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THE DEPTFORD TRILOGY:
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THE DEPTFORD TRILOGY: AN ARCHETYPAL STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION:


1.2 Davies was an avid reader of C. G. Jung and soon after his first trilogy, he continued to work at assimilating the ideas of Jung. Generally, he found that Jung’s perceptions extended and tallied with his own, but sometimes they presented quite different ways of looking at things and compelled him to reconsideration. From 1968 on, Davies, in his speeches and interviews, spoke with new frankness about his deepest convictions instead of masking them with humour or concealing them.
Jung’s insights provided him with an overview of the crisis that he and so many other middle-aged men had to face. Davies’ reading of Jung had an impact on unconscious mind. In 1958, an image began to float insistently to the surface of Davies’ mind. It came unbidden, repeatedly, acquiring more detail and definition with each successive appearance.

This is how he described it, in 1979:

(It was) a winter’s night on a village street, which in time I recognized as a street I knew well from childhood . . . After a while the scene was peopled by two boys, and one was throwing a snowball, and I knew the snowball had a stone concealed in it. (Grant 468)

Subsequent accounts added more details. The scene takes place in front of Davies’s home on Elizabeth Street in Thamesville at about six O’clock on a snowy winter night, one, two or sometimes three days after Christmas. The boys are running along the street and they have been quarrelling. One is hurrying home for supper, the other calling abuse after him. The snowball, spitefully thrown, misses the boy at whom it is aimed and hits a woman in front of whom he dodges. The woman, who is accompanied by a man, is only a casual passer-by, but the snowball hits her head and hurts her so severely that she falls to the ground.

After two years, the scene had recurred so often to his consciousness that Davies recognized he had to deal with it. His travel
diary “Works in Progress” reflects upon Davies that the novel was “pretty clear” in his mind. The notes of the diary reveal that a second element that he later saw as crucial to the creation of the novel had by now occurred to him, namely, a reflection on the moral responsibility of children. Davies, having kept these ideas in his mind, was not yet ready to sit and write the novel. Four more years passed and during this interval, Brenda discovered the last element that was critical to the novel’s creation. Davies imbibed the idea and working title, “Fifth Business” from an amusing elderly opera singer who said about the operatic roles sung in the Europe of her youth.

1.3 The public response to Fifth Business far exceeded Davies’s expectations. Davies notices the reputation of the novel at the Canadian reception:

. . . in the beginning this story was not warmly received in Canada. However, when it gained very warm commendation in the United States and elsewhere, Canada changed its opinion. Many Canadians began to see in the tale of Dunstan Ramsay some relevance to themselves and to their country. (Grant 483)

Many influential publications in North America were full of praise for his novel: the New Yorker described Fifth Business as “elegant”; the New York Times wrote of it as “a marvellously energetic novel . . . driven by inevitable narrative force”, (484) Esquire described it “as masterfully
executed as anything in the history of the novel” (483). The *Globe and Mail* took the novel seriously and reviewed it positively. On November 7, however, the Gazette Montreal thought it should take the Governor General’s Award for fiction, and enthusiastic reviews had appeared in at least four other major Canadian newspapers before the U.S. publication on November 23. These Canadian reviewers wrote of Davies as a man of surprisingly diverse accomplishment and saw the novel as an advance over his earlier work. In reviewing *Fifth Business* in the *New York Times*, Christopher Lehmann-Haupt concluded: “A marvellously enigmatic novel, then, elegantly written and driven by irresistible narrative force. One thinks of *The Magic Mountain* and *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, although Mr. Davies hardly needs Thomas Mann and John Fowles to prop him up” (Lehmann-Haupt 35). *The Washington Post* and the *Chicago Tribune* appreciated the novel as “a mature, accomplished and altogether remarkable book, one of the best of this or any other reason and it simply cannot be ignored” (Grant 484). There are dozens of reviews (in *Saturday Review*, the *Christian Science Monitor*, *Time and Newsweek*, for example), which highly praised the novel. Internationally, renowned authors Saul bellow, John Fowles, and Anthony Burgess praised *Fifth Business* to the skies, with predictable results. Davies became a celebrity and his novel a bestseller. Having been cloistered in
his Massey College office for twelve years, Davies was suddenly deluged with requests to give speeches, readings, and interviews.

1.4 The title of the novel, *Fifth Business*, came to Davies’ mind when he and his wife, Brenda, attended the operatic roles of the opera at the home of Nicholas Goldschmidt. Brenda heard a theatrical friend quoting what an amusing elderly opera singer had once said about the operatic roles sung in the Europe of her youth:

> There were heroes and heroines, she said, and these, of course, were sopranos and tenors. Then there were villains and temptresses, and naturally, these were basses and contraltos. Then, she said dismissively, there was Fifth Business – the sort of roles sung by other singers whose parts were necessary to the plot, but not central to it. (Grant 471)

Davies, finally, decided to name the novel *Fifth Business* that brought him reputation.

The term ‘Fifth Business’, as Davies describes, refers to the role in an opera, usually played by a man. While only a supporting character, he is essential to the plot, for he often knows the secret of the hero’s birth, or comes to the assistance of the hero when all seems lost, or may even be the cause of someone’s death. In this novel, Dunstan Ramsay plays this role and he is in magnificent form.
Though Ramsay narrates the novel, and is intimately entwined in the lives of all its characters, he somehow manages to remain slightly in the background as a passive observer of others. It is through his eyes that we witness the key figures – Boy Staunton, Paul Dempster, Mary Dempster, Boy’s first wife Leola. Ramsay comes to realize that he is the ‘Fifth Business’ in the drama of his own life.

1.5 Interpretations of Fifth Business:

In 1970, Davies published Fifth Business, the first instalment of his “The Deptford Trilogy.” On the surface level, the novel chronicles 60 years in the life of Dunstan Ramsay, an assistant headmaster at a Canadian school. But on a deeper level, Davies weaves into the story many religious and psychological themes. What is more, the novel is a complex study of several characters, full of Jungian archetypes, synchronicity, and questions about power, sexuality, love, and faith.

Because of the complexity of novel, L. J. Davis of Book World (1970) branded the novel “a work of theological fiction that approaches Graham Greene at the top of his form” (99). With this perspective at the back of mind, let us see how the novel has been critically analysed and evaluated.

At the outset, it is to be noted that the limitation of space does not permit detailed attention to each of the themes of the novel. The novel is analysed on the following grounds:
"Fifth Business" reflects upon the picture of Canadian society.

"Fifth Business" is analysed on the level of spiritual autobiography.

The major theme is the theme of guilt.

The theme of the difference between materialism and spirituality. Davies asserts religion is not necessarily integral to the idea – demonstrated by the corrupt Reverend Leadbeater who reduces the Bible to mere economic terms.

"Fifth Business" and the two novels of the trilogy delineate the town’s religious denominations.

The novel throws light on the role of women in society.

"Fifth Business" has sometimes been read as an allegory of Canada’s struggle for recognition and identity.

The theme of self-discovery.

The novel is analysed on the level of the Jungian psychology.

The novel is richly multilayered in its exploration of ideas and themes. Let us see some of the themes in detail.

1.5.1 "Fifth Business" has been compared with Davies’ life. Davies’ own life is reflected in the novel in a number of ways, and Davies was keenly aware of this. A few months before the writing began he told Horace Davenport:

"It is autobiographical, but not as young men do it; it will be rather as Dickens wrote "David Copperfield" – a fictional reworking of some things experienced and much rearranged – a spiritual autobiography in fact, and not a sweating account of the first time I backed a girl into a corner. . . . I
discern something that gives great richness to my life, and helps me to behave rather more decently toward other people than my unaided inspiration can achieve. And that is important to me: the world is so full of self-seekers, crooks and sons of bitches that I am very keen to be a decent man – not a Holy Joe, or a do-gooder, but a man who does not gag every time he looks into a mirror. (Grant 473)

His memories of Thamesville were central to *Fifth Business* right from the beginning. With *Fifth Business*, he plumbed new artistic and spiritual depths. The opening scene, which he envisioned taking place at his boyhood home in Thamesville, Ontario, haunted Davies from the first time it appeared to him in about 1960 until he began to draft the novel ten years later:

> It was simply a scene that kept occurring in my mind, which was of two boys on a village street on a winter night . . . I knew from the look of the atmosphere that it must be just around Christmas-time . . . and one boy threw a snowball at the other boy. Well, that was all there was to it, but it came so often and was so insistent that I had to ask myself, why is that boy doing that and what is behind this and what is going on? (468)

Many elements of the novel that emerged from this vision were drawn from Davies’s early childhood. Davies projects his life experiences into many of his works and it seems no surprise Davies thought of it as “autobiographical, but not as young men to it; it will be rather as Dickens wrote *David Copperfield*, a fictional reworking of some things
experienced and much re-arranged” (473). Davies allows us to peer through a window into his childhood in Thamesville, Ontario and through his young life into higher education and beyond through the character of Ramsay and throughout The Deptford Trilogy.

