of the myth critic is a special one. Unlike the traditional critic, who relies heavily on history and the biography of the writer, the myth critic is interested more in prehistory and the biographies of the gods. Unlike the formalistic critic, who concentrates on the shape and symmetry of the work itself, the myth critic probes for the inner spirit which gives that form its vitality and its enduring appeal. And, unlike the Freudian critic, who is prone to look on the artifact as the product of some sexual neurosis, the myth critic sees the work holistically, as the manifestation of vitalizing, integrative forces arising from the depths of humankind's collective psyche.

Despite the special importance of the myth critic's contribution, this approach is, for several reasons, poorly understood. In the first place, only during the present century have the proper interpretive tools become available through the development of such disciplines as anthropology, psychology, and cultural history. Second, many scholars and teachers of literature have remained skeptical of myth criticism because of its tendencies toward the cultic and the occult. Finally, there has been a discouraging confusion over concepts and definitions among the myth initiates themselves, which has caused many would-be myth critics to turn their energies to more clearly defined approaches such as the traditional or formalistic. In carefully picking our way through this maze, we can discover at least three separate though not necessarily exclusive disciplines, each of which has figured prominently in the development of myth criticism. In the following pages we examine these in roughly chronological order, nothing how each may be applied to critical analysis.

A. Anthropology and Its Uses

The rapid advancement of modern anthropology since the end of the nineteenth century has been the most important single influence on the growth of myth criticism. Shortly after the turn of the century this influence was revealed in a series of important studies published by the Cambridge Hellenists, a group of British scholars who applied recent anthropological discoveries to the understanding of Greek classics in terms of mythic and ritualistic origins. Noteworthy contributions by members of this group include Anthropology and the Classics (New York: Oxford UP, 1908), a symposium edited by R.R. Maret; Jane Harrison's Themis (London: Cambridge UP, 1912); Gilbert Murray's Euripides and His Age (New York: Holt, 1913); and F.M. Cornford's Origin of Attic Comedy (London: Arnold, 1914). But by far the most significant member of the British school was Sir James G. Frazer, whose monumental The Golden Bough has exerted an enormous influence on twentieth-century literature, not merely on the critics but also on such creative writers as James Joyce, Thomas Mann, and T.S. Eliot. Frazer's work, a comparative study of the primitive origins of religion in magic, ritual, and myth, was first published in two volumes in 1890, later expanded to twelve volumes, and then published in a one-volume abridged edition in 1922. Frazer's main contribution was to demonstrate the "essential similarity of man's chief wants
everywhere and at all times," particularly as these wants were reflected throughout ancient mythologies. He explains, for example, in the abridged edition (New York: Macmillan, 1922), that:

Under the names of Osiris, Tammuz, Adonis, and Attis, the peoples of Egypt and Western Asia represented the yearly decay and renewal of life, especially vegetable life, which they personified as a god who annually died and rose again from the dead. In name and detail the rites varied from place to place; in substance they were the same.

The central motif with which Frazer deals is the archetype of crucifixion and resurrection, specifically the myths describing the "killing of the divine king." Among many primitive peoples it was believed that the ruler was a divine or semi-divine being whose life was identified with the life cycle in nature, and in human existence. Because of this identification, the safety of the people and even of the world was felt to depend upon the life of the god-king. A vigorous, healthy ruler would ensure natural and human productivity; on the other hand, a sick or maligned king would bring blight and disease to the land and its people. Frazer points out that if

the course of nature is dependent on the man-god's life, what catastrophes may not be expected from the gradual enfeeblement of his powers and their final extinction in death? There is only one way of averting these dangers. The man-god must be killed as soon as he shows symptoms that his powers are beginning to fail, and his soul must be transferred to a vigorous successor before it has been seriously impaired by threatened decay. (265)

Among some peoples the kings were put to death at regular intervals to ensure the welfare of the tribe; later, however, substitute figures were killed in place of the kings themselves, or the sacrifices because purely symbolic rather than literal.

