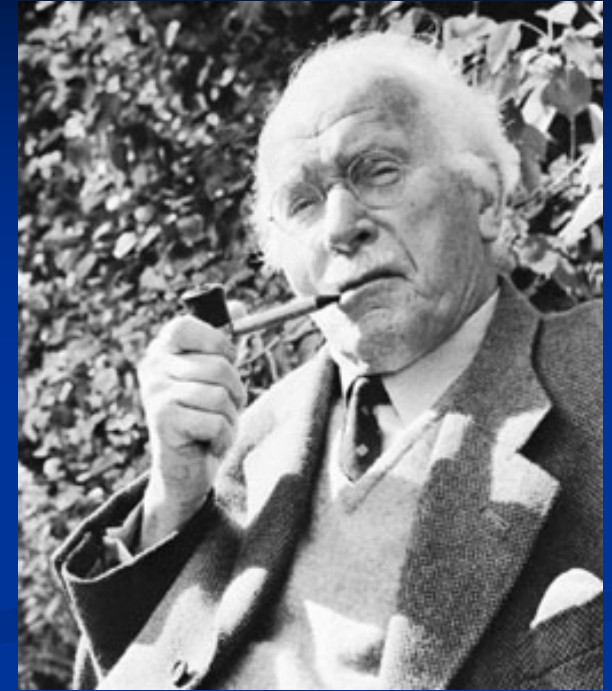


Archetypes in Literature

What is an archetype?

- Archetype – a recurrent image, symbol, character or even situation that is an instinctual expression of man's nature and experiences that are universal in nature.

CARL JUNG



Carl Jung – Swiss psychologist and psychiatrist whose study of the nature of the human mind resulted in two basic concepts that are important in examining and analyzing literature.

1. **collective unconsciousness** – unconscious/subconscious mental record of all common human experiences (examples – love, passion, birth, death, anger, peace, evil, spirituality, etc)
2. **archetypes** – symbols which express our “collective unconscious,” which are our common human experiences

OBJECTS AS ARCHETYPAL IMAGES

Water

- birth, death, resurrection, purification, redemption, fertility, growth
 - the sea – mother of all life, the unconscious, timelessness
 - rivers – baptism, flowing of time, phases of life cycle



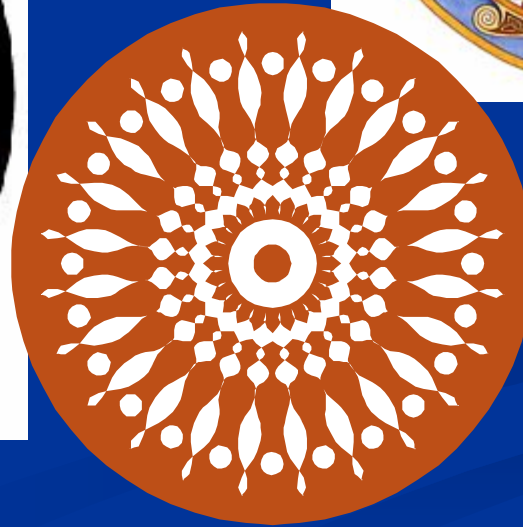
SUN

- creative energy, father figure, passage of time and life
 - rising sun – birth, creation, enlightenment, associated with the east
 - setting sun – death, destruction, associated with the west



circle

- wholeness, unity, oneness



Serpent or Worm

- evil, corruption, healing energy and force, (but also, sometimes, sensuality)



Garden

- paradise, innocence, unspoiled feminine beauty, fertility



tree

- growth, proliferation, life, immortality



road or train

- journey through life



DESERT

- lack of spirituality, death, hopelessness



COLORS

- red – blood, sacrifice, immorality, passion, sometimes violent
- green – growth, sensation, hope, fertility
- blue – truth, security, religiousness, spiritual purity
- black or darkness – chaos, mystery, unknown, death, unconscious, evil, melancholy
- white – (positive) purity, innocence, light, timelessness
(negative) death, terror, supernatural

NUMBERS

- three – holy trinity, spiritual awareness, light
- four – life cycle, four seasons, the four elements (earth, air, fire, water)
- seven – most potent of all symbolic numbers because it signifies the union of 3 and 4, represents perfect order



Characters as archetypal images

hero

- circumstances of his conception and birth are vague or unusual
- little or nothing is known of his childhood
- upon reaching manhood, he returns to his future kingdom
- after a victory of some sort, he reigns uneventfully for a time until he loses favor with gods
- often meets with a mysterious death
- examples - Beowulf, King Arthur