Like Dunstable Ramsay’s father, Davies’s father was the one-man publisher of a village newspaper, and Davies grew up in the newspaper business. Like his protagonist in Fifth Business, Davies was raised in the Presbyterian Church. Although he eventually rejected its particular doctrines, he retained a strongly religious temperament. His spiritual explorations ultimately found resonance in the works of Carl Gustav Jung. Ramsay’s attempts to instruct Paul in magic were drawn from Davies’s own experiments as a boy: like Ramsay, Davies possessed a clumsy set of hands. The Madonna that Ramsay spies at the battle of Passchendaele is identical to the statue that Davies purchased on a trip to Austria. The following passage reflects upon Davies’s clashes with his mother:

She pursued me around the kitchen, slashing me with the whip until she broke down and I cried. She cried, too, hysterically, and beat me harder, storming about my impudence, my want of respect for her, of my increasing oddity and intellectual arrogance . . . My father and Willie came home, and there was no supper. . . . This I had to do on my knees, repeating a formula improvised by my father,
which included a pledge that I would always love my mother, to whom I owed the great gift of life. (FB 39-40)

The most powerful autobiographical component, however, was Ramsay’s certainty that the realm of mystery, spirit, and awe co-exists with the more ordinary realm of science, law, work, and pragmatism. Just as Davies believed that Jung’s collective unconscious and archetypes explained human initiative and destiny, linking everyday experiences to religion, art, mythology, and literature, so Ramsay discovers that magic and more mythical and less factual approach to history, together with saints and their inspiring tales of faith and miracles, provide a powerful foundation for human endeavour and identity.

The character of Percy Boyd Staunton is also an important reference to Davies’ real life. Some of the elements of Boy’s life-story are drawn from Robertson Davies’ friend Vincent Massey. Both men became rich from their father’s agricultural business. Both men were enlisted in WWI, went into politics to hold cabinet positions, and strengthened Canada’s ties with the mother country during her time of need. While Vincent Massey becomes the first Canada-born Governor General, Boy is likewise appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario. And the most convincing parallel is that Boy becomes the Chair of the Board of Governors that runs the school Ramsay teaches as, much as Robertson Davies spent his career at the University of Toronto as the
head Professor of Massey College. But the character is also fictionalized largely, for instance, Vincent Massey goes into office without taking an ill-suited wife and also manages to overcome the difficulties of the abdicating and dying Kings in England. Davies has stated that aspects of the character are more reflective of his father. The initial snowball incident that shapes Boy’s life is more neutral and Davies claimed it was developed out of an inspirational dream.

Ramsay’s life (wounded war veteran, lifelong bachelor schoolmaster) was wholly unlike Davies’ (never in the army, married with a family, a newspaper editor and author) yet some readers thought Fifth Business semi-autobiographic.

1.5.2 As had been the case with his Salterton Trilogy, Davies filled his novel with social elements. The town of Deptford was based on his hometown Thamesville, to the degree that the layout of each was a perfect match.

The picture of the society that we witness in The Salterton Trilogy differs in The Deptford Trilogy. In The Salterton Trilogy the society is that of white upper-middle class, whose outdated ideals are relics of British colonialism. In The Deptford Trilogy, we notice that Loyalists and British immigrants dominated the society. But it is seen that the society is gradually separating from the influence of Great Britain. The strict class
hierarchies started to fade in light of changing politics as Canada broke away from Great Britain and moved closer to the USA, and more and more immigrants came to North America. Gradually, Davies weaved in characters of non-Anglo-Saxon or Celtic origin.

Because of these developments, the British monarchy, the embodiment of British traditions, suffers a heavy blow in *The Deptford Trilogy*. One of the protagonists, Boy Staunton, adores Prince Edward as his personal idol and tries to impersonate the prince’s ideals. Unfortunately, for Boy, the prince does not behave in accordance with the standards and expectations of his position – he is reported to be a womanizer, dresses unfittingly, and rebels against his father. When the old king does, Boy believes Edward VIII to be destined for great things. But then, because of his unwillingness to end his relationship with a divorced woman, the prince abdicates under the pressure of his government. This development is a heavy blow for Boy, who projected his hopes on the monarch. On the national level, the monarch’s death symbolizes the change of heart in Canada. Canada cannot continue to live in the shadow of the mother country but must endeavour to find its own role models. As a consequence, Canada decides not to play the role of “The Daughter who stayed at Home” any longer. Now the nation has embarked upon a quest to define an identity of her own, which should
differ from that of the United States and Great Britain. Davies started to become aware of society’s diversity as far as ethnicity and class are concerned. Dunstan Ramsay, the narrator of *Fifth Business* sets out to Europe and South America. Ramsay encounters a number of things like Esiengrim’s show of magic, meeting unattractive Liesl and beautiful Faustina. Both women enthral Ramsay because their striking features are so different from their insides. Davies’s protagonist finds other countries to be more open-minded and liberal towards the unknown in comparison with Canada.

Dunstan’s experiences separate him from the other Canadians. He realizes the limitations of his country and feels “like a stranger in (his) own land” (20), where the majority of people is still narrow-minded and has no sense for the colourful world that lies not only outside but also within the borders of Canada. Davies’s important message is that the outside appearance of a person does not justify conclusions about his or her personality. Sometimes there is unresolved passion hidden inside waiting to be released. Davies probably meant to urge Canadians, once again, to start exploring their inner lives and to stop paying so much attention to superficialities, but at the same time, he wanted to encourage them to open up their minds to the exotic and marvellous in the world.
Another important and leading theme of the novel is the theme of guilt. The novel, *Fifth Business* dominates the consequences of premature birth. The novel begins in the village of Deptford, with a quarrel between two boys. Percy’s new sled will not go as fast as Dunstan’s old one. Humiliated and vindictive, Percy hides a stone the size of a hen’s egg in a snowball and throws it at Dunstan, who ducks. The snowball hits Mary in the head and sends her into labour. Her premature son, Paul, struggles for life.

Dunstan Ramsay feels responsible for Mrs. Dempster’s Condition. Burden with a Presbyterian conscience, Ramsay carries his guilt with him for the rest of his life, providing for Mrs. Dempster until she dies. When confronted by young Ramsay with his crime, Staunton refuses to acknowledge his responsibility for Mrs. Dempster’s condition, and he promptly forgets the incident. Thus, he can join with the other Deptford youth calling Mrs. Dempster “hoor” with no sense of shame or compunction since he remains unaware of his part in her story. As a seventy-year-old tycoon, he is genuinely surprised to learn about Mrs. Dempster’s history.

Mrs. Dempster plays a number of roles in the life of Dunstan Ramsay. There are roles such as Mrs. Dempster’s acting as personal saint.
to Ramsay, and Mrs. Dempster’s role in the private mythology of Dunstan Ramsay: lover.

Dunstan is a man who believes in following his own mind and heart, rather than going along with mob mentality. This trait makes him Mary Dempster’s only champion, and young Paul Dempster’s only friend. The responsibility he feels towards these two human beings, so damaged by life, will stay with him throughout his entire adulthood. Dunstan is a man of great integrity, and quietly fulfils his responsibilities to Mrs Dempster and Paul, never once seeking praise or recognition for his kind deeds.

1.5.4 Robertson Davies is aware of the role of women in society. He creates a gallery of women portraits in his novel *Fifth Business*. We have Mrs. Ramsay, mother of Ramsay; Mrs. Mary Dempster, Leola, Staunton’s wife and prettiest girl; Caroline, Staunton’s daughter, Denyse Hornick, a manipulation; Liesl, a Devil; Diana Marfleet, a nurse; Miss Bertha Shanklin, an old maid and aunt of Mary Dempster. Women of Deptford do not breathe freely. These women are governed by the following factors:

- Men believe in the negative power of women.
- The society is male-dominatated.
- Mothers are dominating and they go by their own codes of conduct.
Women of Deptford rule the town with their moral authority.

The moral code enforces first on women then, on men.

Committing adultery is a sin.

The male-dominated religious society of Deptford considers a lifetime sentence of bondage and home arrest to be appropriate punishment.

Women are never allowed to fall short of the mark of perfection; if they do, they stand to lose their reputations, their freedom, their safety, and perhaps even have their children taken away from them. Perfection is a tough line to maintain, as any man can attest. If society allowed women the same margin of error, which it allows men, men would most likely find themselves under less pressure from women to act saintly all of the time.

