Archetypes

Joseph Campbell was heavily influenced by psychologist Carl Jung’s idea of archetypes. An archetype is an original ideal of a person, or an ideal model of something. It is a prototype from which other things are copied, emulated, or compared. According to Jung, the human race has a collective unconscious, and in that unconscious are certain archetypal personalities which we can all recognize and identify. Symbols are also part of this collective unconscious that Jung has introduced: just as there are archetypal characters, there are archetypal symbols that appear in myths and religious stories, in addition to our dreams and in our subconscious. Our loathing of snakes, symbolizing evil and temptation, is one of these symbols. The following page is a sheet containing many of the typical archetypes found both in Ruhl’s *Eurydice* and other myths. Below are some visual examples of these archetypes. Again, it is important to recognize that one character can fulfill more than one archetype at one…for example, The Nasty Interesting Man could be seen as both a shape shifter and a herald. Ultimately, looking at archetypes is just another helpful way of analyzing this play and its characters. Below are examples of major archetypes from Joseph Campbell’s *Hero with a Thousand Faces*. 
HERO’S JOURNEY ARCHETYPES

Hero  The essence of the hero is not bravery or nobility, but self-sacrifice. The mythic hero is one who will endure separation and hardship for the sake of his clan. The hero must pay a price to obtain his goal. The hero’s journey during a story is a path from the ego, the self, to a new identity which has grown to include the experiences of the story. This path often consists of a separation from family or group to a new, unfamiliar and challenging world (even if it’s his own back yard), and finally a return to the ordinary, but now expanded, world. The hero must learn in order to grow. Often the heart of a story is not the obstacles he faces, but the new wisdom he acquires, from a mentor, a lover, or even from the villain. Other characters besides the protagonist can have heroic qualities. This can be especially true of the antagonist. Heroes can be willing and adventurous, or reluctant. They may be group and family oriented, or loners. They may change and grow themselves, or act as catalysts for others to grow and act heroic. The hero can be an innocent, a wanderer, a martyr, a warrior, a vengeful destroyer, a ruler, or a fool. But the essence of the hero is the sacrifice he makes to achieve his goal.

Mentor  The mentor is a character who aids or trains the hero. The essence of the mentor is the wise old man or woman. The mentor represents the wiser and more godlike qualities within us. The mentor’s role may be to teach the hero. These characters are often found in the roles of drill instructor, squad leader or sergeant, the older officer policeman, the aged warrior training the squire, a trail boss, parent or grandparent, etc. An effective teacher may be an otherwise inept or foolish character who possesses just the skill or wisdom the hero needs for his challenge. The other major role of the mentor is to equip the hero by giving him a gift or gifts which are important in his quest. These gifts may be weapons, medicine or food, magic, or some important clue or piece of information. Frequently, the mentor requires the hero to have passed some sort of test before receiving the gift. The gift may be a seemingly insignificant object, the importance of which doesn’t emerge until later. The mentor may occasionally be the hero’s conscience, returning him to the right path after he strays or strengthening him when he weakens. The hero doesn’t always appreciate this assistance, of course.

Threshold Guardian  The threshold guardian is the first obstacle to the hero in his journey. The threshold is the gateway to the new world the hero must enter to change and grow. The threshold guardian is usually not the story’s antagonist. Only after this initial test has been surpassed will the hero face the true contest and the arch-villain. Frequently the threshold guardian is a henchman or employee of the antagonist. But the threshold guardian can also be an otherwise neutral character, or even a potential ally such as the police lieutenant who warns the hero private detective off the case, or the Cowardly Lion who first frightens and then joins Dorothy on her journey to Oz. The role of the threshold guardian is to test the hero’s mettle and worthiness to begin the story’s journey, and to show that the journey will not be easy. The hero will encounter the guardian early in the story, usually right after he starts his quest.

Herald  The role of the herald is to announce the challenge which begins the hero on his story journey. The herald is the person or piece of information which upsets the sleepy equilibrium in which the hero has lived and starts the adventure. The herald need not be a person. It can be an event or force: the start of a war, a drought or famine, or even an ad in a newspaper.

Shapeshifter  The shapeshifter changes role or personality, often in significant ways, and is hard to understand. That very changeability is the essence of this archetype. The shapeshifter’s alliances and loyalty are uncertain, and the sincerity of his claims is often questionable. This keeps the hero off guard. The shapeshifter is often a person of the opposite sex, often the hero’s romantic interest. In other stories the shapeshifter may be a friend or ally of the same sex, often a buddy figure, or in fantasies, a magical figure such as a shaman or wizard. The shapeshifter is sometimes a catalyst whose changing nature forces changes in the hero, but the normal role is to bring suspense into a story by forcing the reader, along with the hero, to question beliefs and assumptions. As with the other archetypes, any character, including the protagonist and antagonist, can take on attributes of the shapeshifter at different times in the story. The hero often assumes the role of shapeshifter to get past an obstacle. Mentors often appear as shapeshifters.
**Shadow**  The Shadow archetype is a negative figure, representing things we don't like and would like to eliminate. The shadow often takes the form of the antagonist in a story. But not all antagonists are villains; sometimes the antagonist is a good guy whose goals disagree with the protagonist’s. If the antagonist is a villain, though, he's a shadow. The shadow is the worthy opponent with whom the hero must struggle. In a conflict between hero and villain, the fight is to the end; one or the other must be destroyed or rendered impotent. While the shadow is a negative force in the story, it's important to remember that no man is a villain in his own eyes. In fact, the shadow frequently sees himself as a hero, and the story's hero as his villain.

**Trickster**  The Trickster is a clown, a mischief maker. He provides the comedy relief that a story often needs to offset heavy dramatic tension. The trickster keeps things in proportion. The trickster can be an ally or companion of the hero, or may work for the villain. In some instances the trickster may even be the hero or villain. In any role, the trickster usually represents the force of cunning, and is pitted against opponents who are stronger or more powerful.