Corollary to the rite of sacrifice was the scapegoat archetype. This motif centered in the belief that, by transferring the corruptions of the tribe to a sacred animal or person, then by killing (and in some instances eating) this scapegoat, the tribe could achieve the cleansing and atonement thought necessary for natural and spiritual rebirth. Pointing out that food and children are the primary needs for human survival, Frazer emphasizes that the rites of blood sacrifice and purification were considered by ancient peoples as a magical guarantee of rejuvenation, an assurance of life, both vegetable and human. If such customs strike us as incredibly primitive, we need only to recognize their vestiges in our own civilized world—for example, the irrational satisfaction that some people gain by the persecution of such minority groups as blacks and Jews as scapegoats, or the more wholesome feelings of renewal derived from our New Year's festivities and resolutions, the homely tradition of spring-cleaning, our celebration of Easter and even the Eucharist. Modern writers themselves have employed the scapegoat motif with striking relevance (for example, Shirley Jackson in "The Lottery," Robert Heinlein in Stranger in a Strange Land, and Tom Tryon in Harvest Home.)

The insights of Frazer and the Cambridge Hellenists have been extremely helpful in myth criticism, especially in the mythological approach to drama. Many scholars theorize that tragedy originated from the primitive rites we have described. The tragedies of Sophocles and Aeschylus, for example, were written to be played during the festival of Dionysus, annual vegetation ceremonies during which the ancient Greeks celebrated the deaths of the winter-kings and the rebirths of the gods of spring and renewed life.

Sophocles's Oedipus is an excellent example of the fusion of myth and literature. Sophocles produced a great play, but the plot of Oedipus was not his invention. It was a well-known mythic narrative long before he immortalized it as tragic drama. Both the myth and the play contain a number of familiar archetypes, as a brief summary of the plot indicates. The king and queen of ancient Thebes, Laius and Jocasta, are told in a prophecy that their newborn son, after he has grown

up, will murder his father and marry his mother. To prevent this catastrophe, the king orders one of his men to pierce the infant's heels and abandon him to die in the wilderness. But the child is saved by a shepherd and
taken to Corinth, where he is reared as the son of King Polybus and Queen Merope, who lead the boy to believe that they are his real parents. After reaching maturity and hearing of a prophecy that he is destined to commit patricide and incest, Oedipus flees from Corinth to Thebes. On his journey he meets an old man and his servants, quarrels with them and kills them. Before entering Thebes he encounters the Sphinx (who holds the city under a spell), solves her riddle, and frees the city; his reward is the hand of the widowed Queen Jocasta. He then rules a prosperous Thebes for many years, fathering four children by Jocasta. At last, however, a blight falls upon his kingdom because Laius's shad has gone unpunished. Oedipus starts an intensive investigation to find the culprit—only to discover ultimately that he himself is the guilty one, that the old man whom he had killed on his journey to Thebes was Laius, his real father. Overwhelmed by this revelation, Oedipus blinds himself with a brooch taken from his dead mother-wife, who has hanged herself, and goes into exile. Following his sacrificial punishment, Thebes is restored to health and abundance.

Even in this bare summary we may discern at least two archetypal motifs: (1) In the quest motif, Oedipus, as the hero, undertakes a journey during which he encounters the Sphinx, a supernatural monster with the body of a lion and the head of a woman; by answering her riddle, he delivers the kingdom and marries the queen. (2) In the king-as-sacrificial-scapegoat motif, the welfare of the state, both human and natural (Thebes is stricken by both plague and drought), is bound up with the personal fate of the ruler; only after Oedipus has offered himself up as a scapegoat is the land redeemed.

Considering that Sophocles wrote his tragedy expressly for a ritual occasion, we are hardly surprised that Oedipus reflects certain facets of the fertility myths described by Frazer...

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[1 skip over mythic analyses of specific literary texts, to page 166, almost halfway down the page]

**B. Jungian Psychology and Its Archetypal Insights**

The second major influence on mythological criticism is the work of C.G. Jung, the great psychologist-philosopher and onetime student of Freud who broke with the master because of what he regarded as a too-narrow approach to psycho-analysis. Jung believed libido (psychic energy) to be more than sexual; also, he considered Freudian theories too negative because of Freud's emphasis on the neurotic rather than the healthy aspects of the psyche.

