Archetypal Rhythm in Modern Children’s Literature: A Study of Ursula K. Le Guin, Diana Wynne Jones, and Trudi Canavan.

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According to Myles McDowell:

Children’s books are generally shorter; they tend to favour an active rather than a passive treatment, with dialogue and incident rather than description and introspection; child protagonists are the rule; conventions are much used; the story develops within a clear-cut moral schematism which much adult fiction ignores; children’s books tend to be optimistic rather than depressive; language is child oriented; plots are of a distinctive order, probability is often disregarded; and one could go on endlessly talking of magic, and fantasy, and simplicity and adventure. (Hunt and Ray, 25)

Children’s Literature “in its written form has originated from an extremely rich oral heritage.” (Hunt and Ray, 936) It acquaints children with their culture, rich folklore, mythology, legends as well as the history of their nation. This genre acts as a bridge between the stage of listening to stories and adult fiction. It helps to inculcate a reading habit and stimulates the imaginative and creative faculty of a child. Children easily identify with the characters in the books who become role models for them. Children’s Literature answers several questions related to this world, life, death, god etc. which we as adults avoid answering. In this case children’s literature plays a vital role since it subtly acquaints a child with these issues. This genre elevates children’s minds, fires their imagination, builds their character and gives them a new outlook about life. It is children who make or break a nation and therefore Children’s Literature plays a significant role in nation building also.

In today’s scenario Children’s Literature has become a phenomenon. For example: The Harry Potter Series (1997-2007) created a mass hysteria and has been read across continents and generations. Similarly, C.S. Lewis’s Narnia Chronicles (1950-1956) and J.R.R Tolkien’s The Lord of the Rings (1954-1955) as well as comics like The
Adventures of Tintin (1929-1976) and The Adventures of Asterix (1961-2009) have been translated and read all over the world.

According to Jerry Griswold, the seeds of Children’s Literature in America were sown by the immigrants who brought with them English chapbooks, alphabet books, books of manners, Isaac Watts’s poems, the fairy tales of Perrault, the fables of Aesop, stories of Cock Robin and Dick Whittington etc. (Hunt and Ray, 871). In the first half of the nineteenth century writers attempted to celebrate America’s modest, rural history. Washington Irving’s Rip Van Winkle (1819) and The Legend of Sleepy Hollow (1820) are considered to be the first great works in the conventional canon of American young adult fiction. A number of other works such as Fenimore Cooper’s The Last of the Mohicans (1826), Samuel Griswold Goodrich’s The Tales of Peter Parley about America (1827) and Daniel Pierce Thompson’s The Green Mountain Boys (1839) also celebrate America.

The Golden Age of Children’s Literature in America (1865-1914) saw the publication of a number of noteworthy works like; The Adventures of Tom Sawyer (1876), The Wonderful Wizard of Oz (1900), Tarzan of the Apes (1912), The Secret Garden (1911) etc.

The dominion of children’s books was firmly established by the dawn of the twentieth century. Further, this period may be considered to be the herald of the modern picture books such as Wanda Gag’s Millions of Cats (1928), Margaret Wise Brown’s Goodnight Moon (1939), Ludwig Bemelmans’s Madeline (1939), Dr. Seuss’s And to Think I Saw It on Mulberry Street (1937), and Robert McCloskey’s Make Way for Ducklings (1941). Further, increased publication for children led to the emergence of a number of genres like: high fantasy with the publication of Lloyd Alexander’s The Prydain Chronicles (1964-1968) and Ursula K. Le Guin’s Earthsea Trilogy (1968-1972);

It is heartening to note that the twenty-first century American literary scene is booming with an annual publication of 14,000 books for children and young adults. Writers like Rick Riordan, Stephanie Meyer, Christopher Paolini, Gregory Maguire, Holly Black, and Tony Diterlizzi are extremely popular.