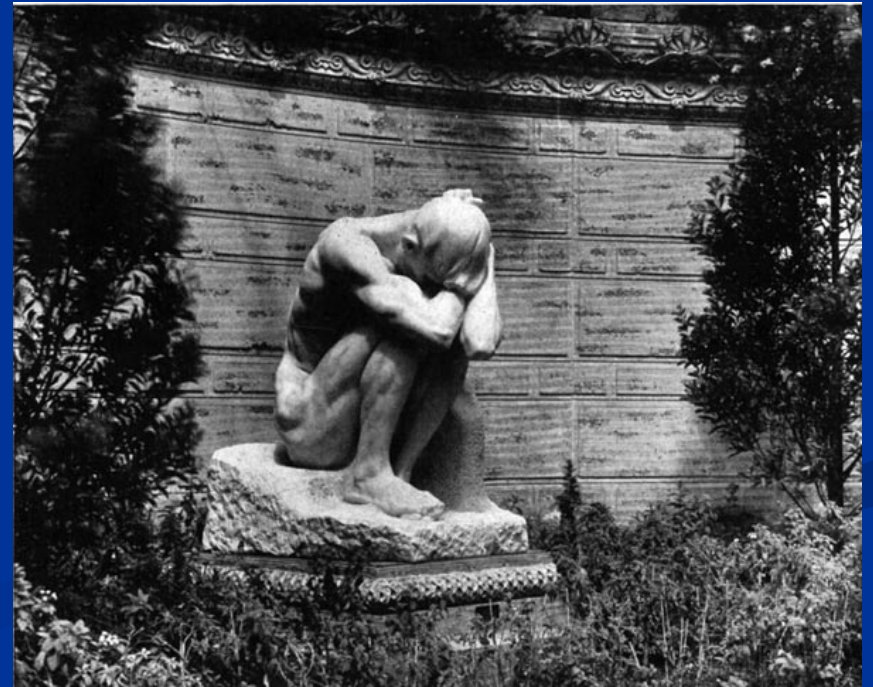
SCAPGOAT

- the hero with whom the welfare of the people of the nation, kingdom, or tribe is identified and who must die to atone for the people's sins in order to return the land to fruitfulness
- examples - Jesus Christ



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- a figure who is banished from a social group for some crime against his fellow man
- he/she is usually destined to become a wanderer
- examples - Cain, Unferth



devil figure



- offers worldly goods, fame, knowledge to the protagonist in exchange for possession of his soul
- examples - Lucifer, Satan, Hades

Earth Mother

- symbolic of fruition and abundance as well as fertility
- example - Mother Nature



TEMPTRESS

- characterized by sensuous beauty
- usually involved in downfall of the hero or protagonist
- examples - the Sirens



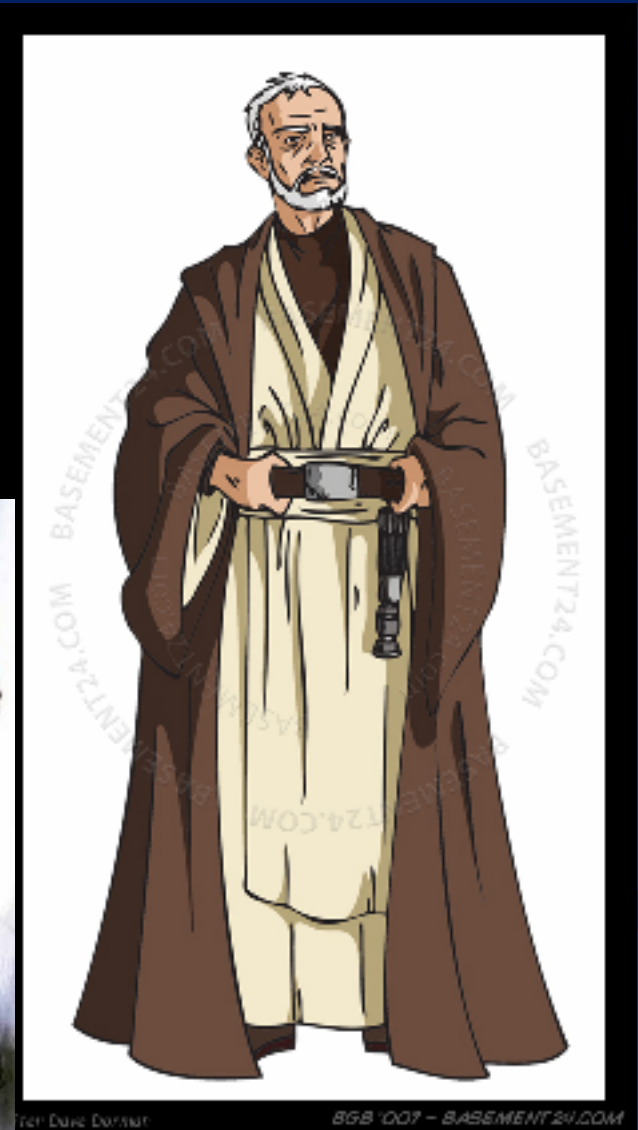


UNFAITHFUL WIFE

- married to a man she sees as dull and unimaginative
- physically attracted to a more virile or desirable man
- example - Guinevere

Wise Old Man

- represents knowledge, wisdom, spirituality of soul, insight
- examples - Ben Kenobi, Yoda, Merlin



For Dave Dorner

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Situations as archetypal images

QUEST

- the search for someone or some talisman which, when found and brought back, will restore fertility to a wasted land
- the desolate state of that land is mirrored by a leader's illness and disability
- examples - search for the Holy Grail, Ahab's quest for the albino whale

task

- to save the kingdom, to win the fair lady, or to assume his rightful position, the hero must perform some superhuman deed
- examples - Beowulf must slay Grendel, Arthur pulling the sword from the stone

Fall

- describes a descent, usually of a hero, from a higher to a lower state of being
- usually involves spiritual defilement and/or loss of innocence
- also involves an expulsion from some kind of paradise
- examples - King Arthur, Adam and Eve

Night Journey

- descent into earth followed by a return to light
- usually, knowledge has been gained through the experience

- What movie today played with these archetypes, almost inverting them for the sake of humor?