1.5.5 Regarding religious sectarianism, Dunstan Ramsay says,

We had five churches: the Anglican, poor but believed to have some mysterious social supremacy; the Presbyterian, solvent and thought chiefly by itself to be intellectual; the Methodist, insolvent and fervent; the Baptist, insolvent and saved; the Roman Catholic, mysterious to most of us but clearly solvent, as it was frequently and, so we thought, quite needlessly repainted. (FB 20)

There is religious sectarianism in Deptford dividing the frontier townsfolk between five different Christian churches that do not associate with each other under normal circumstances. It takes emergencies for
them to lend aid to each other, but this is conditional aid based on the assumption that certain moral codes will be preserved regardless of faith. For instance, Mary Dempster is a daft-headed girl who habitually flouts the norms of the society, so she finds herself ostracized and ridiculed by her society, and no one comes to her aid when her son runs away. But she is the only member of Deptford society that Dunstan views as truly religious in her attitude because she lives according to a light that arises from within (which he contrasts with her husband’s deeply religious attitude, which “meant that he imposed religion as he understood, it on everything he knew or encountered” (56).

As a boy, Dunstable is raised as a Presbyterian, but he also takes an avid interest in Catholic saints. He grows up to develop a more spiritual mode of life that is not reliant on external structures. For Dunstan Ramsay, religion and morality are immediate certainties in life, and the events of the novel show how moral lapses have a way of ‘snowballing’ and coming back to haunt one.

1.5.6 One of the leading themes of Fifth Business is the theme of myth and history.

Davies and Dunstan here are at pains to illustrate to us just how fluid the concept of historical fact really is, and that is not so distinct from the supposition of mythic thinking. Dunstan questions the extent
that he can provide an accurate of the events of his childhood or his participation in WWI campaigns, because what he recalls is surely distinct from the ‘consensually accepted reality.’

One aspect of this blurred distinction between myth and history is Ramsay’s lifelong preoccupation with the lives of the Saints. The fantastic nature of their stories were always grounded in actual events, but their miracles were given attention and focus based on the psychosocial attitudes and needs of the day, so that what the public wanted had a large measure of influence over what became the accepted canon.

2.1 *The Deptford Trilogy: The Archetypal Study*

As it has been stated in the introduction that Robertson Davies wanted to become a playwright, he was discouraged by his experience as a playwright. To quote him “To hell with it. You write a play and then you have an awful time getting it quite badly done by incapable people. I think I’ll try it as a novel, and see how it goes as a novel” (Grant 326). The play became a novel with startling economy of effort. He was able to use practically everything he had in hand, filling out the large fictional form with things that were at the top of his mind at the time. *Tempest-Tost* was completed and published in 1951; so followed *Leaven of Malice*

Davies had ample of time to think over for his second trilogy, *The Deptford Trilogy*. In his second venture, he decided to incorporate the principles of Freudian and Jungian psychology. Davies has categorically stated in his speeches and interviews that he was an ardent student of Freud and Jung.

In addition to his study of Freud and Jung, he also studied deeply the hagiography and the mythology with a view to describe contemporary experiences in which people discover the meaning of their lives by discovering the ways those lives conform to ancient patterns. Davies’s patterns are avowedly Jungian. Davies means to recharge the world with a wonder it has lost, to recreate through the intervention of saints and miracles, psychoanalysts and sleight-of-hand a proper sense of awe at life’s mystery and recognition of the price that must be paid for initiation into that mystery. He is a psychological optimist: the distinctive character of the trilogy that is completed with (*World of Wonders*) derives from Davies’s belief that a man may at some cost gain understanding of his destiny. Davies has complained that “the fear and dread and splendour and freedom of wonder have been banished” (515) from the modern world. In *The Deptford Trilogy*, the world of wonders within the human
psyche makes a triumphant return. In *Fifth Business*, Dunstan Ramsay goes soul-searching. Fascinated by myth and magic, he pursues saints, meets devils, explores illusion and reality, and finally, after sleeping with the devil, finds himself. With this volition, Davies sets out to write his second trilogy, which comprises *Fifth Business*, *The Manticore* and *World of Wonders*. Davies was apt in using the titles, for his novels. The term ‘*Fifth Business*’, as Davies describes, refers to the role in an opera, usually played by a man, which has no opposite of the other sex. While only a supporting character, he is essential to the plot, for he often knows the secret of the hero’s birth, or comes to the assistance of the heroine when all seems lost, or may even be the cause of someone’s death. In this novel, Dunstan Ramsay plays this role. And he is in magnificent form. Though he narrates the novel, and is intimately, entwined in the lives of all its characters, he somehow manages to remain slightly in the background as a passive observer of others. It is through his eyes that we witness the rise of Boy Staunton, his childhood friend from the small Canadian town of Deptford.

The second title is *The Manticore*. The dictionary of mythology defines a *Manticore* as “a thing composed of a man helplessly trapped in the attributes of beings that were less than human” (498). *The Manticore* is one of the Jungian symbols but it is also a medieval monster that has
been imported into Christian myths and folklore from India. *The Manticore* is the story of Boy Staunton’s only son, David. David Staunton undergoes Jungian psychoanalysis in Switzerland. During his therapy, he tries to understand his father and his relationship to him. The novel is a detailed record of his therapy and his coming to understand his own life. The title refers to elements of the subconscious, which unfold through the story and are eventually manifested as fantastic mythical creature: a *Manticore*.

The title of the last novel of *The Deptford Trilogy* is *World of Wonders*. *World of Wonders* would complete the story that runs through *Fifth Business* and *The Manticore*, and that together the three would constitute a trilogy. Davies seems to be fond of number three. As Davies told Roper, “It was never my intention to write a trilogy, or even to write the second book. It just happened. The story ran on, and required to be told. I have answered all enquires about a trilogy within an assured No up to this time. But I have changed my mind” (505). The title is judiciously selected as it deals with the story-history-myth of Paul, the boy, who became Magnus, the man. The text is a film about the life of a famous nineteenth century magician, Robert-Houdin, whom Magnus portrays, which is being made at Sorgenfrei. The subtext, which gives Magnus’ performance depth, is his personal story-history-myth, which he tells to
the director, producer, cameraman, Dunstan as historical consultant, and Liesl their host who remains in the background.

The three titles are carefully chosen in order to reveal interrelations. When the last novel of the trilogy was published, Davies wrote to Gordon Roper:

I finished the novel this morning, and wish I knew what to make of it. It has been uncommonly tough chewing, because as you know I never intended a trilogy, and so had made no preparation for pulling three books into a unity; . . . But I think I have managed somehow, if not well, and have even managed a surpriser two. (511)

The ‘unity’ of the trilogy has been maintained by a number of things such as a common setting, many common characters, important events such as Staunton’s death, cause and effect and leading themes.

As regards its setting, it is to be noted that there are some Canadian novelists who convey Canadian identity through developing fictional microcosms. Robertson Davies, Margaret Laurence and Alice Munro, the regionalists, follow the tradition of novelists such as Walter Scott, Thomas Hardy, William Faulkner, and Arnold Bennett who created their fictional kingdoms of Waverley, Wessex, Yoknapatawpha, and Five Towns. Davies creates a fictional microcosm in Deptford on his actual hometown of Themesville. Davies conveys the social stratifications of his
microcosm through a delineation of his respective town’s social and religious denominations. A common setting (Deptford Ontario – based on Thamesville) holds the three novels together. The second novel, *The Manticore* deviates a bit—it starts out in Deptford and the opening chapter gives the impression that the cast of characters is going to be similar to the previous novels; David Staunton who is the narrator of the novel, seeks out the help of Jungian psychoanalysts in Zurich after having undergone a psychotic episode in Toronto. *World of Wonders* concludes the story begun in *Fifth Business* and continued in *The Manticore*, following the effects of a snowball thrown by a young boy on the people whose lives were altered that day.

The three novels are also held together by common characters. The trilogy records the lives of three different people – Ramsay, David Staunton and Paul Dempster. Each of the main characters narrates his life story. And in the course of each of these interrelated stories, we find a common desire for a mythical or magical world that exists within the confines of ordinary, rationalist, desacralized modern society.

The main characters of the series have come by twisting paths from their simple village – and each carries a secret that crosses the lives of the others and drives the plot forward. The greatest secret is one that the reader is not even aware of until the close of the last book, but which
finally answers questions about the relationships among several major characters. Dunstan Ramsay is the narrator of both *Fifth Business* and *World of Wonders*. He also appears as a major character in *The Manticore*, and appears in several other novels by Davies. Ramsay also appears in the novel *What's Bred in the Bone* of Davies’ *Cornish Trilogy* and in the later novel *The Cunning Man*. He is at times compared with Saint Dunstan and his struggle with Satan.