According to the famous historian Harvey Darton; Children’s Literature in Britain began in earnest with the publication of John Newbery’s *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book* (1744) (Hunt and Ray 676). However, in the preceding centuries this literature was in its nascent form. The books were published essentially to educate and instruct children. For instance, the *Elucidarium* (1200) developed by Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury dealt with various issues concerning children such as manners, duties and religious precepts. Further, during the fifteenth century Johannes Gutenberg’s invention of the printing press made books available to the masses readily. This led to the publication of a number of courtesy books about manners like William Caxton’s *A Booke of Curteseye* (1477) and didactic tales like *Reinhart the Fox* (1481). Literature in England in the eighteenth century took a new turn attempting to teach and delight simultaneously. This shift is evident in books like *The History of Sandford and Merton* (1783) and *The Parent’s Assistant* (1796). In the nineteenth century, poetry for children, which was essentially sparse, emerged with the publication of Jane and Ann Taylor’s *Rhymes for the Nursery* (1806) and Christina Rossetti’s *Sing-Song: A Nursery Rhyme Book* (1872). A number of other noteworthy works were also published like, *The Daisy Chain* (1856), *Tom Brown’s Schooldays* (1857), *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), *Black Beauty* (1877) etc. In the twentieth century Children’s Literature in England came into its own eventually becoming a rich and independent body. This era witnessed the emergence of picture
books with the publication of Beatrix Potter’s *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902). Other landmark picture books include Leslie Brooke’s *Johnny Crow’s Garden* (1903), William Nicholson’s *Clever Bill* (1926), and Kathleen Hale’s *Orlando the Marmalade Cat: A Camping Holiday* (1938). Further, various other genres also developed during this period like: high fantasy with of J. R. R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955) and Susan Cooper’s *The Dark Is Rising* (1965-1977); historical fiction with Rosemary Sutcliff’s *The Eagle of the Ninth* (1954) and Jill Paton Walsh’s *A Parcel of Patterns* (1983); adventure fiction with Edith Nesbit’s *The Railway Children* (1906) and Enid Blyton’s *The Island of Adventure* (1944); and science fiction with Penelope Lively’s *A Stitch in Time* (1976). In the twenty-first century, Children’s Literature in England has gained immense momentum. Writers like J. K. Rowling, Neil Gaiman, Jonathan Stroud, Susan Price, Nick Bantock, and China Miéville are extremely popular.

According to Rhonda M. Bunbury, Australian Children’s Literature has its roots in the rich folklore of the Aboriginal people and therefore oral narratives for children have been around for the last forty thousand years. Publication only began in the latter half of the nineteenth century and the books written in this era were geared to educate children. For instance, Charlotte Barton’s *A Mother’s Offering to Her Children: By a Lady Long Resident in New South Wales* (1841) dealt with science, geology, and morality. Apart from this adventure fiction was also published like William Howitt’s *A Boy’s Adventures in the Wilds of Australia: Or Herbert’s Note Book* (1854) and Ethel Turner’s *Seven Little Australians* (1894). The twentieth century saw the rise of three distinctive trends: the fairy and folktale tradition which was spearheaded by writers like Mary Gibbs and Ida Rentoul Outhwaite; rise of the humorous genre for young readers with writers like Dorothy Wall and Norman Lindsay and the emergence of the school genre with writers like Louise Mac and Mary Grant Bruce. Further, the latter half of this era brought about a cultural
revolution in Australia leading to the rise of the modern picture book. Jenny Wagner’s *The Bunyip of Berkeley’s Creek* (1973), Mem Fox’s *Possum Magic* (1983), and Junko Morimoto’s *A Piece of Straw* (1985) are some of the landmark picture books. A number of enduring classics were also published like Patricia Wrightson’s *The Nargun and the Stars* (1973), Colin Thiele’s *Jodie’s Journey* (1988), and Gillian Rubenstein’s *Beyond the Labyrinth* (1989) etc. In the twenty-first century, Children’s Literature in Australia has garnered a lot of favour. Writers like Kate Forsyth, Trudi Canavan, Markus Zusak, Sonya Hartnett, John Marsden, and Isobelle Carmody are extremely popular.


