Northrop Frye Goes to the Movies

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NORTHROP FRYE GOES TO THE MOVIES

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This dissertation is dedicated to my grandparents, Roger and Grace Hamilton, who have always been spiritual guides, Mary Raymo, and the late Gordon Raymo, who taught me to somehow love writing.
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ABSTRACT

Northrop Frye, in his *Anatomy of Criticism*, identified four main myths: Comedy, Romance, Tragedy, and Irony/Satire. These were essentially genres, each of which move through six phases. Frye believed a critic could simply organize literature into these phases to show that literature formed "an ideal order" (*Anatomy of Criticism* 18). For each of these phases, Frye identified typical narrative structures and characteristics--primal myths with which humanity was and is consistently concerned. Comedy is the reconciliation of the protagonist with his community at the end, Romance chronicles what seems like a knight's quest, Tragedy shows us a hero's separation from his society, and Irony/Satire gives us the everyday difficulties and dissembling of life.

Frye refers mostly to literature in *Anatomy of Criticism* and only a few times to film. Yet as Frye himself recognized in interviews in *A World in a Grain of Sand* (collected by Robert Denham), film "is a literary art in itself, and it has a power of expressing symbolism that … is unmatched by any other form in the history of mankind" (47) in its "extraordinary immediacy" (202). This dissertation has shown that the *Anatomy of Criticism* could categorize not only written literature but also 20th century film. Specifically, these Western films were matched to Frye's Romance phases, War films to Frye's Tragedy phases, Film Noir films to Frye's Irony/Satire phases, as well as Comedy films to Frye's Comedy phases.
CHAPTER ONE
METHODOLOGY AND FRYE'S ARCHETYPAL CRITICISM

Framework/Background

Northrop Frye, in his *Anatomy of Criticism*, identified four main myths. These were essentially genres, each of which moves through six phases. For each of these phases, Frye identified typical narrative structures and characteristics. Frye believed a critic could simply organize literature into these phases to show that literature formed “an ideal order” (*Anatomy of Criticism* 18).

Frye attempted to organize this ideal order through archetypal criticism—a type of criticism attempting to identify the primal myths with which humanity was and is consistently concerned. These are life patterns one’s ancestors experienced: “birth, death, love, family life, struggle” (Scott 21). Archetypal critics merely agree that there are certain patterns and symbols cultures share, regardless of how they came to share them.

Dissertation Question and Goal

In this dissertation, I will attempt to identify whether Frye’s four myths divided into twenty-four phases are applicable to Twentieth Century American and European film. Using the mythic approach, I will make no assumptions about whether the films are good or bad (Frye, in *The Anatomy of Criticism*, called such value judgments “an illusion in the history of taste” (20)). The goal will be to show how each film could serve as one of Frye's phases of myth by drawing on past mythic plot lines. In *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye used mostly examples from written literature to give examples of these phases. I intend to show how film literature can also easily illustrate and fit into each of the six phases of each of Frye’s four mythoi. As Frye himself recognized in interviews in *A World in a Grain of Sand* (collected by Robert Denham), film “is a literary art in itself, and it has a power of expressing symbolism that . . . is unmatched by any other form in the history of mankind” (47) in its “extraordinary immediacy” (202). This is the importance of showing that Frye’s *Anatomy of Criticism* is applicable not simply to
Medieval, Renaissance, Restoration, Romantic, Victorian, and Modern literature (as Frye has shown) but also to Twentieth Century Film.

Jim Kitses calls for just such a study as this when he writes in his *Horizons West*: "What are the archetypal elements we sense within the genre and how do they function? As Northrop Frye has shown in his monumental *The Anatomy of Criticism*, for centuries this immensely tangled ground has remained almost wholly unexplored in literature itself. The primitive state of film criticism inevitably reveals a yawning abyss in this direction" (14). In other words, as Andrew Tudor would call it, this will be "an abstract exploration of the cyclical recurrence of certain themes" (134) in Twentieth Century Western film.

This dissertation, written primarily for scholars of film and literature, will be the first book-length study which examines film solely through the lens of Frye’s *Anatomy*. There have been numerous articles and books written on myth structure in movies, like James Clauss’s “Descent into Hell: Mythic Paradigms in *The Searchers*” (which shows how *The Searchers* follows archetypal patterns like that found in *The Divine Comedy* etc.) and Stuart Kaminsky’s *American Film Genres*, which analyzes movies as part of an ‘ideal order’ but which uses eight genres (Frye used only four).

Recently, William K. Ferrell’s *Literature and Film as Modern Mythology* categorizes literature and the films based on it according to classical myths (not Frye’s phases), like the Prometheus myth, for instance, or the Creation narrative of the Hebrew Bible. Although it cites Frye as, essentially, a progenitor of archetypal criticism, it only uses Frye in defining the genres and only twice mentions Frye’s phases within the genres. Susan Mackey-Kallis’ *The Hero and the Perennial Journey Home in American Film* also emphasizes myths, especially quests, which “invite audiences to change rather than crystallizing status-quo ” (236). Such myths, according to Mackey-Kallis, “may be deemed superior to those that do not” challenge the status-quo. Despite all these excellent studies and more, no book has used Frye’s *Anatomy of Criticism* as closely as I will in establishing Frye’s ‘ideal order.’
I will now develop the methodology for the dissertation, explain the movies I will use and why, and further interpret Frye’s archetypal phases and analogues.

**Frye’s Genre Categories Translated to Film**

Frye’s four mythoi presented in *The Anatomy of Criticism* are Comedy, Romance, Tragedy, and Irony/Satire. In this study, I plan to consider Comedy films for Frye’s Comedy mythos, Western films for Frye’s Romance mythos, War films for Frye’s Tragedy mythos, and Film Noir films for Frye’s Irony/Satire mythos.

It should be noted that Frye's archetypal criticism is independent of historical and chronological considerations. Frye is simply concerned with narrative. However, some of the film genres which I am equating to Frye's mythoi are chronologically bound. The Western movie is certainly a less common sight in movie theatres at the end of the twentieth century than in the early twentieth century. The Film Noir genre, the equivalent of Frye's Irony/Satire mythos begins in the forties, according to film critic John Belton, and lasts until, depending upon the theorist, anywhere from the late fifties to this first decade of the twenty-first century. Of course, Frye makes no reference to such chronology in literature, although it's important in understanding film genre.

**Comedy.** Frye’s study of Comedy in literature, applies *mutatis mutandis* to film.¹ Frye writes: “The tendency of comedy is to include as many people as possible in its final society” (165). Frye defines a Comedy as simply that which leads to inclusion, where “the blocking characters are more often reconciled or converted than simply repudiated” (165), although there are unsuccessful as well as successful phases in Frye's Comedy, as we shall see. For a successful example, Frye uses a Greek Comedy plot type, where “[w]hat normally happens is that a young man wants a young woman, that his desire is resisted by some opposition, usually paternal, and that near the end of the play some twist in the plot enables the hero to have his will” (163). Of course, most twentieth-century Comedy films, like Frye postulated for literature, are characterized by a

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¹ Interestingly, in one of his scarce references to the cinema, Frye writes about the Comedy mythos: “In a movie, where darkness permits a more erotically oriented audience, the plot usually moves toward an act which, like death in Greek Tragedy, takes place offstage, and is symbolized by a closing embrace” (*Anatomy of Criticism* 164).
final, happy, communal society (as, for instance, in *It Happened One Night* or *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*).

Frye's use of Comedy--very similar to the way Dante used the word *Comedy* to describe his combined *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso* with Dante's journey finally ending in heaven--is much more of a medieval definition of Comedy than a modern one. For instance, in *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms*, Ross Murfin and Supryia Ray define Comedy as "any amusing and entertaining work" (53). However, they do note that "[d]uring the Middle Ages, the term comedy was applied to any literary work that had a happy ending and a style less exalted than that ascribed to tragedy" (53). Some of Frye's phases of Comedy, however, also seem to hint at what we today would call dark Comedy or Tragicomedy, of which there doesn't seem to have been very much of a medieval conception.

**Romance.** Similarly, Frye divides Romance into three different stages for the hero: “the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures,” “the crucial struggle,” and “the exaltation of the hero” (187).² Perhaps the film genre which best exhibits these characteristics is the Western, where the cowboys are the heroic knights who set off on many adventures or quests—as in *The Searchers*, for instance—and are often redeemed as heroes through this quest.³

**Tragedy.** In his interview with Janet Somerville collected in *A World in a Grain of Sand*, Frye defines Tragedy as being “really about disaster” (85). If Comedy is about the hero's integration into his society, Tragedy is about the hero's separation from society (37).⁴ Frye also hints in the *Anatomy* that Tragedy emphasizes the natural order of life—i.e. death—without any supernatural salvation from it (206-207). Of course, Twentieth Century wars (and most other wars), with the Twentieth Century civilization’s

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² Of course, the modern definition of Romance can also mean an emphasis on romantic love. But Murfin and Ray in the *Bedford Glossary* hint that Romance, even today, still retains some of the elements of the chivalric knight, except with an emphasis on his romantic love (346). Interestingly, according to Murfin and Ray: "the landscapes of romance are often outward manifestations of the hero's or heroine's inner state" (346), which certainly seems to apply to the wide-ranging, adventurous cowboy.

³ Many science-fiction films also fit Frye’s Romance category, as they include modern-day cowboys on quests in the frontier of space.

⁴ This seems to simply be a concise definition of the modern one. For instance, Murfin and Ray, in their *Bedford Glossary*, state that in Tragedy "catastrophic consequences for the protagonist (and often other individuals in tragic works) result from some error in judgment (hamartia) made by the protagonist" (404).
geometrically increasing technology, led to the savage death of many and were, almost without exception, disasters. This is why the War film illustrates Frye’s Tragedy mythos, although other types of film also contain Tragedy as well.

**Irony/Satire.** Film Noir is a movie with a “gloomy or fatalistic character” ("Film Noir"). Frye defines the Irony mythos as the “‘realistic’ level of experience” (366). The term refers equally to a genre or a style of film characterizing "a dark, corrupt and violent world" (Blankford et al 97). The seemingly no-nonsense characters often found in Film Noir seem to represent very well Frye’s idea of Irony. Of course, many hard-boiled Film Noir detectives, like Sam Spade or Phillip Marlowe, pride themselves on their toughness, realism and observation of details.

Frye's definition of Irony is rooted in Socrates as an *eiron* or self-deprecator (Frye 172). Socrates pretended not to have any knowledge in order to draw out those around him. Irony came to mean, as Frye describes it, a "technique of saying as little and meaning as much as possible" (40), which fits Murfin and Ray's definition of Irony in the *Bedford Glossary*: "contradiction or incongruity between appearance and reality" (176). Of course, such dissembling is commonly a technique of Film Noir detectives such as Humphrey Bogart's Sam Spade, who pretends to have the Maltese Falcon when he doesn't (at least early in the movie), and such pretending actually keeps him alive.

Frye defines a satirist as somebody more interested in surviving everyday life than in espousing some moral imperative (as Frye believes a philosopher would) (229). This also seems to fit a Film Noir private eye, who sometimes seems more concerned with making a decent living than being honest and truthful. As Bogart's Spade tells Mary Astor's O'Shaughnessy in *The Maltese Falcon* (1941): "We didn't believe your story, Mrs. O'Shaughnessy; we believed your two-hundred dollars."