In regard to the central events of the trilogy, it is observed that the first novel of the series, *Fifth Business*, begins with a blow to the head. Ten-year-old Dunstable Ramsay and his lifelong friend and enemy, Percy Boyd Staunton, quarrel because Staunton’s “fine new Christmas sled would not go as fast as (Dunstable’s) old One” (*FB* 13). When Dunstable sets off for home, Staunton begins to hurl taunts and then snowballs after the retreating boy. At exactly 5:58 p.m. on 27 December 1908, an errant snowball (with a stone tucked inside) strikes Mrs. Dempster on the back of the head. Later that evening she gives birth to a son, Paul, who grows up to be the world’s greatest magician. Mary Dempster achieves secular sainthood; Boy Staunton becomes a wealthy philanthropist, and is eventually titled Lieutenant Governor of Ontario. Before he assumes office, he is found dead on a harbour. There is a stone in his mouth. “Who killed Boy Staunton?” is the question that lies at the heart of
Davies’s elegant trilogy. Indeed, Staunton’s death is the central event of each of the three novels. The mystery surrounding the murder of Staunton leads us deeper into the worlds of psychological terror and wonder.

The repercussions of the event upon Ramsay, a man of reason, and Staunton, a man of instinct, were dealt with in *Fifth Business* and *The Manticore*. The key to this novel, to the entire trilogy, is an almost Newtonian concept of morality – no action is without consequences. Davies sets out to show the consequences of the snowballing from the standpoints of the three Deptford boys who were most affected.

At the centre of each of the three novels – *Fifth Business*, *The Manticore*, and *World of Wonders* – is a theme that connects the trilogy’s many intertwining stories: the need to recover a genuine experience of the marvellous, a sense of wonder, in a world from which it has been all but banished. *The Deptford Trilogy* is a richly plotted study of three individuals’ journeys to self-discovery that mingles humour, mystery, magic grotesqueries. In his telephonic talk with Mrs. Brighton, an English teacher, Davies explicitly speaks on the theme of *World of Wonders*: “I suppose. The theme of self discovery is important” (Maes 129). The theme of self-discovery runs throughout *The Deptford Trilogy*. 
Another factor, which throws light on the interpretation of the three novels of *The Deptford Trilogy*, is the use of Jungian psychology, which is implicit in the first novel *Fifth Business*. The Jungian psychology is also explicit in *The Manticore*, which presents the psychoanalysis of Boy Staunton’s son David. *World of Wonders* focuses on Magnus Eisengrim and a touring magic show.

2.2 Robertson Davies drew on his interest in Jungian psychology to create *Fifth Business*, a novel that draws heavily on Davies’ own experiences, his love of myth and magic and his knowledge of small town mores. The narrator, Ramsay, like Davies, is of immigrant Canadian background, with a father who runs the town paper. The book’s characters act in roles that roughly correspond to Jungian archetypes according to Davies’ belief in the predominance of spirit over the things of the world. According to *Book Review*, *Fifth Business* can be read on two levels: “On the surface, then, this is a simple story about the life of one unremarkable man, a supporting player to the stronger personalities around him. But on a deeper level, it is a complex study of several characters, full of Jungian archetypes, synchronicity, and questions about power, sexuality, love and faith” (Phronk 28). In his interview, Robin MacNeil wanted to know from Robertson Davies whether he has any moral message to impart. Davies responds him:
But what I am really trying to do and what I think a moralist generally does is to point out patterns in human behaviour which are inexorable; they are archetypes of behaviour, and I’m not saying that they’re either good or bad. I am simply saying they are so. (MacNeil 2)

In his interview with Gordon Roper in 1968, Davies is more explicit about archetypal situations. Davies said in a dialogue with Roper, “life has a strong mythic and fairy tale quality. And people don’t recognize that they are living out myths or mythic patterns or archetypal situations” (34). The novel that bears his ideas about mythic patterns was published two years later. *Fifth Business* deals with the mythic patterns that Dunstan Ramsay is seeking to understand in his own life and the different archetypes that different characters represent. In his next novel, *The Manticore*, we see that David Staunton was mentally broken down when he happened to see the dramatic death of his father. David decides to subject himself to psychoanalysis, and it is this analysis, conducted in Zurich by the Jungian Dr. Joanna von Heller, that forms the frame of the book. In *World of Wonders*, we are given the picture of Paul Dempster who is transformed from the wretched Deptford boy into the famous and accomplished stage magician, Magnus Eisengrim. Alix Wilber, having made a careful study of *The Deptford Trilogy* summarises his views: “*The Deptford Trilogy* . . . as the combination of magic, archetype, and good, old-fashioned human frailty at work in these novels is a *World of*
Wonders unto itself, and guarantees these three books a permanent place among the great books of our time” (2).

2.3 Psychological and Archetypal Approach:

A highly subjective response to the angst and zeitgeist of life and a poignant orchestration of inner anguish with the aid of apt and adequate images and symbols mark the psychological novel as an important genre having its own in world literature today. In the Canadian scene also, as wielded in the hands of able writers like Margaret Laurence, Mordecai Richler, Alice Munro, Rudy Wiebe, Robert Kroetsch, Jack Hodgins, Timothy Findley and Robertson Davies, the novel as an art form seems to be showing a mounting concern for problems related to human identity. This has brought about a clear shift in focus from social injustice, exploitation and struggle for reform to a depiction of any convolutions of sensibility caught in the configuration of whimsical impulses, compulsions, and emotional blocks. Psychological novels seem now days to be striking new ground in an innovative use of narrative technique so as to make it an extension and an adumbration of thematic insights. The most widely used devices in the achievement of this seem to be pressing into service of Freudian and Jungian principles. With the coming of Freud and Jung, psyche subliminal drives of the Id and the impetus or self-improvement became important components of psychology. Davies
seems to show a remarkable predilection for the latter. His preference for resolving man-milieu conflicts by a sea change in the perceptions and personalities of his protagonists than by any drastic change in the out social scene found an invaluable reservoir of thematic potential in the Jungian concept of individuation. Davies’s professed aim to go beyond psychology to the metaphysical roots of human identity is in consonance with the Jungian tradition of viewing psychology as an integral part of philosophy. Jung’s definition of neurosis as the suffering of the soul, which has not yet discovered its meaning, is highly laudable and validation for it is to be found in the increasing importance accorded to knowledge of self in all modern studies of human psychology. Keith May’s views on ‘self’ best illustrate this point:

    Reaching the self does not bring the end of trouble and sorrow but it does bring a considerable lessening of egotistical suffering and a total absence of neurosis. It brings also a sense of identification with the world at large so that by a seeming paradox the more a man becomes himself the more he realises his identity with the rest of nature. (May 47)

The careers of the protagonists, Dunstable Ramsay (Fifth Business), David Staunton (The Manticore), and Paul Dempster (World of Wonders) seems to be a masterly blending of the Jungian concepts of
Individuation, Shadow, Persona and Anima. Each rejects his beginning and becomes something his parents could not foresee.

Jung saw the psyche or total personality as several interacting systems. In place of Freud’s superego, ego and Id, Jung recognized an ego, a personal unconscious and a collective unconscious. In the personal unconscious were to be found various complexes, and in the collective unconscious were archetypal dispositions to think, perceive and act in a certain way. The archetypes that appear in cultures are widely separated in time and space: God, death, numbers, the child, hero, the Temptress, father, family, martyr, The Wise Old Man or Sage, the Scarecrow, the Mentor, Apollo, Wise Old Woman, the maiden, the outcast, the scapegoat, the star-crossed lovers, the shrew, power, unity, the cave, water. But the most important archetypes were the self, the shadow, the persona, the anima and the animus. These archetypes are vital components of the human psyche and are subliminally present in the unconscious mind of everyone as dark destructive energy (shadow) assumed image (persona) and externalization of the most cherished ideal (Anima). Shadow need not necessarily pertain to concretised image of villainy as for instance an Iage of Shakespeare or a Satan of Milton. It can connote the demonic drives, the dark side in the personality of the protagonist. Persona being an assumed image conceals the true nature of
man from the outside world. Unless and until this mask is shed, there can never be any personality development.

The self is the most important archetype and holds all the other systems together. Achieving oneness and self-realization (individuation, Jung called it) is a long process and one not reached until middle age, if at all.

According to Jung, there are four universal archetypes: Mother, Rebirth, Spirit and Trickster (or Devil). Jung further notes archetypal figures such as the hero, the goddess and the wise man. Jung says that they are not archetypes, but archetypal images, which have crystallized out of the archetypes – as such. Jung described archetypal events: birth, death, separation from parents, initiation, marriage, the union of opposites; archetypal figures: great mother, father, child, devil, God, wise old man, wise old woman, Apollo.