Ursula K. Le Guin (1929- ), is an American critic, short story writer and novelist; mainly a writer of science and fantasy fiction for children, young adults, and adults. She wrote her first fantasy story at the age of nine and her first science fiction story at the age of eleven. She is the author of numerous books and is much awarded for her literary efforts. Le Guin has won the Newbery Honor Medal, multiple Hugo and Nebula awards,
the Margaret Edwards Award, the National Book Award for Children’s Literature, the Harold Vursell Award, an astounding number of Locus Awards and has also been short-listed for the Pulitzer Prize. In fantasy fiction, she is known for her Earthsea Sextet (1968-2001). The first Trilogy is considered to be young-adult fantasy while the second caters to older readers. The Earthsea Trilogy (1968-1972) is considered to be one of the most outstanding fantasies in recent years and has often been compared to “…Lewis’ Narnia series, Alexander’s chronicles of Prydain, and even Tolkien’s Middle Earth stories” (Kirkpatrick, 756). Just like the above-mentioned writers, Le Guin too creates an imaginary world, Earthsea that has a unique geography, anthropology and even its very own language, Old Speech. Further, these novels focus on one or two youthful protagonists “…whose decisions bear unexpected consequences, ethical or otherwise, and whose eventual accepting of responsibility for all their actions signals their maturation” (Kirkpatrick, 756). She has also written other novels for young adults that include the realistic novel Very Far Away from Anywhere Else (1976) and the fantasy The Beginning Place (1980). Apart from this, Le Guin has also written a large number of picture books; the most popular amongst them are her Catwings books. She has also written a prolific amount of science fiction through the years amongst which the most renowned are The Left Hand of Darkness (1969), The Dispossessed (1974), and The Telling (2000). Le Guin’s writing has been influenced by the ideals of Taoism, Jungian Psychology, Norse Mythology as well as a wide array of writers like J.R.R. Tolkien, Philip K. Dick, Leo Tolstoy, Virgil, the Bronte Sisters, Virginia Woolf, and Children’s Fiction writers like Lewis Carol, Rudyard Kipling and Kenneth Grahame.

A Wizard of Earthsea (1968) is partially a response to the image of wizards being ancient and wise as well as Le Guin’s curiosity as to where they come from. The novel revolves around a young mage Ged and traces his journey from childhood to maturity. Le
Le Guin through Ged’s journey highlights the significance of balance, self-discovery and the acceptance of darkness that lives in each one of us.

*The Tombs of Atuan* (1971) revolves around a young girl Tenar and traces her arduous journey from darkness to light. This chosen High Priestess of the Ancient and Nameless Powers of the earth, is renamed Arha thus becoming the guardian of the sinister Tombs of Atuan. She finds an unwarranted intruder Ged, in search of the lost half of Erreth-Akbe’s ring. Ged’s kindness and hard-won wisdom helps her realise the emotional and psychological stunting she risks in serving these Dark Powers. In order to free herself Arha joins hands with Ged and united they escape. The restored ring ushers in an era of peace to Earthsea and marks anew the process of coming-of-age for Arha while it teaches Ged the importance of mutuality.

*The Farthest Shore* (1972) picks up several years after *The Tombs of Atuan* (1971) and we see Ged at the peak of his power as the Archmage of Roke. He embarks on a quest to restore death to its rightful place in the universe. The young and inexperienced Prince Arren accompanies him on this journey into the Kingdom of the Dead. Le Guin through this journey displays Arren’s evolution into manhood. Further, it throws light on the importance of balance and the acceptance of mortality.

