**I Archetypal/Myth Criticism**

A form of criticism based largely on the works of **C. G. Jung** (YOONG) and **Joseph Campbell** (and myth itself). These critics view the genres and individual plot patterns of literature, including highly sophisticated and realistic works, as recurrences of certain archetypes and essential mythic formulae. Archetypes, according to Jung, are "primordial images"; the "psychic residue" of repeated types of experience in the lives of very ancient ancestors which are inherited in the "collective unconscious" of the human race and are expressed in myths, religion, dreams, and private fantasies, as well as in the works of literature (Abrams, p. 10, 112). Some common examples of archetypes include water, sun, moon, colors, circles, the Great Mother, Wise Old Man, etc. In terms of archetypal criticism, the color *white* might be associated with innocence or could signify death or the supernatural.

**Key Terms:**

**Anima** - feminine aspect - the inner feminine part of the male personality or a man's image of a woman.

**Animus** - male aspect - an inner masculine part of the female personality or a woman's image of a man.

**Archetype** - (from Makaryk - see *General Resources* below) - "a typical or recurring image, character, narrative design, theme, or other literary phenomenon that has been in literature from the beginning and regularly reappears" (508). **Note** - Frye sees archetypes as recurring patterns in literature; in contrast, Jung views archetypes as primal, ancient images/experience that we have inherited.

**Collective Unconscious** - "a set of primal memories common to the human race, existing below each person's conscious mind" (Jung)

**II Psychoanalytic Criticism**

The application of specific psychological principles (particularly those of **Sigmund Freud** and **Jacques Lacan** [zhawk lawk**-**KAWN]) to the study of literature. Psychoanalytic criticism may focus on the writer's psyche, the study of the creative process, the study of psychological types and principles present within works of literature, or the effects of literature upon its readers (Wellek and Warren, p. 81).

**Key Terms:**

**Unconscious** - the irrational part of the psyche unavailable to a person's consciousness except through dissociated acts or dreams.

**Freud's model of the psyche:**

* **Id** - completely unconscious part of the psyche that serves as a storehouse of our desires, wishes, and fears. The id houses the libido, the source of psychosexual energy.
* **Ego** - mostly to partially (<--a point of debate) conscious part of the psyche that processes experiences and operates as a referee or mediator between the id and superego.
* **Superego** - often thought of as one's "conscience"; the superego operates "like an internal censor [encouraging] moral judgments in light of social pressures" (123, Bressler - see General Resources below).

**III Marxis****t**

A sociological approach to literature that views works of literature or art as the products of historical forces that can be analyzed by looking at the material conditions in which they were formed. Class struggle is often a key element. In Marxist ideology, what we often classify as a world view (such as the Victorian age) is actually the articulations of the dominant class. Marxism generally focuses on the clash between the dominant and repressed classes in any given age and also may encourage art to imitate what is often termed an "objective" reality.

**Key Terms**

**Commodificaion** - "the attitude of valuing things not for their utility but for their power to impress others or for their resale possibilities" (92).

**Conspicuous consumption -** "the obvious acquisition of things only for their sign value and/or exchange value" (92).

**Dialectical materialism** - "the theory that history develops neither in a random fashion nor in a linear one but instead as struggle between contradictions that ultimately find resolution in a synthesis of the two sides. For example, class conflicts lead to new social systems" (92).

**Material circumstances** - "the economic conditions underlying the society. To understand social events, one must have a grasp of the material circumstances and the historical situation in which they occur" (92).

**IV Genre Criticism** **or Formal Criticism**

Study of different forms or types of literature. Genre studies or formal criticism often focus on the characteristics, structures, and conventions attributed to different forms of literature, e.g., the novel, short story, poem, drama, film, etc. More recent inquiry in genre criticism centers on the bias often inherent in genre criticism such as its latent (or overt) racism and sexism.

**V Feminism**

To speak of "Feminism" as a theory is already a reduction. However, in terms of its theory (rather than as its reality as a historical movement in effect for some centuries) feminism might be categorized into three general groups:

1. theories having an essentialist focus (including psychoanalytic and French feminism);
2. theories aimed at defining or establishing a feminist literary canon or theories seeking to re-interpret and re-vision literature (and culture and history and so forth) from a less patriarchal slant
3. theories focusing on sexual difference and sexual politics (including gender studies, lesbian studies, cultural feminism, radical feminism, and socialist/materialist feminism).

Further, women (and men) needed to consider what it meant to be a woman, to consider how much of what society has often deemed inherently female traits, are culturally and socially constructed.

**Key Terms**

**Androgyny** - taken from [Women Studies page of Drew University](http://www.depts.drew.edu/wmst/CoreCourses/WMST112/terms_by_week.htm#Oct2) - "'...suggests a world in which sex-roles are not rigidly defined, a state in which ‘the man in every woman' and the ‘woman in every man' could be integrated and freely expressed' (Tuttle 19). Used more frequently in the 1970's, this term was used to describe a blurring, or combination of gender roles so that neither masculinity or femininity is dominant."

**Essentialism** - taken from [Women Studies page of Drew University](http://www.depts.drew.edu/wmst/CoreCourses/WMST112/terms_by_week.htm#Oct2) - "The belief in a uniquely feminine essence, existing above and beyond cultural conditioning...the mirror image of biologism which for centuries justified the oppression of women by proclaiming the natural superiority of men (Tuttle 90).

**Patriarchy** - "Sexism is perpetuated by systems of patriarchy where male-dominated structures and social arrangements elaborate the oppression of women. Patriarchy almost by definition also exhibits androcentrism, meaning male centered.

**Phallologocentrism** - "language ordered around an absolute Word (logos) which is “masculine” [phallic], systematically excludes, disqualifies, denigrates, diminishes, silences the “feminine” ([Nikita Dhawan](http://www.gradnet.de/papers/pomo2.archives/pomo02.papers/power.htm)).

**VI. Existentialism**

Existentialism is a philosophy (promoted especially by Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus) that views each person as an isolated being who is cast into an alien universe, and conceives the world as possessing no inherent human truth, value, or meaning. A person's life, then, as it moves from the nothingness from which it came toward the nothingness where it must end, defines an existence which is both anguished and absurd (Guerin). In a world without sense, all choices are possible, a situation which Sartre viewed as human beings central dilemma: "Man [woman] is condemned to be free." In contrast to atheist existentialism, Søren Kierkegaard theorized that belief in God (given that we are provided with no proof or assurance) required a conscious choice or "leap of faith." The **major figures** include Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre (sart or SAR-treh), Albert Camus (kah-MUE or ka-MOO) , Simone de Beauvoir (bohv-WAHR) , Martin Buber, Karl Jaspers (YASS-pers), and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (mer-LOH pawn-TEE).

**Key Terms:**

**Absurd** - a term used to describe existence--a world without inherent meaning or truth.

**Authenticity** - to make choices based on an individual code of ethics (commitment) rather than because of societal pressures. A choice made just because "it's what people do" would be considered inauthentic.

**"Leap of faith"** - although Kierkegaard acknowledged that religion was inherently unknowable and filled with risks, faith required an act of commitment (the "leap of faith"); the commitment to Christianity would also lessen the despair of an absurd world.