Having noted two major categories of archetypes, namely, characters and situations/symbols, Jung expresses a number of ideas. An attention predominantly directed towards the outside world is termed extroverted, and when directed towards the inside is termed introverted. Introverts are people who prefer their internal world of thoughts, feelings, fantasies, dreams and so on, while extroverts prefer the external world of things and people and activities. But the personality is always made up of
exterior and interior elements, as the ego and personal unconscious operate in opposite directions. Our culture, of course, values the extrovert much more. Another idea of Jung that we come across in Davies is Synchronicity. Synchronicity is the occurrence of two events that are not linked causally, nor linked tellologically, yet are meaningfully related. The idea of synchronicity is easily explained by the Hindu view of reality. In the Hindu view, our individual egos are like islands in a sea: we look out at the world and each other and think we are separate entities. What we do not see is that we are connected to each other by means of the ocean floor beneath the waters. Jung also talks about the functions of thinking, feeling, sensing and intuiting have their everyday meanings, though two generally predominate, the other two being repressed.

As regards the archetypal hero, Jung and Joseph Campbell observe that the archetypal hero appears in all religions, mythologies, and epics of the world. He is an expression of our personal and collective unconscious. All archetypal heroes share certain characteristics. In respect of dreams, Jung differs from Freud. Dreams are singularly important because they carry symbolic messages from the unconscious. Jung did not believe that dreams come in a disguised form (as did Freud) but in a symbolic or metaphorical form, that needs interpreting. Jung
used a method of amplification and active imagination in order to gain insight into dreams.

An interdisciplinary approach that combines anthropology, psychology, history, and comparative religion and mythology assumes that human creativity has certain traits and impulses common to all cultures and epochs. These show up in motifs, heroes, villains, situations, and outcomes that appear in works of literature spanning vast times and places. Jung named these fundamental elements archetypes, claiming that they evoked deep psychic realities. Jung believed that all individuals share a “collective unconscious,” a set of primal memories common to the human race, existing “beneath” each person’s conscious awareness. In his writings, Jung connected the collective unconscious with archetypal images. Depth psychology, a branch of Jungian psychology uses mythology to personalize archetypes. In all three novels of the Deptford Trilogy, Davies portrays myth and fairy tale as transmitters of the human inheritance. Dunstan, in particular, articulates the view that myth depicts recurring character types, situations and actions. His brief references in Fifth Business to Oedipus, Mars, Venus and Ganymede reveal a constant awareness of the mythical elements that underlie our apparently ordinary lives.
With this perspective at the back of mind, let us see *The Deptford Trilogy* in the light of Jung’s archetypal study.

2.3.1 The critics of Robertson Davies like Nicholas Maes and a host of national and international reviewers observe that *The Deptford Trilogy* speaks eloquently and passionately the sense of wonder, magic and psychological truth. To quote *Book Review*:

> On the surface level, then, this is a simple story about the life of one unremarkable man, a supporting player to the stronger personalities around him. But on a deeper level, it is a complex study of several characters, full of Jungian archetypes, synchronicity, and questions about power, sexuality, love, and faith. (Phronk 29).

In 1968, Davies said in a dialogue with Gordon Roper that “life has a strong mythic and fairy tale quality. And people don’t recognize that they are living out myths or mythic patterns or archetypal situations” (Roper 34). This idea would refer to his novel, *Fifth Business*, which was published two years later. Any serious discussion of *Fifth Business* must deal with the mythic patterns that Dustan Ramsay is seeking to understand in his own life and the different archetypes that different characters represent.

In his interviews, Davies has repeatedly spoken about the influence of Freud and Jung. Freud focused on the working of the human mind,
using the psychological constructs like the Id, the Ego and the Superego. Jung has also a three-fold structure of the human psyche: personal conscious, personal unconscious and collective unconscious. He traces the overdominance of the collective unconscious mind in the life-activities. Davies’s setting of the Fifth Business is set in three distinct milieus. The setting is similar to that of the three-fold structure of the human psyche. It is interesting to note that each milieu can be said to represent a different aspect of the psyche. The first and most well developed of the three settings is the tiny village of Deptford. The portrait painted of this village is rich with dark imagery, and in Jungian terms could be considered the darkness of the subconscious mind. Deep in the dark heart of Deptford lurk the secrets which Percy, Paul, and the narrator, Dunstan, think long buried. But, like subconscious emotions, these secrets drive the adult characters’ actions long after they have escaped the tiny confines of Deptford. Both Percy and Dunstan escape to Toronto, a major city in Canada. The city is not well described in the story, but it does serve to represent the conscious mind. Here in this well-populated milieu, Boy and Dunstan create and live out their public roles. Dunstan, a disciplined man who has long suppressed his emotions, must travel to South America to encounter his emotional side. In Jungian dream interpretation, this part of the world signifies man’s uncontrolled, undeveloped emotions. In the climax, the dark secrets buried in Deptford
finally emerge, as Dunstan, after spending time getting acquainted with his emotions in south America, finally integrates the buried pieces of his psyche with his conscience world in Toronto.

In addition to the richly symbolic physical settings, *The Deptford Trilogy*, beginning with *Fifth Business*, is an attempt by three different people, Ramsay himself, David Staunton (the son of his friend Boy Staunton), and Paul Dempster, to discover the truth about themselves and about the strange series of events in which they are involved. Davies, being an avid student of Jung’s ideas, deploys them in *Fifth Business*. Characters are clear examples of Jungian archetypes and events demonstrate Jung’s idea of synchronicity.

*Fifth Business* begins in the village of Deptford, with a quarrel between two boys. The incident of the two boys occurred in 1960. Davies was haunted by the incident when he began to draft the novel ten years later:

It was simply a scene that kept occurring in my mind, which was of two boys on a village street on a Winter night – I knew from the look of the atmosphere that it must be just around Christmas – time – and one boy threw a snowball at the other boy. Well, that was all there was to it, but it came so often and was so insistent that I had to ask myself, why is that boy doing that and what is behind this and what is going on? (Grant 468)
Many elements of the novel that emerged from this vision were drawn from Davies’s early childhood. When Dunstable is ten years old, he and Staunton have a quarrel one day. Percy’s new sled won’t go as fast as Dunstan’s old one. Humiliated and vindictive, Percy hides a stone the size of a hen’s egg in a snowball and throws it at Dunstan, who ducks. The snowball hits Mary in the head and sends her into labour. Mary Dempster delivered a premature son, Paul. It also results in her permanently losing her reason and becoming what the local Catholic priest calls a “fool saint”, eccentric in her behaviour and indiscriminating in her generosity, up to the point when she scandalizes the town by giving herself to a wandering tramp, whom the trauma of their discovery by a search party in the local hobo jungle turns into a missionary in the city slums. The opening scene demonstrates Jung’s idea of synchronicity. The stone thrown at Ramsay when he was a child reappears decades later in a scandalous suicide or murder. Davies deploys Jung’s idea of introverted and extroverted personality. Ramsay’s character is a classic introverted personality, contrasted throughout the book with the extroverted sensuality of Boy Staunton. Dunstan Ramsay feels responsible for Mrs Dempster’s condition. He describes how as a child he listened “guilt-ridden” (FB 27) to his mother’s account of the first six months of the life of the premature Paul Dempster. Burdened with a Presbyterian conscience, Ramsay carries his guilt with him for the rest of
his life, providing for Mrs. Dempster until she dies. In contrast, Mrs. Dempster’s son Paul runs away from home before the age of ten because his father holds him responsible for his mother’s madness and because he is subject to the cruel jokes of people who think there is something funny about her. When confronted by young Ramsay with his crime, Staunton refuses to acknowledge his responsibility for Mrs. Dempster’s condition, and he promptly forgets the incident. Thus, he can join in with the other Deptford youth calling Mrs. Dempster “hoor” with no sense of shame or compunction since he remains unaware of his part in her story. As a seventy-year-old tycoon, he is genuinely surprised to learn about Mrs. Dempster’s history.