Jung's primary contribution to myth criticism is his theory of racial memory and archetypes. In developing this concept, Jung expanded Freud's theories of the personal unconscious, asserting that beneath this is a primeval, collective unconscious shared in the psychic inheritance of all members of the human family. As Jung himself explains in *The Structure and Dynamics of the Psyche* (Collected Works, vol. 8) (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 1960):

> If it were possible to personify the unconscious, we might think of it as a collective human being combining the characteristics of both sexes, transcending youth and age, birth and death, and, from having at its command a human experience of one or two million years, practically immortal. If such a being existed, it would be exalted over all temporal change; the present would mean neither more nor less to it than any year in the post-Christian era. If it were possible to explore its meandering ever again the life of the individual, the family, the tribe, and the nation, and it would possess a living sense of the rhythm of growth, flowering, and decay. (349-50)

Just as certain instincts are inherited by the lower animals (for example, the instinct of the baby chicken to run from a hawk's shadow), so more complex psychic predispositions are inherited by human beings. Jung believed, contrary to eighteenth-century Lockeian psychology, that "Mind is not born as a tabula rasa [a clean slate]. Like the body, it has its pre-established individual definiteness; namely, forms of behaviour.
They become manifest in the ever-recurring patterns of psychic functioning” (Psyche and Symbol [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1958:] xv). Therefore what Jung called "myth-forming" structural elements are ever present in the unconscious psyche; he refers to the manifestations of these elements as "motifs," primordial images,” or "archetypes."

Jung was also careful to explain that archetypes are not inherited ideas or patterns of thought, but rather that they are predispositions to respond in similar ways to certain stimuli: “In reality they belong to the realm of activities of the instincts and in that sense they represent inherited forms of psychic behavior” (xvi). In Psychological Reflections (New York: Harper, 1961), he maintained that these psychic instincts “are older than historical man. . . . Have been ingrained in him from earliest times, and, eternally living, out-lasting all generations, still make up the groundwork of the human psyche. It is only possible to live the fullest life when we are in harmony with these symbols; wisdom is a return to them” (42).

In stressing that archetypes are actually "inherited forms," Jung also went further than most of the anthropologists, who tended to see these forms as social phenomena passed down from one generation to the next through various sacred rites rather than through the structure of the psyche itself. Furthermore, in The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious (New York: Pantheon, 1959), he theorized that myths do not derive from external factors such as the season or solar cycle but are, in truth, the projections of innate psychic phenomena:

All the mythologized processes of nature, such as summer and winter, the phases of the moon, the rainy seasons, and so forth, are in no sense allegories of these objective occurrences; rather they are symbolic expressions of the inner, unconscious drama of the psyche which becomes accessible to man’s consciousness by way of projection— that is, mirrored in the events of nature. (6)

In other words, myths are the means by which archetypes, essentially unconscious forms, become manifest and articulate to the conscious mind. Jung indicated further that archetypes reveal themselves in the dreams of individuals, so that we might say that dreams are "personalized myths" and myths are "depersonalized dreams."

Jung detected an intimate relationship between dreams, myths, and art in that all three serve as media through which archetypes become accessible to consciousness. The great artist, as Jung observes in Modern Man in Search of a Soul (New York: Harcourt, n.d.; first published in 1933), is a person who possesses the "primordial vision," a special sensitivity to archetypal patterns and a gift for speaking in primordial images that enable him or her to transmit experiences of the "inner world" through art. Considering the nature of the artist’s raw materials, Jung suggests it is only logical that the artist "will resort to mythology in order to give his experience its most fitting expression." This is not to say that the artist gets materials secondhand: "The primordial experience is the source of his creativeness; it cannot be fathomed, and therefore requires mythological imagery to give it form" (164).

Although Jung himself wrote relatively little that could be called literary criticism, what he did write leaves no doubt that he believed literature, and art in general, to be a vital ingredient in human civilization. Most important, his theories have expanded the horizons of literary interpretation for those critics concerned to use the tools of the mythological approach and for psychological critics who have felt too tightly constricted by Freudian theory.