Diana Wynne Jones (1934-2011), was a British novelist mainly a writer of fantasy for children and young adults. Jones was the daughter of Marjorie Jackson and Richard Aneurin Jones who were both intellectuals and well-known educators. Her childhood, which corresponds with the World War II, was essentially unsettling and marred by parental neglect. Her family was constantly on the move during this turbulent period. It is during one of these moves that Jones along with her siblings and mother went up to live at the Lake District, coincidently living in the same house as the Altounyan children, on whom Arthur Ransome based his novel *Swallows and Amazons* (1930). During this
brief stay, she also got the opportunity to meet both Arthur Ransome and Beatrix Potter in person. Jones received her graduate degree in English Literature from St. Anne’s College, Oxford in 1956 where she attended lectures by both J. R. R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis. Due to all these events and because of her interaction with the above-mentioned stalwarts of fantasy fiction she turned to writing for children. (Zipes 2:332) In the same year, Jones married an old acquaintance John A. Burrows, a medieval literature scholar. She is the author of numerous books and has been much awarded for her literary efforts. Jones has won, four Mythopoeic Fantasy awards, three Carnegie Medal commendations, two Locus Awards, multiple Guardian Children’s Fiction and Boston Globe-Horn Book awards, the Phoenix Award, the World Fantasy Award for Life Achievement, the British Fantasy Society’s Karl Edward Wagner Award, and has also been short-listed for the Hugo Award. In fantasy fiction she is best known for her Chrestomanci series (1977-2006). These novels focus on “…the nine-lived enchanter known as the Chrestomanci, whose childhood and education are followed in Charmed Life (1977), The Lives of Christopher Chant (1988), and a work that fills in missing years in his development, Conrad’s Fate (2005)” (Zipes 2:334). Further, in the other novels The Magicians of Caprona (1980), Witch Week (1982), and The Pinhoe Egg (2006) Chrestomanci is seen stepping into his official role in order to prevent the abuse of magic. Jones has also written other novels for young adults like the sci-fi Hexwood (1993) and the fantasy Dark Lord of Derkholm (1998). Apart from this she has also written a number of works specifically for younger readers, which includes an illustrated retelling of Puss in Boots (1999) as well as shorter works like: The Ogre Downstairs (1974), Dogsbody (1975), Archer’s Goon (1984), and Fire and Hemlock (1985). The most prominent themes in her novels are the magical as a site for discovery, self-knowledge, and ethical debates about power.
and responsibility. What sets Jones apart is the brilliant way in which she mingles humour with pathos.

*Charmed Life* (1977) revolves around the orphaned siblings Eric ‘Cat’ and Gwendolen Chant. However, trouble brews when the children go to live at the castle since Chrestomanci refuses to acknowledge Gwendolen’s powers. In order to prove her prowess Gwendolen plays all sorts of tricks on Chrestomanci ultimately resulting in her going to another world. Eventually it is discovered that Eric like Chrestomanci is a nine-lived enchanter whose powers have been indiscriminately used and abused by Gwendolen since he was born. Eric then joins hands with Chrestomanci and teaches Gwendolen a lesson by trapping her permanently in one of the related worlds.

*The Magicians of Caprona* (1980) is set in Italy and revolves around the country’s most famous feuding wizarding houses the Montanas and the Petrocchi. With the city’s magic gone haywire the onus falls on the youngest members of these warring house Tonino Montana and Angelica Petrocchi to save Caprona from the evil clutches of the White Devil. However, with the Chrestomanci’s help they find the famed words to the Angel of Caprona thereby defeating the White Devil and restoring the city to its former glory.

*Witch Week* (1982) is set in series twelve B and revolves around Larwood House, a boarding school for witch orphans where witchcraft is illegal Mr. Crossley receives an anonymous tip, regarding someone in the class being a witch. This results in an internal investigation in which Nan Pilgrim, Charles Morgan, Brian Wentworth, and Nirupam Singh discover themselves to be witches. Ultimately help does arrive in the form of Chrestomanci who helps them put their world back together which results in their losing all magical abilities.
The Lives of Christopher Chant (1988) traces the formative years of Christopher Chant. As the story opens we discover that Christopher’s parents are both magic users and often remain at loggerheads. These hostilities at home force Christopher to find an escape through his dreams, in which he travels to the related worlds. Further, his ability to bring back things from these ‘spirit travels’ is exploited by his Uncle Ralph, who in the name of experiments makes him smuggle illegals goods like dragon’s blood, mermaid meat etc. from the related worlds. In the midst of all this Christopher unlocks his magical talents and discovers that he is a nine-lived enchanter; following which he is sent to the Chrestomanci Castle to be groomed by Gabriel De Witt.