Mrs. Dempster plays a key role in the transformation of Ramsay. Her primary role is that of Ramsay’s personal saint. As a child, he was raised in the Presbyterian Church. He entertains Paul Dempster (at the age of four) with card tricks and with a pretty volume called A Child’s Book of Saints by William Canton. Ramsay eventually rejected the particular doctrines of Presbyterianism, and appreciated the study of the saints. What is more, he took the religious figures as archetypes of universal characters and tales. Hagiography becomes a lifelong occupation for Ramsay. As an adult, Ramsay writes popular books about saints as well as learned articles on saints’ lives for the Jesuit Bollandist
Society. Father Regan, the Roman Catholic priest of Deptford, introduced the concept of saint to adult Ramsay, who, at later stage, realises that Mrs. Dempster is as saint because he can attribute three miracles to her, including his own recovery from a five month coma after being wounded and burnt in World War I. He loses a leg in the trenches during World War I and is awarded a Victoria Cross for heroism. After the war, the public needs heroes, and he is one of them. According to Jung, many archetypes are story characters. The hero is one of the main ones. He is the mana personality and the defeater of evil dragons. Basically, he represents the ego and is often engaged in fighting the shadow. When he is awarded the Victoria Cross by the King of England, Ramsay sees himself and the king as two icons. He knocks out a German machine-gun emplacement in World War I, a chance act performed in the confusion and horror of war. In professions too, people are cast in roles. Although Ramsay does not spend many pages describing his life as a teacher, when he explains why he was forced to relinquish the position of headmaster at Colborne which he had held on an interim basis during World War II, he reveals that he had the public persona for an eccentric schoolmaster – someone who wears the wrong clothes, has easily identifiable personal habits, and is an expert on a peculiar subject, saints.
Dunstan and Percy and Paul are of “the twice born” (230). According to Jung there are four universal archetypes: Mother, Rebirth, Spirit and Trickster. Jung states that there are five forms of rebirth. One of them is called “transmutation.” By “transmutation,” Jung means, “a profound basic change in the essential nature of the individual” (Jung, *Four Archetypes*, 113). Ramsay changes his name from Dunstable to Dunstan after his heroic deed on the battlefield during World War I. After lying in a coma for five months, he awakens to find himself physically transformed, having lost a leg and suffered severe burns on his chest. His last thought before slipping into unconsciousness had been that he had seen Mrs. Dempster’s face on a statue of Virgin and Child. When he awakens five months later, he believes that he has been in a special protected place watched over by the Madonna with Mrs. Dempster’s face. He attributes his recovery not to medical science but to himself, or to “the little Madonna” (*FB* 127), or to “some agencies other than good nursing and medical observation” (242). For a time he has a relationship with his English nurse, Diana Marfleet, and she suggests to change his name from Dunstable to Dunstan:

St. Dunstan was a marvellous person and very much like you – mad about learning, terribly stiff and stern and scowly, and an absolute wizard at withstanding temptation. Do you know that the Devil once came to tempt him in the
form of a fascinating woman, and he caught her nose in his
goldsmith’s tongs and gave it a terrible twist? (97)

Ramsay likes “the idea of a new name”; it suggests “new freedom and a
new personality” (ibid), a kind of miraculous transformation.

Percy’s life is devoted to himself and he operates purely on the
conscious level. Percy is a figure of power, wealth and control. At home,
Staunton creates classic days functional family: He thinks of his wife
Leola as a failure, unsuited to her social position, and tries to remodel
her; he spoils his daughter Caroline, praising her extravagantly for her
good looks; and he nervously watches his son David for any signs of
unmanliness. In business, Staunton cultivates a number of “clean-cut”
young rising executives whose stars fall when they marry and bring their
wives to dinner at Staunton’s. Ramsay sees sex as playing a dominating
part in Staunton’s life, but Staunton as being totally unaware of it,
regarding Freud as “a madman” for bringing everything down to sex the
way he did” (251). After the abdication of King Edward, Staunton’s hero,
Boy goes into a funk and leaves his family temporarily, sending Leola
into a suicidal tailspin when Ramsay rejects her advances.

After World War II and the death of Leola, Boy Staunton becomes
involved in public life. He thinks that he can solve Canada’s problems by
applying business principles to the government. He does not do too well
with the electorate because he cannot hide his contempt for the common
man and he is too handsome for a politician, but he draws the attention of Denyse Hornick who manipulates him into marrying her and campaigning for the position of Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario, an appointed position that is mainly ceremonial and is costly to whoever holds the post. He is on the verge of achieving his goal when he dies mysteriously, his body found in the driver’s seat of a submerged car in Toronto harbour with a stone in his mouth. His death precipitates Dunstan Ramsay’s heart attack when Dunstan hears himself identified by the Brazen Head in Magnus Eisengrim’s magic show as one of Staunton’s murderers, “the inevitable fifth, who was keeper of his conscience and keeper of the stone” (262).

Of the three characters in *Fifth Business* Percy Boyd Staunton is one who changed his name. Percy Boyd Staunton becomes Boy Staunton during World War I, and it suited him admirably. Just as Childe Rowland and Childe Harold were so called because they epitomized romance and gentle birth, he was Boy Staunton because he summed up in himself so much of the glory of youth in the postwar period. So for Staunton, the name suggests his identification with an era and a character type epitomized in the fiction of F. Scott Fitzgerald. As he grows older, the name seems increasingly inappropriate, but the suggestion of someone
whose understanding always remains on a naïve, undeveloped level makes it appropriate for this character.

The third character who experiences a name change is Paul Dempster. He becomes Magnus Eisengrim. He is unlike Ramsay and Staunton. They are grown up under the protection of their parents whereas Dempster ran away from home and has severed his connections with his family. He is an outcast who is never accepted by the locals except Dunstan. He never dwells on his abduction. He remains loyal to Willard, who teaches him the tricks of the magician’s craft. He has become a magician, an artist who travels across the world. His new name bears no connection to the one he had; the face he shows to the world purposely conceals the real man underneath. When Ramsay encounters Magnus Eisengrim in a magic show at Guadalupe shortly after World War II, it takes Ramsay some time to be sure that Eisengrim is really Paul Dempster. Ramsay wonders how Demspter came “by this new self” (267) but he does not find out. Eisengrim remains mysterious in this novel – a totally fabricated personality whose motives are not clear.

In Europe, Paul Demspter meets Liesl who assists Magnus Eisengrim in his travelling magic show. She is bisexual, and the victim of an early adolescent affliction which leaves her unusually tall and with large features. Liesl symbolizes the Devil in this novel. Liesl plays the
role of the Devil who tempts Dunstan. Ramsay Liesl teaches Dunstan the essence of Jung’s concept of the ‘shadow self’. Liesl instructs Dunstan to make friends with his personal devil. This personal devil can be likened to Jung’s shadow self, which consists of all the characteristics and traits an individual suppresses or denies; the traits, which an individual suppresses, are those traits which contradict the individual’s positive view of themselves. Jung observes that one should not keep other people’s secrets. In Dunstan’s case, he suppresses the memory of revealing one of Percy’s secrets to Paul. He suppresses it because it does not suit his image of himself as Percy’s confidant, and thus on some deep level he has carried guilt for this betrayal. But in fact, he only betrayed the confidence in the first place to cheer up Paul after Percy was cruel to Paul. Thus, telling secrets is not always bad, as Liesl makes Dunstan understand. According to Jung, Liesl is right. When we suppress our negative qualities, they bubble to the surface in destructive ways. But if we can get to know our shadow selves, we can see even flaws, in a more positive light, and find room to accommodate, rather than suppress them. Liesl says this best when she tells Dunstan that:

there is a whole great piece of your life that is unlived, denied, set aside. That is why at fifty you can’t bear it any longer and fly all to pieces and pour out your heart to the first really intelligent woman you have met – me, that’s to
say – and get into a schoolboy yearning for a girl who is as far from you as if she lived on the moon. This is the revenge of the unlived life, Ramsay. Suddenly it makes a fool of you. You should take a look at this side of your life you have not lived. (260)

Dunstan does indeed learn to make friends with his personal devils. She is Ramsay’s confessor and lover and critic and completes him as a man.

Magnus and Liesl meet and befriend Dustan in Mexico on one of his hagiographical pilgrimages. At the end of the novel, Percy meets Magnus for the first time. They are in Dunstan’s study, during Magnus’s first tour of Canada. Mary’s ashes are brought down from a shelf. The stone is on the desk; it is used as a paperweight. Dunstan tells the story of the snowball. When Percy objects, Dunstan explains:

I’m simply trying to recover something of the totality of your life. Don’t you want to possess it as a whole – the bad with the good? I told you once you’d made a God of yourself, and the insufficiency of it forced you to become an atheist. It’s time you tried to be a human being. Then may be something bigger than yourself will come up on your horizon. (268)

Humiliated and vindictive, Percy attacks Dunstan, but makes the tactical error of referring to Paul’s “miserable mother”, thus dismissing the reality of Mary and her son. Magnus calms them down and asks Percy for a lift to his hotel. Percy is found dead the next morning. Magnus and
Liesl leave the country. Dunstan finds his paperweight missing and has a heart attack. When he recovers, he receives a postcard from Liesl begging him to join them in Switzerland, where his journey into self-discovery continues.

2.3.2 In regard to his second novel of the trilogy, Davies observes:

I feel impelled to write another novel about the same characters, but from a quite different point of view – that of Edward Staunton, the son of Boy Staunton, who is said to have become a lawyer and a drunk. But I see this man as one of his father’s principal victims, but a victim who in the end escapes his father’s toils. He adored his father, and wanted to be like him, but for the obvious reason – that sons, in one way or another are impelled to live out the unlived portion of their father’s lives, and because Edward is a man of greater sensitivity than Boy – he could not do it. . . . How does a son face the reality of a dominant and successful father? (Grant 487)

In his trilogy Davies sets out to show the consequences of the snowballing from the standpoints of the three Deptford boys who were most affected, but in The Manticore he actually circumvents the problem of how to perceive and present the insensitive and monstrously self-conceited Boy Staunton by showing Boy’s life through the eyes and feelings of his son, the brilliant and alcoholic lawyer David Staunton, “Who had a dark reputation because the criminal world thought so highly
of him, and who played up to the role, and who secretly fancied himself as a magician of the courtroom” (M 320). Realizing that the shock of his father’s dramatic death has pushed him to the edge of a mental breakdown, David decides to subject himself to psychoanalysis, and it is this analysis, conducted in Zurich by the Jungian Dr. Joanna von Heller, that forms the frame of the book.

*The Manticore* is in three parts – “Why I went to Zurich,” “David Against the Trolls”, and “My Sorgenfrei Diary.” Part One, “Why I Went to Zurich,” explores David’s motives for choosing Jungian psychoanalysis. In his words, “The Jungians had two negative recommendations: The Freudians hated them, and Zurich was a long way from Toronto” (281). The novel is fundamentally the process of David’s analysis. He is under the guidance of Dr. Johanna von Haller. He is shocked to discover his analyst is a woman, Johanna, who encourages him to talk about the events around his father’s death. Dr. Johanna takes the platonic modes of apprehension and understands them as thinking, feeling, sensation and intuition. David is quite short of feeling and suspicious of intuition. And as the analysis proceeds, another clever device is used. In order to speed things up to give us much more details of the analysis, lawyer David is assigned to prepare court briefs to ‘defend’ himself in the court of judge David Staunton. As his story
unfolds, we discover how hard it was for him to cope with identifying the body, managing his step-mother’s desire for a pseudo-state funeral, and being executor of his father’s will – which he has left out since he has been a disappointment as far as his father’s dynastic ambitions are concerned; as in *A Mixture of Frailties*, the family money will return to David’s legitimate son and heir, should he ever have one. Once his need for anamnestic is established, he enters the next phase of psychoanalysis: looking at people he knows, looking at people he does not know but who are portions of himself, looking at what he has remembered, looking at things he thought he had forgotten looking deeper into that part of him which is not unique but is part of humanity’s common heritage. The aim of the analysis is:

“I am going to try to help you in the process of becoming yourself”

“My best self, I expected you to say. A good little boy”

“Your real self may not be a good little boy. It would be very unfortunate if that were so. Your real self may be something very disagreeable and unpleasant.” (334)

David is not an easy and cooperative patient in the early days and one insightful session sets some of the parameters of what he will have to confront:
David: “I am ready and anxious to go ahead. I learn quickly. I am not stupid.”

Dr. Von Haller: “. . . You are stupid. You can think and you can learn. You do these things like an educated modern man. But you cannot feel, except like a primitive. Your plight is a common one, especially in our day when thinking and learning have been given such absurd prominence, and we have learned our way into world-wide messes. We must educate your feeling and persuade you to experience like a man and not like a maimed, dull child. (362)

Part Two, “David Against the Trolls”, explores: the scope and limitations of Jungianism as a prism for exploring David’s unique unconscious and persona. Through his journal, and Johanna’s observations on his anamnesis, he learns he is a thinker not a feeler, and he recognizes slowly, that people are not archetypes; they are people. He gradually identifies the way his ego has projected the “comedy company of the psyche” onto others; his shadow onto the brother of his lifelong family retainer, his friend onto the stuffed bear of his childhood, his anima onto the Jewish girl he loved as a young man, his magus onto his blind genius of a law tutor at Oxford. The only archetype missing is his great mother, who remains hidden, since his inner conflict is with his great troll, his father, who did so much conscious good and caused so much unconscious harm, between throwing the stone hidden in the snowball and dying with the stone hidden in his mouth. Eventually, Johanna feels
David no longer needs to be guided in his anamnesis, can continue his analysis himself, and become stronger and more independent. David, who is still a rationalist, is not convinced and wants their relationship to continue.

Part Three, “My Sorgenfrei Diary”, accomplishes what Jungian psychoanalysis cannot. David leaves Zurich for a holiday in St. Gall, where he meets Dunstan and Leisl, who invite him to her magnificent enchanted castle, Sorgenfrei, which means free of care. Dunstan is Leisl’s permanent guest, and Magnus, the master of illusions, is also there preparing for another world tour. David is still burdened, he still wants to know how Percy died, the individual and collective damage Percy has caused is still unresolved. Three important things happen at Sorgenfrei. First, Liesl takes him deep into a hidden care, where our ancestors once experienced awe and the numinous in bear worship, and where she now worships. When he tries to escape from the hidden cave, he is possessed by the spirit of his forebears and literally shits himself – that is, he gets in touch with his shit – which gives him the strength to move on. Second, the next day, Dunstan gives him a gingerbread bear, so he can eat his father’s sins. Third, later that day, Dunstan takes him for a walk to a nearby precipice and asks whether he still has the stone found in his father’s mouth. David takes the stone from his pocket and gives to
Dunstan, who: “. . . raised his arm high, and with a snap of the wrist threw it far into the valley. In that instant, it was possible to see that he had once been a boy. We both watched until the little speck could no longer be seen again the valley dusk” (531). This happens on Christmas Day, Jesus’ birthday. David is now free to return to Canada and grow into the fullness of his humanity.

2.3.3 Davies realized that this novel would “complete the story that runs through Fifth Business and The Manticore,” (Grant 505) and that together the three would constitute a trilogy. As he told Roper: “It was never my intention to write a trilogy, or even to write the second book. It just happened. The story ran on, and required to be told. I have answered all enquiries, about a trilogy with an assured No up to this time. But I have changed (my mind)” (505).

‘Fifth Business’ had told the story of Dunstan Ramsay, one of the three Deptford boys whose lives had been profoundly affected by the loaded snowball. Now in making World of Wonders the story of Paul Dempster, Davies was also inviting readers to see The Manticore, at least partly, as the story of Boy Staunton. From the moment he had conceived it, he had meant The Manticore not only to deal with David Staunton’s recollection with himself and his father, but also to tell the story of Boy Staunton’s own life as ‘reflected from his son.’” (511)
World of Wonders is in three parts – “A Bottle in the Smoke,” “Merlin’s Laugh,” and “Le Lit de Justice”. Davies uses the ‘accidental’ revelation of a great magician’s life – by the magician himself – to complete The Deptford Trilogy. This novel answers the question asked in The Manticore: who killed Boy Staunton?”

In “A Bottle in the Smoke,” Magnus tells the story – history – myth of Paul’s ten years with the travelling circus between 1918 and 1928. After many years with the group, he becomes part of an English theatre cast. His change in life from abused circus performer to famed magician is one filled with fear, hard work and determination. If his decade with the travelling circus was a period of hellich abuse, perhaps it was no more hellish or abusive than his life as Mary’s son back in Deptford.

According to Davies, each stage of life brings its own challenges, which must be confronted if we are not to lose our bearings. Either way, our choices have real consequences that can extend far into the future. To understand our present, then, we must understand what we have inherited from our past: it has much to teach us. The collective unconscious, the deepest level of the mind, is a particularly potent legacy from the human past that we share.
Davies’ world-view is woven deeply into the trilogy. We have seen Dunstan Ramsay and David Staunton in *Fifth Business* and *The Manticore* meet the crisis of middle age, both of them confronting and coming to terms with their shadow and anima. In *World of Wonders*, Magnus, too, successfully reorients himself as he moves into the second half of life. Like Dunstan and David, he begins with very little self-knowledge. His relationship with Willard can be read as a magic-realist representation of Hegel’s master-slave dialectic, and his relationship with Happy Hannah, the bible-bashing fat lady, can be read as a magic realist representation of the Protestant world-view. These influences, Athens and Jerusalem, or Hellenism and Hebraism, are powerful forces to be reckoned with in the Western imagination and Paul reckons with them quite well. A gypsy fortune teller prophesies bad luck for the travelling circus, which will be good luck for Paul, provided he is smart and keeps his eyes open.

At the beginning of the part two, “Merlin’s Laugh”, the film is in the can. Magnus and Dunstan and Leisl travel to London to see it. On arrival, Magnus continues with the next stage of his story-history-myth. After Willard dies, Paul joins the theatre company of Sir John and Lady Tresize, the first persons he admits to loving. Sir John was the most popular Romantic actor of his day; an egoist with a Celtic surname, who
fought against Modernism to maintain a nineteenth century idea of theatre in the twentieth century: “He believed devoutly in what he did; he believed in romance, and he couldn’t understand that the concept of Romance was changing” (WW 722). Paul eventually becomes Sir John’s double, which means getting inside him, learning his rhythm, and becoming him rather than simply imitating him. This movement beyond mimesis – and ongoing loyalty to the Romantic tradition – is the source of Paul’s creative power. Although it is the twilight of their career, the Tresizes take their theatre company on a long winter tour of Canada with their most successful repertoire. On this tour, Paul encounters his native land and is reconciled to all of it except Deptford. On their return to London, the Tresizes retire and eventually pass away. Paul moves to Switzerland, where he is absorbed into Leisl’s world and becomes a famous magician. When the young, grotesquely deformed Liesl falls in love with Magnus, he politely rebuffs her advances and tells her about his relationship with Willard and Milady, at which she jeers: “From buggery to selfless, knightly adoration at one splendid leap!” (838). They get into a knock-down, drag-out fight, which ends in sexual intercourse, and in time, they develop a warm friendship. When Liesl describes herself as “the Loathly Maiden in the Arthurian stories,” (ibid) it is clear that in Jungian terms she is a woman upon whom one cannot hang an anima projection. Each of the men in turn is initially repelled by her hideous
appearance, and this allows them to get to know and appreciate her as a person, and eventually to recognize her peculiar beauty as well.

Boy Staunton, in contrast, fails to make the mid-life reorientation. Clinging to the values of the first half of life, he gains neither wisdom nor self-knowledge, as he grows older. For him, age brings waning sexual prowess, the offer of a splendid post that carries no real power and finally the desire to “get into a car and drive away from the whole damned thing” (ibid).

Part Three: ‘Le Lit de Justice’, takes place in a large bed at The Savoy, as a bed is the best place “for a philosophical discussion, an argument, and if necessary a show-down” (845). Dunstan and Magnus and Leisl are nicely tucked up. Dunstan wants to know how Percy died; he has always suspected Magnus killed Percy for revenge. But Magnus admits to owing everything he has become to Percy throwing the stone in the snowball, and makes the counter accusation that Dunstan had the real motive for killing Percy. According to Magnus, Percy took his own life, once he realised that being Lieutenant-Governor meant the end of his freedom of choice. His only real choice was to abdicate as his friend and hero Edward VIII had abdicated, since he believed Edward’s abdication “took guts” (859). So Magnus did not murder Percy, but neither did he stop Percy from committing suicide, as he says: “Was I the man to fret
about the end of his life when he had been so cavalier about the beginning of mine?” (832). Even Magnus, the egoist, the master illusionist, believes God is not dead and God is not mocked.

3. In all three novels of *The Deptford Trilogy*, Davies portrays myth and fairy-tale as transmitters of the human inheritance. Dunstan, in particular, articulates the view that myth depicts recurring character types, situations and actions. His brief references in *Fifth Business* to Oedipus, Mars, Venus and Ganymede reveal a constant awareness of the mythical elements that underlie our apparently ordinary lives. When Boy shows him a set of nude photographs of his wife, Leola, Dunstan is reminded of the myth of King Candaules, who displayed his queen in the nude to his friend Gyges. He tells the story, with both its unpleasant endings, to Boy to make him realize that he has carried his ego games into dangerous territory. Boy scoffs, but the myth later proves relevant. Leola does take a fancy to Dunstan, who debates with himself: “Was the story of Gyges and Candaules to have the ending in which Gyges takes his friend’s wife? No; upon the whole I thought not” (*FB* 161). In the second ending, Gyges kills Candaules. Although Dunstan’s part in Boy’s death is unclear at the end of *Fifth Business*, he shares responsibility for it. Dunstan makes it clear that not only do myths have contemporary relevance, but those who recognize their depiction of deep psychological patterns gain a measure
of insight and control over their lives as a result. He outmanoeuvres Boy because he has a deeper understanding of the game that Boy himself has introduced.

David Staunton in *The Manticore* recalls Dunstan’s insistence on the importance of myth in his history classes at Calborne College:

> The bee in his bonnet was that history and myth are two aspects of a kind of grand pattern in human destiny: history is the mass of observable or recorded fact, but myth is the abstract or essence of it. He used to dredge up extraordinary myths that none of us had ever heard of and demonstrate – in a fascinating way, I must admit – how they contained some truth that was applicable to widely divergent historical situations. (*M* 377-78)

At the end of the book, Dunstan recounts the legend of the St. Gall, concluding with an observation especially relevant to David: “if we are really wise, we will make a working arrangement with the bear that lives with us, because otherwise we shall starve or perhaps be eaten by the bear” (547). When, in *World of Wonders*, Dunstan suggests that Magnus’ initial servitude to and ultimate vengeance on Willard is an instance of the myth of “the man who is in search of his soul, and who must struggle with a monster to secure it” (*WW* 836), he is drawing a modern parallel with the stories of saints who killed or mastered dragons.
In addition to relevant of myth to the contemporary situations, Davies would like to bring to the notice of the readers that the past is much alive in the present. Every major character of the trilogy faces the burden of the past. Near the end of *World of Wonders*, Liesl describes the “Magian World View” that, according to Spengler, was embedded in the outlook of the Middle Ages:

It was a sense of the unfathomable wonder of the invisible world that existed side by side with a hard recognition of the roughness and cruelty and day-to-day demands of the tangible world. It was a readiness to see demons where nowadays we see neuroses, and to see the hand of a guardian angel in what we are apt to shrug off ungratefully as a stroke of luck. It was religion, but a religion with a thousand gods, none of them all-powerful and most of them ambiguous in their attitude toward man. It was poetry and wonder which might reveal themselves in the dunghill, and it was an understanding of the dunghill that lurks in poetry and wonder. (835)

To Liesl, it is a great loss that:

We have educated ourselves into a world from which wonder, and the fear and dread and splendour and freedom of wonder have been banished. Of course wonder is costly. You could not incorporate it into a modern state, because it is the antithesis of the anxiously worshipped security which is what a modern state is asked to give. Wonder is
marvellous but it is also cruel, cruel, cruel. It is undemocratic, discriminatory, and pitiless. (836)

The capacity for wonder is present in all three of the central characters – Dunstan, David Staunton and Magnus. Dunstan believes Mary Dempster to be a saint, and tells his friend Padre Blazon about meeting the devil disguised as a woman. David Staunton glimpses the Magian World View on his way out of the bear care, and Magnus, who is far less a rationalist than either of the others, finds wonder everywhere – in the stories from A Child’s Book of Saints, in the carnival, in the theatre, in his feelings for Milady, in the great cross-Canada train tour, even in mechanical toys.

All three novels suggest that it is the role of the artist to make wonders accessible to the rest of us. In *Fifth Business*, Magnus makes it possible for audiences hungry for “romance and marvels” to experience the sense of wonder he himself experiences daily. In *The Manticore*, the analyst tells David that:

> great myths are not invented stories but objectivizations of images and situations that lie very deep in the human spirit; a poet may make a great embodiment of a myth, but it is the masc of humanity that knows the myth to be a spiritual truth, and that is why they cherish his poem. (M 429)

As the creator of the *Soiree of Illusions* in *Fifth Business*, Magnus presents “such visions and illusions as had nourished the imagination of
mankind for two thousand years” (FB 205). As the great magician in *World of Wonders* – “A man who can stand stark naked in the midst of a crowd and keep it gaping for an hour while he manipulates a few coins, or cards, or billiard balls – he embodies the wizardly aspect of the Wise Old Man” (WW 555).

The trilogy also expresses many of Davies’ convictions about the great forces of good and evil and their relation to human life. Dunstan Ramsay in *Fifth Business* is convinced of the saintliness of Mary Dempster and of the miraculousness of her three interventions into the natural order. He has a brush with the Devil, and achieves greater self-knowledge as a result. David Staunton in *The Manticore* views worships as a matter of convention – until he experiences the terror and awe that grip him in the scramble from the care. Magnus Eisengrim in *World of Wonders* permits the Devil to intervene in his life when a boy, and believes himself condemned to Hell as a result, until he is redeemed by the influence of Milady and later acknowledges and controls his wolfishly evil streak. Boy, the anti-hero of the trilogy, has a mind closed to revelation. His religious observance is dictated by society’s values rather than conviction, and in the end, he becomes an atheist. Many of the passages that surround Magnus’ narration, introducing speculations about God and the Devil, give direct expression to Davies’ own views.
Davies’ *The Deptford Trilogy* – *Fifth Business, The Manticore, and World of Wonders* – conveys the social stratifications of his microcosms through a delineation of his town’s (Deptford) religious denominations. Within the scope of a dissertation, one cannot make a comprehensive study of religious denominations of every novel of the trilogy. Davies explores alternatives to the Canadian condition what he termed “the bizarre and passionate life of the Canadian people” (Cameron 73) perhaps implying that Canadians could cultivate a Magian view of a world of wonder. All these alternative religions – Roman Catholic saints and miracles, Jungian archetypes, and primitive bear-worshippers are set in the Old World, however. Clearly, the New World offers Davies no alternative.

*The Deptford Trilogy* is a richly plotted study of three individuals’ journey to self-discovery that mingles humour, mystery, magic, grotesqueries and the Jungian theory of archetypes. There has been much criticism pointing out the presence of Jungian archetypes in Davies’s fiction. They are there, but they are not imposed on the material; rather they emerge from the narrative elements that are presented novelistically.
REFERENCES