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1. Some Special Archetypes: Shadow, Persona, and Anima

In The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious (New York: Pantheon, 1959), Jung discusses at length many of the archetypal patterns that we have already examined (for example, water, colors, rebirth). In this way, although his emphasis is psychological rather than anthropological, a good deal of his work overlaps
that of Frazer and the others. But, as we have already indicated, Jung is not merely a derivative or secondary figure; he is a major influence in the growth of myth criticism. For one thing, he provided some of the favorite terminology now current among myth critics. The term "archetype" itself, though not coined by Jung, enjoys its present widespread usage among the myth critics primarily because of his influence. Also, like Freud, he was a pioneer whose brilliant flashes of insight have helped to light our way in exploring the darker recesses of the human mind.

One major contribution is Jung's theory of individuation as related to those archetypes designated as the shadow, the persona, and the anima. Individuation is a psychological growing up, the process of discovering those aspects of one's self that make one an individual different from other members of the species. It is essentially a process of recognition—that is, as one matures, the individual must consciously recognize the various aspects, unfavorable as well as favorable, of one's total self. This self-recognition requires extraordinary courage and honesty but is absolutely essential if one is to become a well-balanced individual. Jung theorizes that neuroses are the results of the person's failure to confront and accept some archetypal component of the unconscious. Instead of assimilating this unconscious element to their consciousness, neurotic individuals persist in projecting it upon some other person or object. In Jung's words, projection is an "unconscious, automatic process whereby a content that is unconscious to the subject transfers itself to an object, so that it seems to belong to that object. The projection ceases the moment it becomes conscious, that is to say when it is seen as belonging to the subject" (Archetypes, 50). In layman's terms, the habit of projection is reflected in the attitude that "everybody is out of step but me" or "I'm the only hun-

est person in the crowd." It is a commonplace that we can project our own unconscious faults and weaknesses on others much more easily than we can accept them as part of our own nature.

The shadow, the persona, and the anima are structural components of the psyche that human beings have inherited, just as the chicken has inherited his built-in response to the hawk. We encounter the symbolic projections of these archetypes throughout the myths and the literature of humankind. In melodrama, such as the television or Hollywood western, the persona, the anima, and the shadow are projected respectively in the characters of the hero, the heroine, and the villain. The shadow is the darker side of our unconscious self, the inferior and less pleasing aspects of the personality, which we wish to suppress. "Taking it in its deepest sense," writes Jung in Psychological Reflections, "the shadow is the invisible saurian [reptilian] tail that man still drags behind him" (217). The most common variant of this archetype, when projected is the Devil, who, in Jung's words in Two Essays on Analytical Psychology (New York: Pantheon, 1953), represents the "dangerous aspect of the unrecognized dark half of the personality" (94). In literature we see symbolic representations of this archetype in such figures as Shakespeare's Iago, Milton's Satan, Goethe's Mephistopheles, and Conrad's Kurtz.

The anima is perhaps the most complex of Jung's archetypes. It is the "soul-image," the spirit of a man's élan vital, his life force or vital energy. In the sense of "soul," says Jung, anima is the "living thing in man, that which lives of itself and causes life. . . . Were it not for the leaping and twinkling of the soul, man would rot away in his greatest passion, idleness" (Archetypes, 26-27). Jung gives the anima a feminine designation in the male psyche, pointing out that the "anima-image is usually projected upon women" (in the female psyche this archetype is called the animus). In this sense, anima is the contrasexual part of a man's psyche, the image of the opposite sex that he carries in both his personal and his collective unconscious. As an old German proverb puts it, "Every man has his own Eve within him"--in other words, the human psyche is bisexual, though the psychologi-

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cal characteristics of the opposite sex in each of us are generally unconscious, revealing themselves only in dreams or in projections on someone in our environment. The phenomenon of love, especially love at first sight, may be explained at least in part by Jung's theory of the anima: we tend to be attracted to members of the opposite sex who mirror the characteristics of our own inner selves. In literature, Jung regards such figures as Helen of Troy, Dante's Beatrice, Milton's Eve, and H. Rider Haggard's She as personifications of the anima. Following his theory, we might say that any female figure who is invested with unusual significance or power is likely to be a symbol of the anima. (Examples for the animus come less readily to
Jung; like Freud, he tended to describe features of the male psyche more than those of the female, even through both analysts' patients were nearly all women.) One other function of the anima is noteworthy here. The anima is a kind of mediator between the ego (the conscious self, or thinking self) and the unconscious or inner world of the male individual. This function will be somewhat clearer if we compare the anima with the persona.