Conrad’s Fate (2005) is set in series seven of the related worlds and revolves around the young boy Conrad Tesdinic. Conrad is led to believe by his Uncle Alfred that he has bad karma and therefore he must infiltrate Stallery Mansion and kill the person who is pulling the possibilities. Conrad joins the staff of Stallery Mansion where he meets Christopher Chant. Thus, united they are able to find Christopher’s friend Millie and stop the shifts altering the possibilities. Gabriel De Witt swoops in at the end taking Conrad, Christopher, and Mille back to series twelve A while Alfred is banished to one of the related worlds.

The Pinhoe Egg (2006) revolves around Eric Chant and Marianne Pinhoe. On a trip to Ulverscote, Eric encounters Marianne and together they find a mysterious egg in the old residence of Gammer Pinhoe. Eric takes the egg to Chrestomanci Castle where under his tender care it hatches into a baby griffin. Chrestomanci keeps a watchful eye over all this and discovers that something is amiss in surrounding woodlands. However, Eric and Marianne restore the woods to their original state by breaking the magical barriers setup by the Farleighs. In the end, Chrestomanci resolves the feud between the
Pinhoes and the Farleighs by segregating local history from superstition thus bringing peace to the area.

Trudi Canavan (1969-) is an Australian novelist, mainly a writer of fantasy fiction for young adults. She developed an interest in art, music, and writing early on in her childhood. She wrote her first book the story of the Dollmouse when she was precisely eight years old. Canavan received an Advanced Certificate in Promotional Display from Melbourne College of Decoration in 1988 and was awarded for attaining the Highest Aggregate Mark in Art Subjects. She is the author of numerous books and has been much lauded for her literary efforts. Canavan has won two Aurealis Awards, Ditmars Award, The Deutsche Phantastik Pries as well as multiple Aurealis and Ditmars Award nominations. In fantasy fiction, she is best known for *The Black Magician Trilogy* (2001-2003). These novels focus on a slum girl Sonea with innate magical abilities. *The Magicians’ Guild* (2001) traces Sonea’s journey leading to her discovering her magical abilities. Further, in the other novels *The Novice* (2002) and *The High Lord* (2003) Sonea’s initiation into the Guild, her education, and finally her integration into the Magicians’ Guild has been chronicled. Canavan has also written other novels for young adults like *The Priestess of the White* (2005) and *Thief’s Magic* (2014). Apart from this, she has written a number of short stories for younger readers, like *Whispers of the Mist Children* (1999), *Room for Improvement* (2003), and *A Good Yarn* (2013). Her writing has been influenced by the Japanese, Roman and Aboriginal tradition. Further, a number of writers have also influenced her like J. R. R. Tolkien, Ursula K. Le Guin, Raymond Fiest, Tanith Lee, Guy Gavriel Kay, Jennifer Fallon, Glenda Larke, and Russell Kirkpatrick.

*The Magicians’ Guild* (2001) revolves around a slum dweller Sonea who discovers that she has natural magical abilities. The novel traces her attempts to evade
capture by the Guild since she fears for her life as a rogue mage and then struggles to come to terms with her new powers.

*The Novice* (2002) continues the story of Sonea as she discovers and learns to control her magical powers. Sonea finally having agreed to join the Magicians’ Guild begins her apprenticeship under the of Lord Rothen. During this struggle to master magic as well as finding her place, she discovers a dark secret at the heart of the Guild. This not only involves the practice of forbidden magic by the High Lord Akkarin but also involves her friends the Thieves of Imardin.

*The High Lord* (2003) picks up a year after *The Novice* (2002) and we see Sonea under the guardianship of Akkarin who acquaints her with the higher arts. However, the Guild discovers this and banishes both Akkarin and Sonea to Sachaka. On discovering that Kyralia has been invaded by the Sachakans they come back in order to aid the Guild in fending them off. In the ensuing battle, Akkarin is fatally injured and eventually dies passing on his powers to Sonea. Sonea then goes on to become the Black Magician of the Guild.

