**Mythological or Archetypical Theory**

This theory is all about symbols. Remember that there are three main points of study: Archetypal Characters, Archetypal Images, and Archetypal Situations. Below you will find more detailed information on these points of study.

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<th>Archetypal Characters</th>
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| **The Hero**          | • a figure, often larger than life, whose search for identity and/or fulfillment results in his or her destruction (often accompanied by the destruction of society in general).  
• The aftermath of the death of the hero, however, results in progress toward some ideal.  
• While this applies to modern superheroes such as Superman (Clark Kent, searching for the balance between his super self and his mortal identity), it also applies figures in many religions.  
• Christianity’s Jesus, who must come to terms with his destiny as the Messiah, Judaism’s Moses, reluctant to fulfill his assigned destiny as the leader of the Israelites, and thousands of other literary and religious figures throughout history are examples of the archetype.  
• Variations of the HERO figure include the “orphaned” prince or the lost chieftain’s son raised ignorant of his heritage until he is rediscovered (King Arthur, Theseus). |
| **The Scapegoat**     | • an innocent character on whom a situation is blamed—or who assumes the blame for a situation—and is punished in place of the truly guilty party, thus removing the guilt from the culprit and from society. |
| **The Loner or Outcast** | • a character who is separated from (or separates him or herself from) society due to either an impairment or an advantage that sets this character apart from others. Often, the Hero is an outcast at some point in his or her story.  
• Jesus goes into the desert to discern his destiny.  
• Buddha leaves society to attain Nirvana.  
• Variations on the LONER OR OUTCAST are the underdog, the smaller, weaker, less worldly wise character, who usually emerges victorious at the end of the story and the guilt-ridden figure in search of redemption. |
| **The Villain**       | • the male or female personification of evil.  
• While nearly all works of literature include an antagonist to provide conflict with the protagonist, not all antagonists are villains.  
• Villains personify evil. Their malice is often apparently unmotivated, or is motivated by a single grievance from the past. The villain’s malice is often limitless, and rarely is the villain reformed within the context of the story. Examples of archetypal villains are Satan and Loki, from Norse mythology.  
• Variations on the VILLAIN are the “mad scientist” or the bully. |
| **The Temptress**     | • the female who possesses what the male desires and uses his desire (either intentionally or unintentionally) as a means to his ultimate destruction. Examples are Eve, Juliet, Lady Macbeth. |
| **The Earth-Mother/Goddess** | • Mother Nature, Mother Earth—the nurturing, life-giving aspect of femininity. |
| **The Spirit/Intellect** | • the often-unidentified feminine inspiration for works of art and literature. Examples would be Dante’s Beatrice, Shakespeare’s Dark Lady, etc. |
| **The Sage**          | • largely of Eastern origin, the sage is the elderly wise man, the teacher or mentor. Examples from Western literature would be Merlin and Tiresias.  
• Yoda from Star Wars and Gandalf from The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings are contemporary derivations.  
• Some variations of the SAGE are the wise woman, the crone, or witch. Note that, while the male SAGE’s wisdom is usually spiritual or philosophical (often with political or military applications), the wise woman’s wisdom tends to concern the workings of nature—hence, the connection of the wise woman with witchcraft and the associated superstitions.  
• the stern, but loving authority figure.  
• the oracle: male or female prophet, fortuneteller, soothsayer. |
### Archetypal Images

#### Colors
- red as blood, anger, passion, violence;
- gold as greatness, value, wealth;
- green as fertility, luxury, growth;
- blue (the color of the sky) as peace, serenity;
- white as purity, goodness, God-like holiness,
- etc.

#### Numbers
- three for the Christian Trinity, stability (a stand with three legs can stand steadily on most surfaces);
- four for the four seasons, the four ancient elements (earth, water, fire, air);
- twelve for the months of the year, the tribes of ancient Israel, the apostles of Jesus.

#### The Ancient Elements
- Fire
- Water
- Air
- Earth

#### Water
- the source of life and sustenance; cleansing or purification; baptism.

#### Fire
- ambiguously both protective and destructive;
- on an archetypal level, fire often symbolizes human knowledge and industry (Prometheus stole fire from the gods and gave it to humankind when there were no other gifts left to give).

#### Gardens
- natural abundance;
- easy, beautiful life;
- new birth, hope;
- Eden, the original Paradise from which humankind was expelled.

#### Geometric Shapes
- a triangle for the Trinity
- a circle for perfection and eternity, wholeness, union.

#### Celestial Bodies
- the sun (masculine) is both the giver and destroyer of life
- the moon (feminine) marks the passage of time and controls the course of human events. Planting, harvesting, etc., are all determined more by the phases of the moon than the progress of the sun.

#### Masculine Images/ Symbols
- columns
- towers
- boats
- trees
- etc.

#### Feminine Images/ Symbols
- bodies of water
- caves
- doorways
- windows

#### Caves
- ambiguously can represent the womb (the source of life) and the grave
- often represent the entrance to the underworld (related to the grave), as well as to the unexplored regions of the human mind and soul.

#### Ying and Yang
- any scheme that suggests that each of a pair of opposites partakes of the other's nature, complements the other, and essentially completes the other; the idea that without a balance of opposing forces, the world would erupt into chaos.
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