The persona is the obverse of the anima in that it mediates between our ego and the external world. Speaking metaphorically, let us say that the ego is a coin. The image on one side is the anima; on the other side, the persona. The persona is the actor's mask that we show to the world—it is our social personality, a personality that is sometimes quite different from our true self. Jung, discussing this social mask, explains that, to achieve psychological maturity, the individual must have a flexible, viable persona that can be brought into harmonious relationship with the other components of his or her psychic makeup. He states, furthermore, that a persona that is too artificial or rigid results in such symptoms of neurotic disturbance as irritability and melancholy.

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[I skip over mythic analyses of specific literary texts, to page 181, second half of the page]

IV. LIMITATIONS OF MYTH CRITICISM

It should be apparent from the foregoing illustrations that myth criticism offers some unusual opportunities for the enhancement of our literary appreciation and understanding. No other critical approach possesses quite the same combination of breadth and depth. As we have seen, an application of myth criticism takes us far beyond the historical and aesthetic realms of literary study—back to the beginning of humankind's oldest rituals and beliefs and deep into our own individual hearts. Because of the vastness and the complexity of mythology, a field of study whose mysteries anthropologists and psychologists are still working to penetrate, our brief introduction can give the reader only a superficial and fragmentary overview. But we hope we have given interested students a glimpse of new vistas that they will explore myth on their own.

We should point out some of the inherent limitations of the 180

mythological approach. As with the psychological approach, the reader must take care that enthusiasm for a new-found interpretive key does not tempt him or her to discard other valuable critical instruments or to try to open all literary doors with this single key. Just as Freudian critics sometimes lose sight of a great work's aesthetic values in their passion for sexual symbolism, so myth critics tend to forget that literature is more than a vehicle for archetypes and ritual patterns. In other words, they run the risk of being distracted from the aesthetic experience of the work itself. They forget that literature is, above all else, art. As we have indicated before, the discreet critic will apply such extrinsic perspectives as the mythological and psychological only as far as they enhance the experience of the art form, and only as far as the structure and potential meaning of the work consistently support such approaches.

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[The following excerpts from A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature relate to mythological criticism]

French feminists who follow [Jacques] Lacan, particularly Hélène Cixous, often propose a utopian place, a primeval female space free of symbolic order, sex roles, otherness, and the Law of the Father in which the self is still linked with what Cixous calls the Voice of the Mother. This place, with its Voice, is the source of all feminine writing. Cixous contends: to gain access to it is to find a source of inmeasurable feminine
power. Luce Irigaray also describes this utopian feminine space, but Julia Kristeva is most explicit about the distinction between it and the "real" world. Kristeva calls this Mother-centered feminine realm the semiotic as opposed to the symbolic.

Before we end this section, we must mention one other type of psychological feminism, myth criticism. Though myth criticism has its own history and methodology (see chapter 4), several feminist writers have adopted its perspectives and transformed them for the purposes of feminist criticism. Notable among these is Anais Pratt, who, although she criticizes Jung for his lack of treatment of the female developing psyche, offers intriguing connections between feminism and Jungian archetypal criticism. Pratt attempts to construct archetypes of power that are useful to practicing women critics as a means of avoiding the patriarchal tradition (Pratt, Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction [Brighton: Harvester, 1982], and "The New Feminist Criticism: Exploring the History of the New Space," in Beyond Intellectual Sexism: A New Woman, A New Reality, ed Joan L. Roberts [New York: David McKay, 1976]: 175-95). Feminist myth critics tend to center their discussions on the Great Mother and other early female images and goddesses, viewing these figures as the radical others that can offer hope and wholeness as against the patriarchal repression of women. Especially popular are figures of the Medusa, Cassandra, Arachne, and Isis.

In The Lost Tradition: Mothers and Daughters in Literature (ed. Cathy M. Davidson and F.M. Broner [New York: Ungar, 1980]), prominent feminist myth critics, including Anna Pratt and Adrienne Rich, define myth as the key critical genre for women. Criticizing male myth critics of the 1950s and 1960s, such as Northrop Frye, for ignoring gender in their scientific classifications of myths and archetypes, these writers direct our attention to gender as well as to the actual practices of diverse ethnic groups. Since most myths are constructed and studied by men, there are some very difficult issues concerning women's representation in myths; thus the need is even greater for women's creation of their own myths. Many of these new feminist myth critics reject the Greco-Roman tradition as hegemonic and instead seek pre-Greek myths, such as those of Isis, and diverse, lesser known cultural myths in different parts of the world, such as those of Native American legend. Rich conforms to these general strategies, but focuses on the ways mothers are portrayed in mythology and literature. Although some early feminists seem to have felt that motherhood and feminism do not go comfortably together, Rich argues through myth that motherhood is the feminine status. She distinguishes between the fact of motherhood and the institution a patriarchal culture makes of it, finding that society's oppression of women comes precisely from its need to romanticize (and in a certain sense avoid facing) the terrible and wonderful powers of the mother.

Myth can teach women how to live, and it can help ethnic groups, especially oppressed minorities, reorganize and reorient themselves within a dominant culture. Myth manages to bring together private and public experiences in ways that can be as direct or as masked as the situation demands. It especially appeals to women in their identification with nature, as in the vegetation-goddess archetypes such as Ceres, and it can connect the individual woman with the totality of the cosmos, as with a goddess such as the three-faced goddess of the crossways, Diana-Selene-Hecate. Even the most destructive women in mythology, such as Medea, can be analyzed to show their attraction for modern women; it is well-documented that in many cultures, when matriarchal societies were replaced with patriarchal ones, the previously venered goddesses are turned by the new culture into witches, seducresses, or fools. Studying these transformations reveals the powers of the goddess all over again, enriching the lives of men as well as women. Yet myth criticism in general and feminist myth criticism in particular have been attacked as too homogenizing, promoting a false universality of identity.
Lévi-Strauss and his disciples determined that the adaptation of Saussure's linguistic model to problems of human science was sound because Saussure had followed a rigorous, objective scientific method, which identifies and defines constituent parts, studies relationships within a system, and accepts mathematical analysis. Language and culture are alike because they are composed of "oppositions, correlations, and logical relations" (Claire Jackson, "Translator's Preface," in Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*. Vol. 1 [New York: Basic, 1963]: xii). To Lévi-Strauss, the structures of myth point to the structures of the human mind common to all people—that is, to the way all human beings think (cf. our discussion in chapter 4 [above] of the universality of myth). Myth thus becomes a language—a universal narrative mode that transcends cultural or temporal barriers and speaks to all people, in the process tapping deep reservoirs of feeling and experience and often invested with divine origins. To Lévi-Strauss, even though we have no knowledge of any entire mythology, such myths as we do uncover reveal the existence within any culture of a system of abstractions by which that culture structures its life. In his study of the Oedipus myth, Lévi-Strauss found a set of mythemes—units of myth analogous to linguistic terms like morphemes, phonemes, or tagmemes, and like those linguistic counterparts based in binary oppositions—whose structural patterns invest the myth with meaning. For example, Oedipus kills his father (a sign of the undervaluation of kinship) and marries his mother, Jocasta (an overvaluation of kinship). In either case, Oedipus has choices, although a pitying reader may not think so: what he does plus what he does not do are significant binary oppositions within the myth (as they are in Sophocles's tragedy). Although Lévi-Strauss was not interested in the literariness of myths, some of his contemporaries saw his work promising implications for purely literary studies, particularly studies of narrative.