**Literature Review:** “Children’s literature sounds like an enticing field of study; because children’s books have been beneath the notice of intellectual and cultural gurus....” (Hunt, 1) Ursula K. Le Guin, Diana Wynne Jones, and Trudi Canavan have been chosen for the proposed study since the anthropological perspective in the light of which they shall be examined remains unexplored. Similarly, a number of critical perspectives have been taken on the works of Ursula K. Le Guin like Daniel Newell in *The “Mother Tongue” in a World of Sons: Language and Power in The Earthsea Cycle* (2010) has applied the structuralist and post-structuralist theories of Saussure, Barthes and Levi-Strauss to analyse the power of language and feminism in *The Earthsea Cycle*
Further, Kerrie Anne Lievre in *The World is Changing: Ethics and Genre Development in Three Twentieth Century High Fantasies* (2004) has used the narrative paradigm and applied the theories of literary ecology to examine the common structures as well as assess the ethical implications shared by J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-1955), Ursula K. Le Guin’s *The Earthsea Cycle* (1968-1972) and Patricia A. McKillip’s *The Riddle Master’s Game* (1976-1979). In *The Failure of the Heroine in Ursula K. Le Guin’s The Tombs of Atuan* (2007), Tom Kinsey explores the roles of the hero and heroine in relationship to Celtic Mythology as well as the societal boundaries and strictures within the novel. Further, Lynette Douglas and Deirdre Byrne in *Woman space: The Underground and the Labyrinth in Ursula K. Le Guin’s Earthsea Narratives* (2014) have explored how the two spaces in the title – “Earth” and “Sea” function in the narrative. Further, through their study they have tried to identify the Earth as being feminine and the subterranean spaces and labyrinths as being sites of power and women empowerment. Similarly, a number of critical perspectives have also been taken on the works of Diana Wynne Jones like Elizabeth Ann Pearce in *Limitation, Subversion, and Agency: Gendered Spaces in the Works of Margaret Mahy, Cynthia Voigt, and Diana Wynne Jones* (2014) has explored adolescent literature featuring female protagonists and has tried to illustrate the complicated relationship between gender and space. Further, through her study she has also tried to highlight how gender creates a literary pattern that has serious ideological implications. In *Spinning the World, Telling the Self: Narrative Strategies in the Young Adult Fiction of Margaret Mahy and Diana Wynne Jones* (2011) Mary Clarke explores the intertextual use of fairy tales and myths as well as the subversive use of narrative conventions to examine the formation of identity. Further, Maria Nikolajeva in *Heterotopia as a Reflection of Postmodern Consciousness in the Works of Diana Wynne Jones* (2002) has discussed Jones’ use of a multiverse to examine
the adolescent sense of self in the postmodern time. In *Four British Fantasists: Place and Culture in the Children’s Fantasies of Penelope Lively, Alan Garner, Diana Wynne Jones, and Susan Cooper* (2006) Charles Butler has taken a historical and postcolonial stance while giving an in-depth analysis of the above-mentioned writers.

Thus, taking from the literature review it is evident that the selected three Children’s Literature writers and their works under consideration in the proposed research have not been studied from the archetypal perspective. Furthermore, the research work would place all the three writers on one holistic platform, thus bringing, out not only points of interconnections among the three, but also points of contrast. Northrop Frye’s Theory of Archetypes has constantly drawn the attention of researchers from time to time, but the proposed research does not intend to explore Frye’s theory in isolation; but it would apply Frye’s theory in the selected writers to generate fresh insights and the underlying systems binding together diverse literary works. Therefore, this would be a pioneering study in the fields of both Children’s Literature and Literary Theory.

Herman Northrop Frye (1912-1991) was a Canadian literary critic and theorist who came into prominence with the publication of *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957); in which he propounded his famous Theory of Archetypes. Frye has published thirty books, three hundred essays, hundred reviews and articles, and has also edited as many as fifteen books. His efforts in the field of literary theory have been much awarded. He has won the Lorne Pierce Medal, the Canada Council Medal, Pierre Chauveau Medal, the Molson Prize, the Mondello Prize, the Royal Bank Award, Governor General’s Literary Award, and the Toronto Arts Lifetime Achievement Award. Apart from this he was also appointed the Charles Eliot Norton Professor of Poetry at Harvard for the year 1974-75. His ground breaking critical theory of archetypes has influenced the likes of Harold Bloom and Geoffrey Hartman. Further, this theory influenced the Canadian Poetry of the
1950s and the 1960s by popularizing the use of myths and this can be seen in the works of Jay Macpherson, James Reaney and Margaret Atwood. In, 2000 Harold Bloom wrote a Foreword to the Anatomy of Criticism (1975) in which he commented that “Frye's criticism will survive because it is serious, spiritual, and comprehensive, but not because it is systematic or a manifestation of genius” (xi).