**Brief Summary of Frye’s Phases and the Movies Illustrating Them**

The following films were selected because they are excellent, typical examples of films that fit Frye’s phases.
**Comedy First Phase.** A Comedy of everyday experience, where the hero “triumphs or remains undefeated” (177) after a “potentially tragic crisis” (179), all while an angry, abusive “father” (*senex iratus*) threatens him. *Our Gang Follies of 1938* (1937) is an everyday childhood story of over-ambition. Alfalfa (Carl Switzer), the ‘king of crooners’ and singer of sentimental love songs, decides to instead become an opera singer. He finally returns to crooning after a nightmare about a tyrannical opera manager (Henry Brandon)—Frye’s tyrannical *senex iratus* whom Alfalfa looks to as a father figure for his opera career—who has signed him to a contract and forced him to sing in the street for money.

**Comedy Second Phase.** A very real, everyday hero “does not transform a humorous society but simply escapes or runs away from it, leaving its structure as it was before” (180). In *City Lights* (1931) the Tramp (Charles Chaplin) establishes an on and off again relationship with a millionaire (Harry Myers): good when the millionaire is drunk, bad when the millionaire is sober. Eventually, the Tramp is able to convince the once again drunken millionaire to pay for a blind flower girl’s (Virginia Cherril) operation to help her see again. The movie ends with the Tramp—still poor and penniless—walking free in the city after being imprisoned for supposedly stealing from a sobered millionaire, but the flower girl can see.

**Comedy Third Phase.** “A *senex iratus* or other humor gives way to a young man’s desires” (180). *It Happened One Night* (1934) is about Ellie Andrews (Claudette Colbert) trying to escape from her domineering father (Walter Connolly). She meets Peter Warne (Clark Gable), and the two finally decide they love each other. Mr. Andrews, who at first is suspicious of Warne, gives his approval when he realizes Warne is not a gold-digger.

**Comedy Fourth Phase.** The “pattern of a temperate social order on the stage” (182) is set up, and this happy, idealistic, innocent society triumphs definitively, as opposed to simply escaping from the greater society around it. *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939) features an idealistic senator Jefferson Smith (James Stewart) who is able to withstand, and eventually triumph over, corruption in Washington.

**Comedy Fifth Phase.** A comedy where the group moves from a “lower world of confusion” (represented by the sea) to an “upper world of order” (184) and where “the
comic ending is less a matter of the way the plot turns out than of the perspective of the audience” (184). *Gilligan’s Island*–“Two on a Raft” (1964) was the first original episode where the skipper (Alan Hale Jr.) and Gilligan (Bob Denver) construct a raft to escape the island. After another huge storm, they find themselves safe back on the same island (although they don’t know they are on the same island).

**Comedy Sixth Phase.** The comedic society falls apart into isolated, individual units (as Frye puts it: “the social units of comedy become small and esoteric, or even confined to a single individual” (185)) and dies. *Network* (1976) is a dark comedy about an insane TV news anchorman (Peter Finch). His ratings rise as his insanity increases until he becomes corrupted by big-market politics and, consequently, becomes bland and boring. Finally, he is killed in an attempt by network executives to raise ratings once again.

**Romance First Phase.** New life, tutored by a fatherly role model (“sometimes represented by a wise old man or teacher” (199)), escapes from a doomed land, saving others from great disaster. *The Searchers* (1956) involves Martin Pawley (Jeffrey Hunter) and Ethan Edwards’ (John Wayne) search for Pawley’s adopted sister and Edwards’ niece Debbie Edwards (Natalie Wood). The young Debbie (Lana Wood) has been kidnapped by an Indian raiding party while Pawley and Edwards were away hunting cattle stealers. Eventually, Pawley and Edwards are able to save Debbie from Comanche warriors.

**Romance Second Phase.** This includes an Edenic, ideal world, full of “the chaste love that precedes marriage” (200), where “the sense of being close to a moral taboo is very frequent” (200). *Shane* (1953) is about an extremely quick gunslinger, Shane (Alan Ladd), who is able to save settlers from a land-hungry tycoon Ryker (Emile Meyer) and his hired gun Jack Wilson (Jack Palance). An intriguing conflict in the movie is whether Shane will give into his attraction for one of the settlers’ wives, Mariann Starrett (Jean Arthur).
**Romance Third Phase.** A Messianic hero wins an endangered bride and saves his society—in circumstances reminiscent of “the quest of St. George” (194) to kill the dragon. *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962) features the highly educated lawyer Ran Stoddard (Jimmy Stewart) who battles town gunslinger Tom Doniphon (John Wayne) for the hand of town beauty Hallie Ericson (Vera Miles). Stoddard is eventually credited with killing evil outlaw Liberty Valance (Lee Marvin) and wins Hallie’s hand in marriage (although, as we discover, it is actually Doniphon who killed Valance).

**Romance Fourth Phase.** A happy, innocent world must defend itself “against the assault of experience” (201). *The Wild Bunch* (1969) is a group of outlaws led by Pike Bishop (William Holden), who find that the individualism of the West is only a memory with increasing technology and organization (“the assault of experience”). The world has become much less heroic and more a matter of financial resources, and, eventually, almost all of the Bunch (except two) are killed.

**Romance Fifth Phase.** Objectively, a past world (often of love) is analyzed and categorized from the viewpoint of age and maturity. “The true lovers are on top of a hierarchy of what might be called erotic imitations, going down through the various grades of lust and passion” (202). *Once Upon A Time In the West* (1969) is the story of the love of three men for Jill (Claudia Cardinale), a former New Orleans prostitute. A certain Harmonica (Charles Bronson) is the hero—the only one of the three men who doesn’t die—and the only one who loves Jill platonically and not sexually.

**Romance Sixth Phase.** This phase “marks the end of a movement from active to contemplative adventure” (202). *Dances with Wolves* (1990) shows us Lieutenant Dunbar (Kevin Costner), who has become disillusioned with the ravages of industrial society and the American Civil War. He retires to the Midwestern plains where he finds a somewhat more peaceful, contemplative existence among the Lakota Sioux.

**Tragedy First Phase.** A dignified hero (whose mother is a central character) “has the innocence of abundant life in a sick and melancholy society” (219). *Sergeant York*
(1941) is the development of a dissolute Alvin York (Gary Cooper), who has caused his mother much pain and eventually converts to Christianity through the influence of his eventual wife-to-be, Gracie Williams (Joan Leslie). A pacifist for religious reasons, York eventually must fight in the hellish, surrealistic world of The Great War and becomes an Allied war hero.

**Tragedy Second Phase.** “A tragedy of innocence in the sense of inexperience” where we become aware of the loss of the Edenic world, after which the inexperienced hero develops a “new and more mature experience” (220). *Sands of Iwo Jima* (1949) is about young soldiers, like Private First Class Peter Conway (John Agar), who are bullied by their training camp sergeant, Sergeant Stryker (John Wayne). They must learn the importance of their rigorous training in the battle for Iwo Jima, which is their loss of the Edenic world and ‘new and more mature experience.’

**Tragedy Third Phase.** The hero is portrayed as completely successful, even in his suffering, and, therefore, the suffering is seen as both tragedy and victory, so that “tragedy may be expressed by a double perspective in the action” (220). *Patton* (1970) describes how George S. Patton’s (George C. Scott) surly temper and ego first lead to his suspension from field command. But this same surly temper and ego eventually help lead the Americans to victory in the Battle of the Bulge after Patton returns to command. Patton’s hard-driving desire to be first, and his 'damn the torpedoes' mentality is ironically necessary to win the Battle of the Bulge.

**Tragedy Fourth Phase.** An experienced hero falls apart through “hybris and hamartia” (221). *Apocalypse Now* (1979) depicts the highly intelligent Army Colonel Kurtz (Marlon Brando), one of the army’s most decorated soldiers. He has become isolated during the Vietnam War and, partly as a result of his unchecked power, has gone insane. Meanwhile a certain Captain Willard (Martin Sheen) is assigned to kill him and, eventually, does.

**Tragedy Fifth Phase.** An experienced hero has lost direction, not through hubris, but through a lack of knowledge and through confusion about his own location and falls “into a state of lower freedom than the audience” (221). *Das Boot* (1981) is about a group of young German submariners, including Correspondent Lieutenant Werner (Herbert Grönemeyer), who are led by an experienced Captain (Jurgen Prochnow). They endure
Allied anti-submarine measures and—after surviving much anxiety, confusion and danger literally at the sea bottom, certainly ‘in a state of lower freedom than the audience’—eventually are killed by an Allied air strike at their submarine base just after they have returned home.

**Tragedy Sixth Phase.** Completely shocking tragedy full of “cannibalism, mutilation, and torture” (222) which eventually moves into an undiluted and uncensored picture of hell. *Platoon* (1986) tells us about an American army platoon that, in response to the death of one of its soldiers, cruelly kills many Vietnamese villagers. This leads to a deep resentment between two army sergeants (one who supports the reprisal, and one who doesn’t) Barnes (Tom Berenger) and Elias (Willem Dafoe) respectively. Barnes eventually kills Elias and, finally, Barnes is killed by one the platoon’s newest recruits, Chris Taylor (Charlie Sheen), as retribution for Elias’s death.\(^5\)

**Irony/Satire First Phase.** An absurdist, depressing criminal society where a rustic hero survives by seeming to be “a plain, common-sense, conventional person” (226) and at the same time “relying on observation and timing” (226). *Maltese Falcon* (1941) describes the search for a hidden treasure inside a statue. Sam Spade’s partner, Miles Archer (Jerome Cowan) is killed, and Spade (Humphrey Bogart) eventually nabs his partner’s killer, Brigid O’Shaughnessy (Mary Astor). He makes an astute, common sense observation noting that Archer had not unbuttoned his coat when he was shot, thus showing that Archer’s murderer was a woman, because Archer had felt comfortable enough not to make his gun available.

**Irony/Satire Second Phase.** A society where there is “the setting of ideas and generalizations and theories and dogmas over against the life they are supposed to explain,” (230) showing the impossibility of dogmatic generalizations and stereotypes. *Citizen Kane* (1941) gives us millionaire Citizen Kane’s (Orson Welles) last word:

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\(^5\) While there is no cannibalism per se in *Platoon*, it is very much full of a metaphorical cannibalism. Although human beings do not literally eat each other, they are constantly killing each other and hurting each other, so that they almost might as well be cannibalizing each other.
“Rosebud” before he dies. This word sparks an investigation into his life through the eyes of various people who all paint somewhat different pictures of him, showing the difficulty of making exact, dogmatic statements about somebody’s personality and character.

**Irony/Satire Third Phase.** In this society both dogmatism and common sense (“we must let go of even ordinary common sense as a standard” (234)) are humbled, as human beings realize the inability of absolutely being sure about anything. *North by Northwest* (1959) shows Roger Thornhill (Cary Grant) mistaken for government agent George Kaplan by an international ring of spies. Thornhill begins a cross-country chase with a beautiful woman Eve Kendall (Eva Marie Saint), but, soon, we discover the difficulty of knowing who, if anybody, is telling the truth, until the end.

**Irony/Satire Fourth Phase.** “[T]here is no attempt to make fun of the character, but only to bring out clearly the ‘all too human,’ as distinct from the heroic, aspects of tragedy” (237). *Taxi Driver* (1976) posits Travis Bickle (Robert De Niro) as a troubled taxi driver whose violent tendencies (including an attempted assassination attempt) actually become useful in saving a street prostitute (Jodie Foster) from her pimp, ‘Sport’ Matthew (Harvey Keitel).

**Irony/Satire Fifth Phase.** “[I]rony in which the main emphasis is on the natural cycle, the steady unbroken turning of the wheel of fate or fortune” (237), so that fate seems unavoidable. *Sunset Boulevard* (1950) has the movie open with a shot of a man dead in a swimming pool. The movie then tracks the career of a certain Joe Gillis (William Holden), who is desperate for a break in Hollywood as a screenwriter. The retired silent film actress Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson) takes Gillis as her paramour and, at the end of an increasingly insane relationship, kills him, so that Gillis is revealed to be the dead man in the opening swimming pool shot. His fate seems to have been predestined from the movie's beginning (because of his obsession with Hollywood).

**Irony/Satire Sixth Phase.** This phase depicts never-ending bondage full of torturous instruments and parodies of religion and romanticism, along with a demonic epiphany, where “on the other side of this blasted world of repulsiveness and idiocy, a world without pity and hope” (239), hope begins again. *Silence of the Lambs* (1991) begins with Clarice Starling (Jodie Foster) interviewing Dr. Hannibal Lecter (Anthony Hopkins)
in an attempt to understand the psychopathic killer Buffalo Bill (Ted Levine), who skins his victims: Lecter—who has an almost religious sincerity in his serial murders—eventually escapes. The movie is full of Buffalo Bill and Lecter’s torture scenes, as well as the realization that Lecter and Buffalo Bill are the low-point of humanity, and it cannot get any worse from there.

**Frye’s Phases as They Work Together**

Frye imagined his different phases as different points on the circumference of a circle. That is, the phases are not distinct from each other, but, rather, blend into each other. At some points on the circumference a work is an equal mixture of two different myths. At another point a work might have a preponderance of one myth and at another point a work might be almost completely—but not quite—one complete myth. We might be tempted to refer to this roundness and cyclical effect as a conventional “clock” (12 points) or a “compass card” (16 points), but we need to have the image of a circle with 24 points, similar to a clock that keeps military or European continental time. The following illustration to better explain Frye’s phases and their integrations has been offered by Roger Ebert (during a class in which he was a student at the University of Illinois in 1967).

![Figure 1: Circle Illustrating Phases](image)

**Analogous Films Describing Analogous Phases.** Frye developed a way to check himself in his categorization. Importantly, the movies representing the different phases
not only fit their original mythos phases but also fit a majority (although not necessarily all) of the characteristics from the same numbered phase of the different genre within the same quarter circle. So, a Tragedy First Phase movie (in this case, *Sergeant York*) fits most (if not all) of the principal characteristics of Tragedy First Phase and Romance First Phase (in this case, movies like *The Searchers*) and vice-versa. Irony/Satire Fifth Phase (*Sunset Boulevard*) is also described in large part by Tragedy Fifth Phase (*Das Boot*) and vice versa. Tragedy Sixth Phase (*Platoon*) can also be described by most (if not all) of Irony/Satire Sixth Phase (*Silence of the Lambs*) characteristics and vice-versa. This is why each movie should illustrate not only Frye’s description of the movie’s original mythos phase but also Frye’s analogue phase. These comparisons are important to make, because Frye frequently made comparisons between phrases and their analogue in the *Anatomy of Criticism*.

**Tragedy and its Analogues**

I will now show, using the example of Tragedy phases one through six, how each movie in each phase can also be described very well by Frye’s corresponding, analogue phase. A movie in Frye’s Tragedy First Phase can also be described in part by Romance First Phase, for example, and a movie in Tragedy Second Phase partially by Romance Second Phase, and a movie in Tragedy Third Phase by some of the characteristics of Romance Third Phase. While each pair of phases shares the same, basic similarities, there are slight differences accounted for by the phases’ different mythoi (or genres).

Tragedy First Phase emphasizes a hero’s innocence in a corrupt world, where Romance First Phase emphasizes how new life (of mysterious origins) leads some out of an evil land. So the difference between the two is mostly to be found in the hero’s origin, which, in Romance First Phase, is mysterious (and perhaps more romantic) and, of course, in the difference between the hero's separation (Tragedy) and the hero's victory (Romance). Tragedy Second Phase chronicles innocent characters who endure suffering and, from the suffering, gain more maturity. Romance Second Phase, similarly, shows us an ideal, platonic world on the brink of spiritual, and sexual, disaster. In both cases, we have innocent characters who both must go through a trial, so these two phases are obviously analogues, although Romance Second Phase emphasizes more of the sexually romantic. Tragedy Third Phase is characterized by a suffering hero whose actions are a
complete tragedy and a complete victory (i.e. Christ), while Romance Third Phase describes a young, Messianic hero who saves an endangered woman and society. Again, both phases share many similarities, although Romance Third Phase does not emphasize as much the tragic suffering.

Tragedy Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Phases are analogous to Irony/Satire Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Phases. Tragedy Fourth Phase emphasizes the experienced hero’s hubris and eventual fall. Irony/Satire Fourth Phase likewise shows how suffering is avoidable if human beings weren’t so mistake-prone. Again, these phases essentially describe the same thing, although Tragedy focuses on the inevitability of the natural cycle (of life and death) as a whole while Irony/Satire focuses on everyday experience. Tragedy Fifth Phase describes an experienced hero who has lost his direction--not because of flaws but because of simple confusion, while Irony/Satire Fifth Phase depicts suffering which is unavoidable, regardless of the character’s integrity. Both are essentially the same thing--in that the protagonist has little control over his fate. Finally, Tragedy Sixth Phase describes a complete, unsparing picture of Hell, while Irony/Satire Sixth Phase similarly shows tortuous instruments with a demonic epiphany. Both, essentially, show us the horrible nature of Hell.
CHAPTER TWO
MOVIES ILLUSTRATING FRYE'S COMEDY PHASES
AND THEIR ANALOGUES

Comedy Introduction

For Frye, Comedy's subject matter is the hero's integration into society (Anatomy of
Criticism 43), although in Comedy this integration may be more or less successful
(Comedy Second Phase is an example of this less successful Comedy). There are also,
for instance, comedies in which the hero is integrated but in destructive ways (Network
and Dr. Strangelove are examples of this as Comedy Sixth Phase). Elder Olson writes
about such comic alienation: "[t]he point is that the extreme comic is produced by
making the observer so indifferent to the fortunes of the persons he is observing that he
can concentrate on the absurdities of action and fortune as such, without emotional
commitment" (78).6

The first three Comedy phases are analogous to Irony/Satire and Irony/Satire's
emphasis on realism and everyday experience (as opposed to Irony/Satire's polar
opposite, Romance, which is an "idealized world" (Frye 367)). This is why Our Gang's
Follies of 1938, for instance, chronicles Alfalfa's lesson that his voice is not as operatic as
he thinks it is. Alfalfa learns to be realistic. The Irony/Satire analogue accounts for the
Tramp's focus on everyday survival in City Lights. The Tramp cannot afford to be a
philosopher in a world where he struggles to find enough money to eat everyday.

The last three Comedy phases are analogous to idealized Romance. For example, Mr.
Smith Goes to Washington (1939) shows us an idealistic senator Jefferson Smith, who is
able to triumph against the politically corrupt Washington machine only with the help of
his secretary and boys clubs. This seems to be a plot far removed from reality. In the

6 Gerald Mast writes: "if the subject matter [of a comedy] is not intrinsically trivial, a comedy reduces
important subject matter to trivia" (10). Mast gives Dr. Strangelove as an example, where "a serious
subject, the destruction of the human race, is treated as if it were no more important than inventing hole-
free doughnuts" (10). Mast's definition of Comedy differs from Frye's in that he sees Comedy as making
"the audience accept a potentially exciting, heroic adventure as not strictly credible, as not real, as
'worthless'" (14). In this Mast agrees with one of the other important literary critics of Comedy, Olson,
who saw Comedy as "the imitation of a worthless action" (46-47).
first episode of *Gilligan's Island*, boat passengers are shipwrecked and are portrayed as living a happy, relatively carefree life, despite the fact that they are an island far from any civilization. Again, reality does not seem to often intrude into Gilligan's Island.

![Diagram of Comedy and Irony/Satire Phases]

**Figure 2: Comedy and Irony/Satire First Phase**

*Our Gang Follies of 1938* (1937) Comedy First Phase.

**Comedy First Phase Characteristics.**

1. Humorous (capricious, whimsical, natural) society is undefeated or, in irony, “simply disintegrates without anything taking its place” (177).
2. The demonic is always nearby (178).
3. There is a ritual death from which the characters are barely saved by a *cognitio* (recognition) (179).

Comedy First Phase, for Frye, is the "most ironic" (*Anatomy of Criticism* 177) of the Comedy phases. By “ironic,” Frye means that Comedy First Phase is the “realistic” level of experience (366)--specifically, of everyday life. As Frye said in one interview: “The aim of education is to be able to distinguish illusion from reality”” (*A World in a Grain of Sand* 51). All three of Frye’s Comedy First Phase characteristics exactly fit *Our Gang*
Follies of 1938, which describe Alfalfa’s childhood fantasy that he possesses an incredibly talented voice. Alfalfa (Carl Switzer) has found instant success as a crooner of love songs, especially for the girls his age who idolize romantic relationships. However, he has become dissatisfied with this genre and, at the same time, so self-satisfied with his voice that he decides he no longer wants to croon but to sing opera. Of course, as we all know, Alfalfa’s belief that he has an excellent operatic voice is an illusion, certainly not on the ‘‘realistic’ level of experience’’ (177).

Spanky (George McFarland) has organized a group of follies, vaudeville acts played by children, with Alfalfa (“The King of Crooners”) as the centerpiece. The problem is that when Alfalfa begins singing, he begins singing from the opera The Barber of Seville—not crooning as the girls want him to. When Spanky demands to know why Alfalfa no longer croons, Alfalfa says with disgust: “Crooning. My crooning days are over.” He then refers to a previous decision Alfalfa and Porky (Eugene Lee) had made that Alfalfa’s “voice ... is a gift. And from now on,” Alfalfa says, “I’m not going to sing anything but opera.”

Refusing Spanky’s pleadings to return to crooning, Alfalfa immediately walks to an opera house, where he interrupts an adult opera singer (Gino Corrado), practicing The Barber of Seville, with his own ‘Alfalfa’ version. In order to get rid of him, more than anything, Barnaby, the opera impresario (Henry Brandon), gives him a contract for twenty years later—until which time Alfalfa is told to ‘rest’ his voice. Alfalfa returns to the theatre where Spanky’s “follies” are still running, where Spanky continues to beg him to croon.

Alfalfa promptly falls asleep, in an apparent attempt to ‘rest’ his voice. Asleep, Alfalfa dreams of his glorious return to the opera, twenty years later, with his name flashing all over the city in neon lights. Alfalfa is told by the older Barnaby in the dream: “Let me have the contract, and I’ll open the door of fame for you.”

However, when Alfalfa begins singing, his audience (of fellow little Rascals) grows hostile towards him (understandably) and finally begins throwing vegetables at him. Barnaby throws Alfalfa out on the street, saying: “You an opera singer, bah. I’ve wasted twenty years waiting for you.” Alfalfa is told to sing in the streets for money, exactly what Spanky predicted he would be doing earlier in the film (if he pursued opera).
The operatic impresario is the short movie’s most obvious manifestation of what Frye described as the demonic world (“in ironic comedy ... the demonic world is never far away” (178). Alfalfa’s nightmare about Barnaby the impresario presents Barnaby as a type of Dracula, with his wide cape, wicked laugh, and greedy look. Of course, this impresario is not reality; it is only a nightmare, although it is very much reality to Alfalfa. Barnaby, despite the fact that he probably has quite a few responsibilities as an impresario, promises that he will always be watching Alfalfa singing on the street. Actually, he is true to his promise, watching Alfalfa as he sings and suddenly appearing from behind walls (although most impresarios would not waste time on a failed singer by closely watching whether they are singing in the street) when he sees something he doesn’t like. This certainly seems to be a supernatural, even demonic, ability (many of the impresario’s statements in Alfalfa’s dream are followed by demonic sounding laughter).

In Alfalfa's dream, as Porky and Alfalfa look wistfully at Club Spanky, while Alfalfa sings in the street, the demonic impresario appears and cries: “Say you. Never mind about Club Spanky. Get busy and sing.” This fits Frye’s example of the demonic world, “the rages of the senex iratus [“angry father”] in Roman Comedy ... directed at mainly the tricky slave” (178). Alfalfa has become enslaved to the impresario’s contract—more generally to his foolish, childish, highly egotistical over-evaluation of his singing abilities which have led him to sign that contract. This is the point where the slave, as Frye says, “is threatened with the mill, with being flogged to death, with crucifixion” (178) etc. Although this doesn’t literally happen to Alfalfa, he seems to feel as if something like this is happening to him.

After seeing an excellent show put together by Spanky at his club, full of swing dancing and lovely ditties which the impresario interrupts to drag Alfalfa away, Alfalfa finally awakens from his dream. He immediately tells Spanky: “Swing music’s finally got me. I wanna’ croon.” The “Follies” end with Alfalfa crooning a song which includes the line: “Learn to croon, if you want to win your heart’s desire.”

Frye writes that, in the first phase “[w]e notice how frequently a comic dramatist tries to bring his action as close to a catastrophic overthrow of the hero as he can get it, and then reverses the action as quickly as possible” (178). Alfalfa, in his nightmare, has
finally agreed to croon for Spanky and is then immediately collared by the omnipresent impresario, who tells him: “You’re supposed to be out in the streets singing opera.” Saved from this nightmare as he awakes from it, Alfalfa averts the disaster he dreamed of in the nightmare by returning to crooning.

The Little Rascals are, of course, children, and so “the fear of death, sometimes a hideous death,” which Frye identifies in Comedy First Phase, is translated to a youthful equivalent: in Alfalfa's dream Porky and Alfalfa are left out in the snow, hungry. This, for Frye, is the ‘point of ritual death’ after which a “cognitio [recognition] takes place” (179). Porky and Alfalfa do not really come close to death, but, as children abandoned in the cold snow, they perhaps feel as if they have come close to death.

Our Gang Follies of 1938 Comedy First Phase Analogue: Irony/Satire First Phase

Irony/Satire First Phase Characteristics.
1. No displacement (Frye defines this as “the adaptation of myth and metaphor to canons of morality or plausibility” (365)) in the story of myth of the humorous (capricious, whimsical, natural) society (226).
2. One feels very close to the demonic and nightmarish (226).
3. A world full of crime and injustice is ‘taken for granted’ (226).
4. For survival, one must observe more and say less (226).
5. The emphasis is on pragmatism (226).

Frye points out in this phase “the Omphale archetype” where the man is “bullied or dominated by women” (228). This is the original undisplaced (meaning in the original, pure form of myth without being changed to fit the modern society's expectations), which fits perfectly in Our Gang Follies of 1938. Alfalfa is “bullied or dominated by women,” whom he only seems to please when he croons. He seems to want to be appreciated not for his genre that absolutely anybody can sing in (as Alfalfa has shown with even his voice) but for his voice itself. The Our Gang Follies of 1938 is really the story of how Alfalfa will be browbeaten back into doing what the girls want him to do and have to
fargo his own personal choices. “Learn to croon if you want to win your heart’s desire,” Alfalfa sings at the end of the short, as girls gather around him, entranced. Only a few minutes earlier they were booing him off the stage when he refused to croon.

The demonic or nightmarish in this phase (226), of course, is the impresario, who also seems to represent a world of crime and injustice that Spanky has taken “for granted” (226). When Alfalfa dreams of his opera contract, he sees bright lights everywhere heralding his opening opera debut. It is almost as if he is being promoted by the Mafia as the greatest opera singer ever, and yet the impresario hasn’t heard him sing in the last twenty years. Spanky, when he sees Alfalfa singing on the street, nods his head knowingly as if he knows exactly what had happened to Alfalfa, that he has been used and abused by the typically corrupt and incompetent opera business. Alfalfa has been led on to think he has a good voice when he really doesn’t.

Frye uses the word *alazon* to describe Irony/Satire First Phase, and he defines an alazon as a “deceiving or self-deceived character in fiction, normally an object of ridicule in Comedy” (Frye 365). Alfalfa is self-deceived, infatuated with his belief that his singing voice is very good when it is actually not. Alfalfa is obsessed with his perceived talent, regardless of how practical or appreciated his perceived talent is. Near the short’s end, despite the fact that has been booed off the opera stage and thrown out of the opera house, Alfalfa refuses to croon, because, as he tells Spanky, he is “a slave to his art” of opera.

“Hence the satirist may employ a plain, commonsense, conventional person as a foil for the various *alazons* of society” (226). While Alfalfa is the alazon, the braggart, Spanky is the plain, commonsense, conventional person. Frye writes that “What is recommended is conventional life at its best: a clairvoyant knowledge of human nature in oneself and others” (226). In *Our Gang Follies of 1938*, Spanky represents the worldly wise and practical “conventional life at its best” (226). Although he does have visions of glory, they are rooted in the practical demands of audience. Spanky, much more conventional and practical than Alfalfa, is only interested in what the people like or want, irrespective of talent. Alfalfa doesn’t have much talent as a crooner, but when Spanky recognizes that the girls are in love with Alfalfa’s sentimentality, he encourages
Alfalfa to do what he is so popular doing (crooning), although Alfalfa is not a 'talented' crooner in the musical sense.

In Alfalfa’s dream, we are shown that Spanky’s concern for the audience’s desires will lead him to be a big producer on Broadway, while Alfalfa, as a slave to his art, will be singing on the streets “with a tin cup in his hand.” Spanky’s life as a big-time producer is founded on an understanding of the conventional desires of his audience. Alfalfa’s audience of young girls desires him to croon and not sing opera, so that is what Spanky gives them, although Alfalfa is perhaps not any better at crooning than at singing opera. Crooning is simply more popular with the ladies.

Spanky exhibits “a clairvoyant knowledge of human nature in oneself and others” (226). He understands what motivates Alfalfa, who wants to be recognized for his talent and not merely because his song fits a certain niche of young girls’ desires. So Spanky exhibits “avoidance of all illusion and compulsive behavior” (226)—specifically Alfalfa’s illusion and compulsive behavior. Further, Spanky relies on “observation and timing rather than on aggressiveness” (226). He doesn’t force Alfalfa to sing. He only makes the observation that Alfalfa will find himself singing on the street with a tin cup which, when Alfalfa dreams that exactly that will happen, Spanky is able to capitalize on.

“And however good or bad expertly conventional behavior may be thought to be, it is certainly the most difficult of all forms of behavior to satirize, just as anyone with a new theory of behavior, even if saint or prophet, is the easiest of all people to ridicule as a crank” (226). Spanky’s behavior is actually quite amusing. Although he is the gruff, energetic producer type, he opens up the 'follies' singing a ditty about love. Despite the strangeness of this, Spanky is able to get away with it, mostly because it is conventional for an impresario to wear several hats. However, Alfalfa’s pretension to be an opera singer, although not much more funny than Spanky singing a love song, is completely ridiculed, because it is not conventional.

Frye writes that, in Irony/Satire First Phase, the “principle is that anyone who wishes to keep his balance in such a world must learn first of all to keep his eyes open and his mouth shut” (226). Of course, part of Alfalfa’s problem is that he is less observant of his actual (insubstantial) musical talent, and talks more about what a great singer he is, which, of course, leads him to believe it.
“Where gaiety predominates in such satire, we have an attitude which fundamentally accepts social conventions but stresses tolerance and flexibility within their limits. Close to the conventional norm we find the lovable eccentric, the Uncle Toby or Betsey Trotwood who diversifies, without challenging, accepted codes of behavior” (Frye 227). This is Alfalfa exactly. Alfalfa is not the standard, suave heartthrob with a mellifluous voice, but because he is willing to sacrifice all self-respect to croon he attracts quite a few young teenage girls, because he is willing to (as he would see it in the first half of the short) demean himself. The crooning of love songs is the social convention, Alfalfa’s awkward voice and lard-sculpted hair are tolerated by the girls as long as Alfalfa is willing to croon in a socially accepted way.

Figure 3: Comedy and Irony/Satire Second Phase

City Lights (1931) Comedy Second Phase

Comedy Second Phase Characteristics.

1. The comic hero “does not transform a humorous society but simply escapes or runs away from it, leaving its structure as it was before” or the society surrounding a hero is unable to affect him (180).
2. The hero is usually a whimsical runaway.
3. In lighthearted comedies, the comic ending sweeps “over all quixotic illusions” (180).

All three characteristics of Comedy Second Phase fit City Lights perfectly. Frye
characterizes Comedy Second Phase as either “a Comedy in which the hero does not transform a humorous society but simply escapes or runs away from it, leaving its structure as it was before” (180) or “when a society is constructed by or around a hero, but proves not sufficiently real or strong to impose itself” (180). Both of these plot descriptions apply to Charlie Chaplin’s *City Lights*. The movie opens with a shot of various speakers apparently trying to take credit for a monument that is about to be dedicated. The inter-title reads: “To the people of this city, we donate this monument, peace and prosperity.” However, the actual speeches seem less concise and much less comprehensible. Their words are represented on the sound track (articulate, spoken dialogue had begun a little more than three years earlier with *The Jazz Singer* as incoherent, screechy babbling (actually saxophones)). From the first few minutes, the movie’s society is portrayed as pompously humorous and, as Frye described Comedy Second Phase, superficial, “not sufficiently real” (180). These politicians and dignitaries are all fluffy, superficial pretension without anything real on the inside.

A cloth is dropped from the monument of three statues, revealing the Tramp (Charles Chaplin) slumbering on the lap of one of the statues to the audience’s uproarious delight. The exasperated dignitaries command the Tramp to leave the statues, but the Tramp only lazily dismounts. A police officer shouting vehemently at the Tramp suddenly has to stop as the Star Spangled Banner begins to play. The police officer salutes. After the Star Spangled Banner ends, the dignitaries’ vociferations begin again. The Tramp places his nose against the thumb of a hand of a statue (the hand is in the ‘stop’ position), so that the Tramp appears to be thumbing his nose at the dignitaries. Then, lightheartedly, an unfazed Tramp leaves the statues, leaving behind the highly superficial society. This opening scene is a microcosm for the entire movie, in which the society surrounding the Tramp will be revealed as self-serving, neurotically humorous, and, ultimately, unable to affect the Tramp’s spirit.

In the next scene, the Tramp encounters a blind flower girl with whom he falls in love. The Tramp attempts to find money for the flower girl in jobs and his pursuit of a relationship with the manic-depressive Eccentric Millionaire (Harry Myers). The

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7 The critic David Robinson believes this to be—not only a subtle jab at politicians—but “a sly dig at the sound quality of many early talkies” (75).
Tramp’s relationship with the Millionaire is on and off again, after the Tramp saves the inebriated Millionaire from trying to commit suicide twice. The relationship between the Millionaire and the Tramp is good when the Millionaire is drunk, bad when the Millionaire is sober. In a sober, rather grouchy, state, the Millionaire doesn’t even recognize the Tramp. As one of the inter-titles states about the Millionaire: “The sober dawn awakens a different man.”

The Millionaire’s first suicide attempt is another microcosm for the movie, because the Tramp is almost killed and then walks lightheartedly away. The Tramp first sees the Millionaire along a water walk tying a noose around his own neck. The Millionaire then ties the rope around a rock and picks up the rock to throw into the water.

Immediately, the Tramp tries to stop him. The Tramp says: “Tomorrow, the birds will sing. Be brave. Face life.”

But the Millionaire eventually, after a few clumsy, hazy seconds, declares: “No, I’ll end it all.” After trying to throw the noose around himself (he has actually thrown the noose around the Tramp), the Millionaire throws the rock out to water, and the Tramp falls in the water. In trying to help the Tramp up, the Millionaire falls in himself. After both climb out of and fall into, and climb out of, the water again, finally, the Millionaire (arbitrarily) decides that he doesn’t want to commit suicide anymore (at least at that moment), and the Tramp and the Millionaire walk off, as if nothing serious had happened. The Tramp tips his hat happily at a policeman and the Tramp and the Millionaire walk away best of friends. Once again, the Tramp escapes danger without his spirits being affected by it.

Another example of the Millionaire and the Tramp’s escapades is an early morning drive home from a drunken night out. The Tramp seems to have sobered, but the Millionaire has not as he drives blissfully over sidewalks at intersections and towards oncoming cars. When the Tramp warns the Millionaire: “Be careful how you are driving,” the stunned Millionaire looks at the Tramp with bleary eyes and asks: “Am I driving?” The Tramp then must work his way into the driver’s seat and take the wheel to bring the two home relatively safely. Throughout the movie, the Tramp is trying to escape from the Millionaire’s dangerous drunkenness and then the Millionaire’s bad temper when he awakes from the drunkenness.
Eventually, the Tramp is able to convince the once again drunken Millionaire to pay for a blind flower girl’s (Virginia Cherril) operation to help her see again. The Millionaire gives the Tramp a thousand dollars, but after the Millionaire is knocked out by a robber, and after the Tramp has gone for the police, the Millionaire sobers up. When the police find the thousand dollars on the Tramp, they ask the Millionaire if he had given the money to the Tramp. As usual for his sobered state, the Millionaire cannot recognize the Tramp at all, much less remember that he had given the Tramp a thousand dollars.

The Millionaire is essentially the “society constructed by or around a hero” which “proves not sufficiently real or strong to impose itself” (180) around the Tramp. Any friendship the Millionaire shows for the Tramp is gone the next time the Millionaire becomes sober. Further, Frye writes that “[i]n this situation the hero is usually himself at least partly a comic humor or mental runaway” (180), and this, of course, is exactly what a tramp can be defined as, especially because there is no stability in his relationship with the Millionaire.

The Tramp is imprisoned for having stolen from the Millionaire, although, of course, he didn’t. The Tramp is led towards a jail as he smokes a cigarette. Just outside the door, he happily throws the cigarette behind him and kicks it away with his foot. Lighthearted movements with his legs are a typical Tramp gesture, showing that even in jail, he is shaking off his lack of freedom like it means nothing to him. There is nothing the society around the Tramp, despite its neuroses, can do to change his attitude. Even sending him to jail for wrong reasons won’t really dampen his spirits. Gerald Mast writes: "He goes to jail, but he has succeeded in helping one human being" (109). *City Lights* ends with the Tramp—still poor and penniless—walking free in the city after being imprisoned for supposedly stealing from a sobered Millionaire, but the flower girl can see.

*City Lights Comedy Second Phase Analogue: Irony/Satire Second Phase*

**Irony/Satire Second Phase Characteristics.**

1. A successful “rogue ... makes conventional society look foolish without setting up any positive standard” (229).

2. The emphasis is on surviving in everyday life, as opposed to attempting to understand life philosophically (229).
3. Consequently, this phase does not set up a moral imperative (229).

4. Stereotypes and dogmas are shown to be inapplicable when set against real life (230).

All four aspects of the Irony/Satire Second Phase fit City Lights. Frye writes that “[t]he satiric counterpart” of Comedy Second Phase “is the picaresque novel, the story of the successful rogue who ... makes conventional society look foolish without setting up any positive standard” (229). The Tramp, although not exactly prosperous, is successful in the sense that he is finally able to secure money for the Blind Flower Girl’s operation. While focusing on this kind of success, there are numerous points in the movie where the Tramp makes conventional society look foolish. For instance, he awakens on the statues—just as they are being unveiled publicly—and fiddles brazenly around on them, making the assembled dignitaries look very foolish, since they don’t seem to have manpower bold enough to force him off the statue. The movie is full of other instances of the Tramp flouting authority, especially police officers, as when the Tramp avoids a police officer standing next to a car by opening a car door behind the police officer (who has his back turned) and then slipping out through the door on the other side, or when he slips away from the police officers as they are attending to the Millionaire. Police officers, although they are not necessarily “conventional society” (229), are trying to enforce a conventional, law-abiding society.

“Satire ... has an interest in anything men do. The philosopher, on the other hand, teaches a certain way or method of living; he stresses some things and despises others; ... he continually passes moral judgments on social behavior” (229). Frye contrasts satire with philosophy. A satirist is simply interested in anything humankind does, whereas the philosopher (for Frye) is interested in morally categorizing men’s actions. In this sense, the Tramp is a satirist and not a philosopher. The Tramp doesn’t scold a drunken (and suddenly friendly) Eccentric Millionaire for the same Millionaire’s rudeness early in the morning. He is only concerned with what he can get at that moment from the Millionaire before the Millionaire becomes sober again. As Frye writes: the attitude “of a satirist [is] pragmatic” (229), where the attitude of a philosopher is dogmatic. A philosopher would likely criticize the Eccentric Millionaire frequently for his sober churlishness, regardless of whether it hurt his relationship with the Millionaire (and any chance for money). However, the Tramp only criticizes the Millionaire when the Millionaire is about to
commit suicide (the Tramp saves his criticism for then, perhaps often because if the Millionaire commits suicide then the Tramp will no longer have anybody he can use to bum off money for the Flower Girl). The Tramp is not one to set up a positive standard. Indeed, instead of criticizing the Millionaire for his drunkenness, the Tramp becomes drunk with him, perhaps in order to smooth the way for more money.

Of course, the Tramp ought not to try to evade the police with the money he has supposedly “stolen” from the Millionaire for the blind girl, and this also shows his pragmatism, as opposed to adherence to a moral code. “Insofar as the satirist has a ‘position’ of his own, it is the preference of practice to theory, experience to metaphysics” (230). The Tramp does not blindly follow society’s mores. In fact, he will disobey them gladly when doing so will give him certain things.

“Here an outsider to the society ... has no dogmatic views of his own, but he grants none of the premises which make the absurdities of society look logical to those accustomed to them” (232). The Tramp, who is the homeless outsider in a city where most of the people have a home, has difficulty with the societal conventions of those who not only have a home but have gigantic mansions bigger than many of the restaurants in which they eat.

This can be shown perfectly in the *City Lights* scene where the Eccentric Millionaire and the Tramp, both drunk, enter a restaurant. It is immediately clear that the Tramp is in an unfamiliar environment. Further, this environment contains many people sharing many premises which the Tramp doesn’t share—the exact same “premises which make the absurdities of society look logical to those accustomed to them” (232). A maid takes off the Tramp’s hat from behind him without his realizing it. When he feels for his hat and discovers it is not there, he sees a man next to him with a very similar black Bowler hat. Thinking the man has taken his hat from him, The Tramp taps the man on the shoulder and then begins to take off his own jacket, ready to fight. But he is quickly whisked away to his table. The incident is perhaps rooted partly in the fact that the Tramp has probably seldom experienced servants taking his hat from him in fancy

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8 Interestingly, the Tramp first reads of the operation for the blind by reading the newspaper headline: “Doctor has cure for blindness.” What the Tramp apparently does not read in the headline just below it: “Free Operation for the Poor.” All the Tramp’s chicanery would have been unnecessary if he had only read a little further.
restaurants. He assumes that his hat being gone means it was stolen from him, because that is often the meaning of the disappearance of one’s clothing items on the streets (which actually happens to the Tramp later in the movie). Admittedly, of course, the Tramp is also drunk, and not thinking clearly.

A few seconds later, while the Tramp and the Millionaire are sitting at the table, a couple enters and performs a violent ‘Apache’ dance in which the man pretends to beat the woman by pushing her down to the ground. It is, of course, a simple entertainment routine, and the audience, used to such things, applauds at the end. But the Tramp, perhaps because he has seen quite a bit of violence on the street, rises and begins to take off his jacket. The Tramp thinks that it is a real beating and that he must defend the girl.

This is because he does not share the premises of the society around him. They see a beating as a type of exciting entertainment, perhaps because they see it so rarely. The Tramp, living on the street, sees it as a fact of life and not entertainment at all. Indeed, perhaps it seems absurd to the Tramp that an audience could take pleasure in that entertainment, although that seems very logical to most people accustomed to it in society (who live in commonplace luxury with a need for excitement).

Figure 4: Comedy and Irony/Satire Third Phase

*It Happened One Night* (1934) Comedy Third Phase

Comedy Third Phase Characteristics.
1. A *senex iratus* “gives way to a young man’s desires” (180).
2. The father and son of the father are “frequently rivals for the same girl” (180).

*It Happened One Night* fits the main characteristic of Frye’s Comedy Third Phase, the battle between an angry old man and potential suitors for his daughter. Frye writes that in Comedy Third Phase there is, sometimes, the “doubling of the *senex* figure” (181). The *senex iratus* (which Frye defines as a “heavy father” (172)) in *It Happened One Night* is embodied in two characters. The first *senex* is Mr. Andrews (Walter Connolly), the father of the heroine Ellie Andrews (Claudette Colbert). Indeed, according to Friz Freleng’s unpublished memoirs (Freleng was one of the most famous Looney Tunes directors), the character of Mr. Andrews was the inspiration for Yosemite Sam. Mr. Andrews is a surly, controlling man, especially regarding his daughter. When told that she is on a hunger strike, he questions his informant loudly: “Well, why don’t you jam it down her throat?”

The second *senex iratus* is King Westley (Jameson Thomas), whom Ellie Andrews marries, mostly to spite her father. Westley marries Ellie Andrews for her money and will only annul his marriage to her if he is bought out handsomely. Both of these men, to one extent or the other, are obstacles to the marriage of the hero and heroine, Peter Warne and Ellie. As Richard Maltby argues in “*It Happened One Night: The Recreation of the Patriarch*,” “*It Happened One Night* describes, quite overtly, the containment of the heroine under patriarchy” (150).

Frye writes: “Ambivalence is apparently the main reason for the curious feature of doubled characters which runs all through the history of Comedy” (181). Ellie has found Mr. Andrews as a father too stifling, and she has married King Westley expressly because her father told her not to marry. So Ellie perhaps thinks King Westley (who is fairly licentious) will give her the freedom that her father does not, that Westley will be a

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9 There is, further, a third possible *senex* at times. Richard Maltby in his “*It Happened One Night: The Recreation of the Patriarch*” argues that Warne becomes Ellie’s substitute father, because she has left her real one. “Peter assumes, and learns, the role of the authoritative father, to the point of hitting Ellie when she argues with him, repeating the action of her father that led her to run away at the outset” (Maltby 152). However, since Frye unambiguously differentiates between the *senex iratus* and his daughter’s suitor (“a *senex iratus* or other humor gives way to a young man’s desires” (180)), I argue there are only two angry fathers here, although Warne’s behavior shows that he wants to become Ellie’s protector and father figure.

kinder father figure. Of course, she discovers that Westley is much more of a *senex iratus* than her father and worse, unlike her father, Westley cares very little for Ellie.

At the beginning of *It Happened One Night*, Mr. Andrews is trying to annul the marriage of King Westley and Ellie. Ellie, who has refused to eat in protest, eventually dives off and swims away from her father’s yacht after Mr. Andrews slaps her. As she attempts to sneak into New York City to see King Westley, she happens to meet Peter Warne (Clark Gable), who has recently lost his job as a journalist (because he submitted one of his news stories in free verse). The two endure a long journey, during which Warne protects Ellie from numerous hazards, ostensibly because Warne can write about his experience with Ellie and, with such a hot story, perhaps get his job back.

However, Ellie eventually admits to Warne that she loves him. While they are only three hours from New York, an ecstatic Warne slips away from Ellie while she is sleeping. Since he has no money, he is hoping to sell his story at his old newspaper, so that he can have some money which he considers necessary to propose to Ellie, and then return before she awakes.\(^\text{11}\)

Ellie is awakened during the night by the camp managers who have noted suspiciously that Warne has left. They boot Ellie out of the camp, and she thinks Warne has left her. Ellie then calls her father to pick her up, and the police escort passes Warne, who is driving in a much older, slower car back to the camp. Having stopped before a railroad junction, Warne then sees Ellie in the escort with her father and King Westley. Warne, thinking Ellie has left him, becomes depressed and returns his money to the newspaper.

Both Ellie and Mr. Andrews now think Warne was only a gold-digger. However, Mr. Andrews agrees to allow Warne to see him. In the interview (where Warne only tries to recoup $34.60 he spent in protecting Ellie) Warne admits to Mr. Andrews that he loves Ellie. Andrews gradually begins to soften toward Warne and, eventually, later, even encourages Ellie to marry him (“He loves you. He told me so,” Andrews tells Ellie). Mr. Andrews, who is impressed because Warne had not wanted the $10,000 reward for Ellie,

\(^{11}\) Raymond Carney argues that Warne is the director Frank Capra’s alter ego. Like Capra, Warne must, by the movie’s end, attempt to market his skills. Warne can no longer write in “free verse” if he expects to be able to support a family. In the same way, Carney writes that Capra had to “convert his inarticulate dreams into the forms of coherent, systematic narrative, in order to make the dreams count at all. Free verse cannot pay the rent” (251).
arranges for a last-minute escape for Ellie when she decides she wants to be married to Warne instead of Westley. Westley receives a $100,000 payment in return for agreeing to get lost. As Raymond Carney writes in *American Vision: The Films of Frank Capra*, Mr. Andrews sends “a sympathetic telegram to the two lovers waiting in their motel room in Michigan ... as if he were spiritually present with them and as if all three were finally united in one sympathetic family group” (255). Mr. Andrews is happy because he believes his daughter has married somebody who will love her, and the movie ends with Peter Warne and Ellie seemingly very happily married.

Frye writes: “The fact that the son and father are so often in conflict means that they are frequently rivals for the same girl” (180). This can be explained partly as the classic rivalry between the father of the bride—who up until her marriage has been her gallant knight and protector—and her groom for the remainder of her life, her husband. Mr. Andrews is essentially a jealous suitor of Ellie, who won’t let anybody except the perfect man even near her.

“The action of Comedy, like the action of the Christian Bible, moves from law to liberty (181). The law in this case is Ellie’s mistake of wanting to marry King Westley. She is consequently bound by law to that decision. This, of course, would be a big mistake for the rest of her life. The only way for liberty is back out of it, for which Mr. Andrews finally pays Westley $100,000, a sum Mr. Andrews pronounces cheap.

“In the law there is an element of ritual bondage which is abolished, and an element of habit or convention which is fulfilled. The intolerable qualities of the *senex* represent the former and compromise with him the latter in the evolution of the comic *nomos*” (181). The *senex*, in this case, is Westley, who demands what he believes to be rightfully his, Ellie and his money. Compromise is when Mr. Andrews buys him off for $100,000. Ellie has her freedom and King Westley still receives money from the Andrews family, which is all he was after in the first place.

Frye writes of the “occasional ‘naughtiness’ of Comedy” (180) specifically in the third phase, and there is no doubt that, for 1934, *It Happened One Night* was naughty. The movie includes a shot of Warne taking his shirt off without an undershirt (which
reportedly led to a huge decrease in undershirt sales), an unmarried man and woman sleeping together in the same room (although in different beds) and other sexual innuendo. Most famous are the “walls of Jericho,” which Warne constructs for privacy as Warne and Ellie have to stay in the same auto-camp room, since they can’t afford two separate rooms. These walls are simply a blanket hanging on a carpet, and, of course, biblically, the walls of Jericho did not prove to be very stable at all.

The movie ends with the camera outside an auto camp room, where Warne and Ellie are staying. There is a trumpet blast, and then the movie ends. The “walls of Jericho,” apparently, have fallen, and that struck a 1934 audience as sexually naughty, which is an aspect of the film perhaps explaining the film’s unexpected success in 1934. Indeed, that scene was completely cut out by the Ohio state censor board (Maltby 136) and was one of the reasons the Legion of Decency considered the movie inappropriate for children and adolescents (Maltby 136-137).

It Happened One Night Comedy Third Phase Analogue: Irony/Satire Third Phase Irony/Satire Third Phase Characteristics.

1. Even common sense is seen as a dogma (234).
2. Constant shifts in perspective permeate this phase, so that characters are consistently seen from different angles, close-ups and long-shots, so to speak (234).
3. “[A] giant power rears up (236).

Frye writes: “For common sense too has certain implied dogmas, notably that the data of sense experience are reliable and consistent, and that our customary associations with things form a solid basis for interpreting the present and predicting the future” (234). Frye writes that the satirist in this phase “often gives to ordinary life a logical and self-consistent shift of perspective” (234). This shift of perspective is found in Peter Warne. It is sometimes difficult to determine whether Warne is a hero or a villain. We first see

him drunk, pretending for an audience of fellow drunks behind him that he is lambasting his boss (who has fired him) on the phone when the boss has already hung up.

Common sense, after such churlish behavior, would seem to hint that Warne is not a good man, certainly not a good husband, for anybody. Warne seems (and is) very vicious, conniving, and intemperate, as well as selfish. Yet, we are meant to see him as a hero at the film’s end, the perfect spouse for Ellie Andrews towards whom he has (unexpectedly) often been kind and considerate. Even ordinary common sense would have led one to think this is impossible. But at the end, we see Warne from a different perspective, as a good husband. Indeed, Frye writes that satire has a “final victory over common sense” (235).

But Warne is an example of the anti-hero so frequent in 1930s and 1940s screwball Comedy. Wes Gehring believed that Warne, as the anti-hero, showed “the full transition from a rural figure full of wisdom learned through experience to a frustrated urban misfit, more childlike than manly” (10). Gehring continues with five characteristics of the anti-hero “his abundant leisure time, his childlike naivete, his life in the city, his apolitical nature, and his frustration” (10). Such a character, as Gehring notes (10), is the rough opposite of the “crackerbarrel” hero (perhaps best exemplified by Longfellow Deeds (Gary Cooper) in *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* or Jefferson Smith (Jimmy Stewart) in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* with their home-spun, folksy style).

Lastly, Frye writes of a Titan, in Irony/Satire Third Phase, who “would have to bear down his opponent by sheer weight of words, and hence be a master of that technique of torrential abuse which we call invective” (236). “The most typical and obvious sign is the verbal tempest, the tremendous outpouring of words in catalogues, abusive epithets and erudite technicalities” (236). Frye gives, as an example, Goliath’s challenge to the Israelites. The corresponding character to Goliath in *It Happened One Night* is Mr. Andrews, whose invectives against his daughter and the men in her life are often atrocious (among other similar remarks, he tells his daughter “You’ve always been a stubborn idiot”). Penniless Peter Warne, who isn’t very compassionate in his remarks either, is metaphorically the David who matches wits with the rich Goliath and is ultimately able to triumph over Goliath by convincing Andrews that he is not a toady
Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (1939) Comedy Fourth Phase

Comedy Fourth Phase Characteristics.

1. Two social planes, one of which is portrayed as better than the other (182).
2. “A Comedy originates in a “normal world,” enters into a “green world,” changes there, and then “returns to the normal world” (182).
3. The green world contains within it “the victory of summer over winter” (183).
4. The rebirth usually results from the feminine (183).
5. The dream world “collides with the stumbling and blinded follies of the world of experience” (183).

*Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* fits all of the aspects of Frye’s Comedy Fourth Phase perfectly. Jefferson Smith (Jimmy Stewart) finds himself in Washington as an appointed senator, replacing a Senator Samuel Foley who has died. Smith is very idealistic, the head of the state’s Boy Rangers, while Washington D.C. is corrupted by many men like Senator Joseph Paine (Claude Raines) who pander consistently to big money (in Paine’s
case, to filthy rich media mogul Jim Taylor (Edward Arnold)) and political interests in order to be re-elected. Smith is appointed mostly because he is thought to be naive and an easy yes man.

However, while in Washington, Smith wants to propose a bill to establish a boy’s camp near Willet Creek. The problem is that, by chance, this is land Taylor owns (under phony names) and wants to profit from in a Senate bill Paine is pushing through to build a dam, with immense profits for Taylor and Paine among others. Smith—once his opposition to the Willet Creek Dam Project is known, and once it becomes clear that he won’t be intimidated by Taylor’s money and promise of future political success (if he becomes Taylor’s yes man)—is framed as owning the land himself and wanting to profit from it. Such allegations are proven by perjured testimony. As Raymond Carney writes: “Smith inhabits a modern world in which .... ‘Knowledge’ does not exist except insofar as it is processed, packaged, and merchandised. Facts and raw data have gone the way of pastoral swains” (302). Smith is convicted by the Committee of Privileges and Elections, and the committee votes for his expulsion from the Senate. Morris Dickstein notes that there are "fundamental narrative archetypes rooted deep in human consciousness. Capra's heroes must undergo a rite de passage of trial and frustration before they take their place in society" (34), and this is Smith's.

Disheartened, Smith is about to leave Washington when his secretary, Saunders (Jean Arthur), finds him beside the Lincoln Memorial as he laments the seemingly lost values it represents. Once cynical, she has become highly emboldened by his idealism, and she encourages him to fight against the Taylors and Paines of the world. After all, she says, “your friend Mr. Lincoln had his Taylors and Paines.” Suddenly a believer again, Smith asks her where they can go for a drink to talk about their plans to fight the expulsion at the last moment.

Smith attempts a filibuster, in which he can take the floor and continue talking without yielding it in an attempt to buy time to rouse popular support to fight the Willet Creek Dam Project specifically. For roughly a day Smith holds the floor, while the Taylor media machine fights against Smith’s Boy Rangers and their small newspaper Boy’s Stuff. Finally, after roughly twenty-four hours of talking, Smith faints from exhaustion, at which point Paine has a crisis of conscience and rushes onto the Senate
floor, proclaiming that he, himself, along with Taylor, had framed Smith and that “every word that boy said was the truth.” So the movie ends with Smith triumphant, and in Comedy's fourth phase "we begin to move out of the world of experience into the ideal world of innocence and romance" (181-182). Smith’s ideals are more important to him than any career success for himself, and that viewpoint triumphs.

The consistent contrast in the movie is between Smith’s impractical idealism and Payne’s corruption. Smith is the martyred senator who has been found guilty of corruption on false charges. Payne is his principal accuser whose supposedly impeccable reputation lends weight to these charges. In Frye, Comedy Fourth Phase is marked by presentation of the “action on two social planes, of which one is preferred and consequently in some measure idealized” (182). Smith is very much the preferred, idealized social plane, and the much larger and more corrupt Washington is the other. As James Palmer and Michael Riley write about the movie:

Capra gave us David and Goliath, and his Goliath was an unmistakable villain, a conspirator if you will, a political boss motivated by greed and lust for power. To a nation pessimistic and apprehensive as a result of both the long Depression and the ominous approach of the Second World War … much of what engaged us was the clarity of the contest and the simple, even simplistic nature of both the conspiracy and the conspirators. (21)

Frye uses Aristophanes's *The Acharnians* as an example of this phase. *The Acharnians* follows a certain Dicaeopolis (an allegorical name meaning “righteous citizen” or “righteous city” in Greek) as he fights the jingoism resulting from economic greed, which has led to the lengthening of the Peloponnesian War. The other Acharnians are upset because their vineyards have been ravaged by the Spartans as a result of war, and they wish the war to continue interminably to sate their desire for revenge. Dicaeopolis makes his own separate peace treaty for his individual house, and his resulting prosperity is contrasted with the suffering of the others at war. In the *Acharnians*, also, Dicaeopolis has to save himself with a long speech, for which he goes to Euripides for assistance in presenting (Euripides loans him many dramatic accoutrements), perhaps much like Jefferson Smith relies on Saunders’ procedural legislative knowledge to succeed in his filibuster attempt. The common Athenians are
convinced by the sincerity of Dicaeopolis’s speech, much like the Senate press corps is impressed by the sincerity of Smith’s speech. The *Acharnians* ends, like *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, with the triumph of the honest speaker.

"In the rituals and myths the earth that produces the rebirth is generally a female figure" (183). Smith’s female figure who leads to his rebirth is Saunders. He has been convicted (with forged documents) of corruption, and he has decided to give up without fighting the charges, disgusted with the Washington political process. Clarissa Saunders (Jean Arthur) convinces him to fight the charges, and inspires him to attempt the filibuster which will save him. Further, without her procedural knowledge, the filibuster would probably have been impossible.

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*Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* Comedy Fourth Phase Analogue: Romance Fourth Phase

Romance Fourth Phase Characteristics.

1. A “happier society is more or less visible throughout the action” (200).
2. The emphasis is on “maintaining of the integrity of the innocent world against the assault of experience” (201). By innocence is meant “the temperate mind [which] contains its good within itself, continence being its prerequisite” (201). By experience, Frye means intemperance, which “seeks its good in the external object of the world of experience” (201).
3. An important image is “the beleaguered castle,” (201) apparently representing innocence, assaulted by experience.

All three Romance Fourth Phase characteristics fit *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* very well. In Romance Fourth Phase “the central theme ... is that of the maintaining of the integrity of the innocent world against the assault of experience” (201). As Palmer and Riley write, *Mr. Smith* and movies like it 'affirm our conviction about the importance and power of the individual and our belief in a political process that functions in a democratic society" (26). Jefferson Smith, perhaps because he was appointed to his post
more or less by luck and not corruption, finds it easier to refuse Taylor’s promise of future political seats, because his goal is not power for himself but to do the most good for his Boy Rangers.

Frye’s example for Romance Fourth Phase is the second book of *The Faerie Queen*, where, as Frye describes it, there is a battle between “Guyon, the knight of temperance” and Acrasia, “the mistress of the Bower of Bliss, and Mammon” (201) (Mammon essentially being worldly possessions). Smith is the knight of temperance, in his restraint from corruption. Paine is Acrasia, in that he is focused on the contentment (bliss) which comes through money (which sometimes is only possible through corruption). Paine says: “This is a man's world. It's a brutal world Jeff, and you've no place in it,” by which he means that Jeff has too many ideals. Payne believes somebody who refuses to be corrupted will, practically, be unable to accomplish anything. Payne says: “I compromised—yes. So that all those years, I could sit in that Senate and serve the people in a thousand honest ways.”

Frye describes the “difficult theme of consolidating heroic innocence in this world after the first great quest has been completed” (201). Smith’s first quest is his bill for a boy’s camp. In *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, Smith’s bill for a boy’s camp is practically defeated when he is accused of secretly owning the same land that he asked the Senate to buy for his boys camp. The boys camp is Smith’s “first great quest.” Dejected, knowing that he has been framed and thinking there is nothing he can do about it, he heads off to the Lincoln Memorial—“the beleaguered castle” (201) representing innocence which is being attacked by the growing corruption of Washington—one last time.

As mentioned briefly before, Saunders finds Smith there, weeping over the seemingly lost ideals the Lincoln Memorial represents. Smith finally agrees to fight the trumped-up charges against him, after Saunders points out to him that “your friend Mr. Lincoln had his Taylors and Paines. So did every other man whoever tried to lift his thought up off the ground. Odds against 'em didn't stop those men. They were fools that way. All the good that ever came into this world came from fools with faith like that.”

Frye writes that “an ironic parody of the same theme forms the basis of Aristophanes’ *Lysistrata*” (202). This is exactly Jefferson Smith. Like Lysistrata, who
convinces the hitherto unobtrusive women to withhold sex from their husbands until those husbands agree to a truce in the Peloponnesian War, Smith is willing to challenge the status quo, because his love for his “children” (the Boy Rangers), like Lysistrata’s love for her children and her desire for peace for them, is what eventually convinces him to fight the inertia of a corrupt, self-interested, self-perpetuating government machine.

*Figure 6: Comedy and Romance Fifth Phase*

*Gilligan’s Island* (1964) Comedy Fifth Phase

**Comedy Fifth Phase Characteristics.**

1. A sad tinge. “[T]he comic ending is less a matter of the way the plot turns out than the perspective of the audience” (184).

2. Contains tragedy (184).

3. The audience views “the action … from the point of view of a higher and better ordered world” (184).

4. “[T]he usual symbol for the lower or chaotic world is the sea, from which the cast, or an important part of it, is saved” (184).

For Comedy Fifth Phase, Frye writes that “the usual symbol for the lower or chaotic world is the sea, from which the cast, or an important part of it, is saved” (184). An excellent example of all four characteristics of Comedy Fifth Phase would be *Gilligan’s Island*, which is about a group of tourists on a “three hour tour” who run into a storm.
which beaches them on a deserted island. “In the fifth phase of Comedy ... we move into a world that is still more romantic, less Utopian, and more Arcadian” (184). The island, of course, is certainly not Utopian in that it has fairly limited resources. It is, however, Arcadian in that it offers a fairly simple, quiet life without any major disturbances … except for Gilligan (Bob Denver). And despite the hilarity of the situation Comedy, the existence of those stranded does “seem less festive and more pensive” (184), as Frye describes it, because, no matter how much Gilligan makes us laugh, we know he is still stranded on the island.

Frye writes that, in this phase, “the comic ending is less a matter of the way the plot turns out than the perspective of the audience” (184). It is not a very comic thing for people to be stranded on a desert island, but along with the ‘laugh track’ and the clutzy, impulsive behavior of Gilligan, we are taught to laugh at a potentially tragic situation. Essentially, we feel like we can laugh at Gilligan’s Island, because the most severe tragedy has been averted. There was a serious storm, where anybody in the storm on the ocean could have been killed, but nobody was killed.

So the tragedy of people stranded on the jungle island doesn’t seem so tragic. In fact, perhaps the tourists are more appreciative of life than they were before the storm. The action moves “from a lower world of confusion to an upper world of order” (184). The lower world of confusion is the sea from which the castaways have been saved. In comparison to that, their life on the island is, as Frye describes this phase, “more romantic” in the Robinson Crusoe idyllic sense.

“In this phase the reader or audience feels raised above the action” (184). Indeed, Gilligan’s Island was originally viewed, and still is viewed, from the comfort of living rooms, and the audience is able to laugh, largely because being stranded on a deserted island for a long period of time is highly unlikely to happen to them, and so Gilligan’s Island is not very threatening. “We see the action, in short, from the point of view of a higher and better ordered world” (184). As Frye writes, there is “not simply ... a cyclical movement from tragedy and absence to happiness and return, but of bodily metamorphosis and a transformation from one kind of life to another” (184). The castaways have essentially lost a highly technological life for a life where they will be exposed to the brunt of nature with its frequent storms.
Gilligan and the Skipper (Alan Hale Jr.) have constructed a rather insubstantial raft in which to set sail and search for help. However, after sharks bite away part of the raft and a storm sinks it, Gilligan and the Skipper find themselves back on the same island, although they don’t know it is the same island. At this point, being separated from the other castaways, they think the sounds produced by the other castaways are actually the sounds of the Marubi, a group of head-hunting cannibals the Professor (Russell Johnson) has told them about. Gilligan and the Skipper have started a fire for warmth, and the other castaways think it is a fire begun by the Marubi. The Professor and the other castaways then test their means of communication (in case they are separated) by blowing (rather stupidly) conch shells all in unison. Gilligan and the Skipper think this is a Marubi war cry. As Sherwood Schwartz, the creator of *Gilligan’s Island*, writes about the “Two on a Raft” plotline: “Personally, I’ve always been fascinated by the problems of human communication. Misunderstandings between people, as well as misunderstandings between nations, may turn innocent remarks into insults, and gestures of friendship may be interpreted as acts of war” (194).

Frye writes that the *cognitio*, that is, the moment of realization, introduces “us to a world of childlike innocence which has always made more sense than reality” (184). The *cognitio* in the first episode of *Gilligan’s Island*, called “Two on a Raft,” involves Gilligan making his normal clutzy mistake which, in this case, actually leads to the reconciliation of the castaways, who have been split apart into two groups. The Professor sets a “trap” for the ‘Marubi’ outside of a cave by attaching a rope to a bunch of rocks. The rope, when tripped, would supposedly lead to an avalanche of rocks trapping the Marubi in the cave. Through the last part of this first episode, all of the castaways become aware of the rope, as they all run in and out of the cave, thinking the other group of castaways is the Marubi.

However, Gilligan, reminded to not trip the rope, actually does trip it a few seconds later. Gilligan’s clumsiness is actually what brings the group together again, at least for a while, because, all trapped in the cave, they must be stationary for long enough to realize that they are simply trying to escape from other castaways, not Marubi. The movie ends with Gilligan, dressed as a Marubi, scaring away the rest of the castaways who are now a
group that he will soon rejoin (the Comedy hero, of a sort, who brings the society together and is later integrated into it).

Frye writes: “The materials of the cognitio of Pericles or The Winter’s Tale ... seem both far-fetched and inevitably right, outraging reality and at the same time introducing us to a world of childlike innocence which has always made more sense than reality” (184). This is exactly Gilligan. His childlike behavior and naïve, clumsy mistakes seem so frequent as to be almost unrealistic. Yet, of course, Gilligan’s clumsiness, which so often keeps the castaways stranded on Gilligan’s Island, makes the show interesting and funny. Essentially, Gilligan’s world is one that we want to make more sense than reality.

**Gilligan’s Island Comedy Fifth Phase Analogue: Romance Fifth Phase**

**Romance Fifth Phase Characteristics.**

1. Emphasis on the natural cycle being viewed from above (202).
2. “[T]he mood is a contemplative withdrawal from or sequel to action rather than a youthful preparation for it” (202).
3. Erotic experience is “comprehended and not … a mystery” (202).
4. The true lovers are at the top of the scale, and the scale moves down towards greater and greater lust and perversion (202).

The fifth phase is “a reflective, idyllic view of experience from above, in which the movement of the natural cycle has usually a prominent place” (202). One of the most fascinating aspects of Gilligan’s Island is the way the characters consistently find themselves close to death in the first episode “Two on a Raft,” but yet the audience somehow knows instinctively that they won’t die. Perhaps this is because it is the first episode of a Comedy or because of the laugh track, or because Gilligan’s clutzy behavior seems so incongruous with death, or because of the frequently light and silly music (which seems humorously inappropriate in the shark attack scene, for instance). But, for whatever reason, when Gilligan and the Skipper’s raft is being eaten away by sharks or when a storm sinks their raft, or when Gilligan submerges completely under the water
with the anchor he has forgotten to release as the raft begins to set sail, we don’t feel like anybody is about to die.

Frye writes that the fifth phase “deals with a world very similar to that of the second phase, except that the mood is a contemplative withdrawal from or sequel to action rather than a youthful preparation for it” (202). Even the other castaways, as they watch the air bubbles of a submerged Gilligan (holding onto the anchor) for quite some time as the raft begins to set sail, do not try to jump in to save Gilligan. They are concerned (“I do believe Gilligan’s gone underwater” Mrs. Howell (Natalie Schaefer) says), but it is almost as if all the characters know they are characters on the sitcom *Gilligan’s Island*, a show on which characters are highly unlikely to die, even if they tried. So *Gilligan’s Island* allows for some reflection, because although the characters are in life and death situations, since they aren’t about to die, we are not so emotionally or empathetically involved, and we can think reflectively about their experience.

Frye writes that this phase is, “like the second phase, an erotic world, but it presents experience as comprehended and not a mystery” (202). Although *Gilligan’s Island* has very little eroticism in it, the one exception is Ginger (Tina Louise), the nightclub singer who has boarded the *Minnow*, as the radio report announcing the *Minnow’s* disappearance mentions, in the same dress in which she sang that night. Ginger plays the role of the sexually experienced woman, although, of course, this is not explicitly mentioned, at least in “Two on a Raft.” Sherwood Schwartz wrote that Tina Louise “was definitely in the Monroe mold” (63). Further, quite a few have commented that Ginger is a sexually experienced Marilyn Monroe type (Tina Louise even said, according to Schwartz: “I want to be more like Marilyn Monroe” (141)).
As Gilligan and the Skipper are both about to set out on their raft, Mary Ann (Dawn Wells) and Ginger have tropical fruit necklaces for them. The Skipper especially is grateful and speaks in Hawaiian a phrase which he translates into the English “until we meet again”—an obviously romantic reference. Ginger also responds with a phrase she states she had learned in a Hawaiian nightclub. When asked its meaning, she replies “This bar is off limits to all military personnel.” Ginger is portrayed as the experienced sexual object in the way she dresses provocatively (even on a small tourist cruise boat) in the way she knows how to handle all men, whether they are wild or drunk, like the Hawaii servicemen, or relatively tame, like the Skipper and Gilligan. Regardless of whether she is sexually experienced (at the very least, Ginger is the type who seems to enjoy sexual innuendo), she certainly has quite a bit of experience with the sexual advances of men.

*Figure 7: Comedy and Romance Sixth Phase*

*Network (1976) Comedy Sixth Phase*

**Comedy Sixth Phase Characteristics.**
1. Social units disintegrate into one isolated individual (185).
2. There is the “sense of individual detachment from routine existence,” “secret and sheltered places, forests in moonlight, secluded valleys” (185).
3. Sometimes it is closely connected "psychologically with a return to the womb” (186).
Network is the story of a television news anchor, Howard Beale (Peter Finch), whose wife’s recent death has led him to drink heavily and to, as a result, lower ratings. Five years after his wife’s death, Beale is fired by the news boss, Max Schumacher (William Holden). Upon announcing his leaving the network, Beale promptly states that he will commit suicide in one week’s time on the air. “That should give the public relations people a week to promote the show. We ought to get a hell of a rating out of that - a fifty share, easy.”

Beale does not commit suicide, and the show continues with his psychotic statements, for which he is heavily criticized by the media. But then Diana Christensen, an up-and-coming management star at UBS, begins to point out the tremendous ratings Howard Beale’s rants could generate, despite the fact that they couldn’t, properly, be called news. So Beale is given his own show and becomes the “mad prophet of the air waves” with a “42 share.”

Beale temporarily runs afoul of the president and chairman of the network company, Arthur Jensen (Ned Beatty), by criticizing one of Jensen’s business deals involving the network. Summoned to Jensen’s office, Beale is converted to Jensen’s “corporate” philosophy. Returning to his news show, Beale begins ‘preaching’ what Jensen has taught him about the death of democracy and the rise of corporate America.

However, as the unidentified narrative voice says: “Nobody particularly cared to hear his life was utterly valueless.” Beale’s ratings drop, which causes Christensen and others like her (namely another vice-president, Frank Hackett (Robert Duvall)) lots of angst and lost money for the network. However, neither Hackett nor Christensen can fire Beale, because Jensen now likes Beale’s show. Hackett says mournfully: “Arthur Jensen has taken a strong personal interest in the Howard Beale show” because of his “very important message to the American people.”

With no other options, the network management decides to kill Howard Beale. They kill him live on the air. Just after Beale is shot dead, the camera crane is raised over him, for a better shot of him as he lies dead. After other news reporters report the incident, the narrator ends the movie with: “This was the story of Howard Beale, the first known instance of a man who was killed because he had lousy ratings.”
This movie applies well to Frye’s sixth phase of Comedy. Frye writes that this is the "phase of the collapse and disintegration of comic society" (185). There is no doubt that Network is about the collapse—indeed, mental breakdown—of Howard Beale. Beale raves about everything to get better ratings. Indeed, Frank R. Cunningham summarizes Network aptly when he writes that it uses “television as a metaphor for the growth of a megacorporate state that progressively dehumanizes and makes passive the individual” (222). Beale’s promise to commit suicide was only the beginning. At least partly, television society has driven him to this madness. The television brass evaluate programs based on the size of the audience they attract. Even if a program is complete drivel and nonsense, if it attracts a large audience it is considered high quality by “network administration.” This is what has created Howard Beale. His disintegration is encouraged (by Christensen, for instance) partly because it brings high ratings on national television. His psychological well-being is ignored.

As Frye points out, "the social units of Comedy" in this phase "become small and esoteric, or even confined to a single individual" (185). The society of the television industry has become a very individual one. Everybody sticks to themselves, because in a world where popularity is the key to success, it becomes very messy to establish alliances that might have to be severed a few weeks later due to poor ratings. Even “love” is something people use to get what they want, and only temporarily.

A perfect example is Diana Christenson. She is solely focused on her own career performance and doesn't know how to interact with others when career isn't involved. She tells Max Schumacher, the head of the UBS news program, on their first date: “All I want out of life is a 30 share and a 20 rating.” Anything else is unimportant. Later, she tells Schumacher, when she is breaking up with him, that she "doesn't know how to love" somebody else besides those things.

Christenson is also a perfect example of "the sense of individual detachment from routine existence" (185). Her only world is television, which divorces her from everyday life. She's so focused on just her job that she doesn't know how to love someone. Indeed, Christensen embraces the non-routine, the strange, the devilishly original, because she knows it will lead to higher ratings.
Interestingly, in this phase Frye discusses the love "of the occult and the marvelous," (185), and Howard Beale's news hour (after it is revised for better ratings), actually has an occult specialist in it—Sybil the Soothsayer—as well as, of course, the emphasis on the marvelous and strange in the world (as opposed to what is newsworthy). And this is what the television executives want: not necessarily the informative but only the marvelous. It doesn’t matter if people hear the truth or not. It only matters that they hear something interesting.

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**Network Comedy Sixth Phase Analogue: Romance Sixth Phase**

**Romance Sixth Phase Characteristics.**

1. There is a movement from “active to contemplative adventure” (202).
2. “A characteristic feature of this phase is the tale in quotation marks, where we have an opening setting with a small group of congenial people, and then the real story is told by one of its members” (202).
3. “The history is conceived not only as a progression but as a cycle of which the audience is the end, and, as the last page indicates, the beginning as well” (203).
4. There is a “cosmic disaster destroying the whole fictional society except a small group, which begins life anew in some sheltered spot” (203).

In the analogous sixth phase of romance we see “the comic society breaking up into small units or individuals” (202). Certainly, this is the case in *Network*. “A central image of this phase, a favorite of Yeats, is that of the old man in the tower, the lonely hermit absorbed in occult or magical studies” (202). This is an excellent description of Howard Beale, all alone, drinking booze even while he's working, lonely (his wife having died), working with a medium in his network news hour.

"... [T]he themes of the lonely old men, the intimate group, and the reported tale are linked" (203). