

The Pattern of Romance (adapted from Joseph Campbell and Northrop Frye)

Phase I: Advent and Initiation

(Preliminary Minor Adventures)

- A. The hero embarks on a perilous journey
- B. Some kind of initiation or trial marks this phase
- C. The typical environment for these events is hostile
- D. Some figures may counsel the hero with wisdom, but more often the older generation is powerful and corrupt
- E. The hero moves from an innocent world to one beset with obstacles and apparently insurmountable challenges
- F. The initiation is a preliminary event, not a final one.

Phase II: The Quest

(The Journey and Growth)

- A. Everything leads to or follows from the primary action of the Romance Pattern, which is the quest
- B. The most common form of the quest is the Journey—usually a sequence of three adventures, leading to a climactic struggle and some dark adversary (dragon, demon, evil doppelganger, etc.)
- C. The journey will be a movement into the unknown and back – skills have to adapt, but they are not proper preparation.
- D. An older man—companion or helper—often assists or thwarts the hero in his completion of the quest. Often both characters are present, and they are sometimes the same (helper/villain)
- E. The goal of a quest may vary—often it is a sacred object (Holy Grail, artifact, relic, etc) to any other number of things (maiden/woman, treasure, talisman, power, freedom, wisdom, skill set, etc).

Phase III: Descent and Recognition

(Critical Struggle)

- A. The hero performs an act of bravery which makes him a true hero
- B. This final phase of the Romance is sometimes more ceremonial than eventful
- C. Hero will overcome his adversary (nearly always, but can be tragic with death)
- D. Following his quest, the hero metes out rewards to the faithful and punishment to his remaining enemies.
- E. Opposition may reoccur, but it seems to represent the last convulsive efforts of the enemy and the final confirmation of the hero's worthiness
- F. The event which characterizes this event is the descent into a dark place.
The descent may be actual (dungeon, cave, underworld), or it may be metaphorical (conventional withdrawal and restorative isolation of the hero). It can be symbolic rather than real (inverted, going to clouds, undersea, etc).
- G. The Hero's return is the second feature of this last phase. It is a form of rebirth. The crucial struggle is usually some kind of battle in which the hero or his foe (or both) must die. If the hero dies, he returns either literally or symbolically (or inspires other to take his place).
- H. The hero, sensing the presence of other powers, becomes more pensive as a result of his awareness of the divine (or cosmic) forces he only distantly perceived in his earlier career or youth.

The Pattern of Irony

The pattern of Irony is a Parody of the Pattern of Romance. It usually has a more realistic view of the world. In conventional Irony the reader agrees to be tricked by the author

Phase I: Demonic Advent and Initiation (similar to satire)

(Hobbling Minor Adventures)

- A. The early trials and preliminary adventures that prepare the Romantic Hero for his career destroy the Ironic Hero—or at least hobble him or make him incapable of further action.
- B. There are features of the Comic/Ironic impostor—Usually young; the world he enters presents two opposing forces (usually diametrically opposing) and based on old and young; The conflict is most often resolved against the hero
- C. The Ironic Hero discovers the world is full of evil (or corruption)

Phase II: The Inverted Quest

(Struggle and Stagnation)

- A. The Hero (anti-hero) embarks on a series of uncertain adventures that lead, if anywhere, to a struggle that is indecisive or anticlimactic compared to the Romance.
- B. The hero wanders through an ambiguous and shattered world (real and symbolic—Emotional, principles, beliefs)
- C. The weak, the cynical, the tortured all seem less in pursuit of a goal than in flight from some terror, and in the struggle to escape, they return to the original source of the horror.

Phase III: Demonic Ritual and Expulsion

(Failure and disillusionment)

- A. Like the Romance, the last phase seems to derive from an involvement with the occult, or at least hint that larger forces are in control and are arbitrary.
- B. The Central Figure is a Tragic Scapegoat
- C. Rituals are demonized—the ironic hero enters into a spiritual underworld from which he never re-emerges: Never to return and never to achieve any other wisdom than the sense of his own frailty. His Journey is a lesson in what not to be, no matter how tempting.

Common characters: Often characters are random and ragged—fool, clown, freak, criminal, scapegoat, scrubby opportunist, the lost rebel, “hero in the ashcan,” hero on a leash