The Archetypal Theory came into prominence in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century with the publication of James G. Frazer’s The Golden Bough (1890-1915). This theory has its roots in cultural anthropology and psychology. (Makaryk 508) The term ‘archetype’ has its origins in ancient Greek, the root words are arche, which means ‘original or old’; and typos which means ‘pattern or model’. Broadly speaking an archetype “…is a typical or recurring image, character, narrative design, theme, or literary phenomenon that has been in literature from the beginning and regularly reappears” (Makaryk 508). Frye in his essay collection Anatomy of Criticism (1957) defines an archetype as “a symbol, usually an image, which recurs often enough in literature to be recognizable as an element of one's literary experience as a whole” (365). An archetype hence refers to the “…recurrent narrative designs, patterns of action, character-types, themes, symbols, and images which are identifiable in a wide variety of works of literature, as well as in myths, (...) and rituals” (Abrams 12). They are primordial patterns which have been coming down to us from antiquity. These patterns have a universal dimension since they occur over and over again in a number of literary works throughout the world.

In the archetypal approach it is essential to understand the formal cause of literature i.e., how the various genres came to be the way they exist now and for this we need to delve into “…the social conditions and cultural demands which produced it – in other words the material cause for the work of art” (Frye 506). Further, Archetypal critics
rly greatly on the methods and insights of anthropology in order to study archetypes and relate these narrative patterns to the creation of rituals and myths.

The archetypes are cultural patterns which have a propensity of reappearing in the greatest of classics we realise that their relationship with literature “…is by no means one of pure descent (…) in fact there seems to be a general tendency on the part of great classics to revert to them” (Frye 507). Therefore, Frye is of the opinion that a search for archetypes in literature is “…a kind of literary anthropology…” (Frye 506). In order, to find these archetypes we need to move from literary history i.e., ‘the history of ideas’ towards literary anthropology i.e., ‘the study of man’.

Placing within the framework of the Archetypal Theory, Frye relates the narrative patterns to the creation of rituals, imagery to the moments of epiphany and rhythm to the natural cycle. This shows that literature is cyclical and follows a recurrence of patterns. A similar phenomenon can also be seen in the natural cycle and hence when there is synchronization between the human and the natural energies, it leads to the formation of a ritual.

Myths therefore are narrative patterns which are passed down from one generation to the other thereby becoming a part of human culture. Frye stresses that “the myth is the central informing power that gives archetypal significance to the ritual and archetypal narrative to the oracle” (Frye 509). The central myth of all literature is the quest myth and it is essentially constructed around a hero whose actions are in cognisance with the different phases of the organic, solar, and seasonal cycles respectively.

Frye takes us back to the primitive times to find this unifying thread which ties the entire World Literature. When we read various literary works we find glimpses of antiquity as well as primitive culture in them.

The objectives of the proposed study would be:
1. To examine the genre of Children’s Literature from a historical perspective.

2. To make an in depth analysis of the Archetypal Approach with special reference to Northrop Frye’s Theory.

3. To locate the selected works of Ursula K. Le Guin, Diana Wynne Jones, and Trudi Canavan within Frye’s Archetypal Framework.

4. To make a comparative study of the three writers.

Keeping in view the above objectives, the tentative chapter scheme of the proposed study would be as follows:

Chapter I- Children’s Literature: A Historical Perspective
   a) Evolution of the Genre of Children’s Literature.
   b) Making of the Writers.

Chapter II- From Literary History to Literary Anthropology: A Study of Northrop Frye’s Archetypal Approach.


Chapter IV- A Personal Odyssey: A Study of Diana Wynne Jones’ Chrestomanci Series.


Chapter VI- Ursula K. Le Guin, Trudi Canavan, and Diana Wynne Jones: A Comparative Perspective.

Chapter VII- Conclusion.
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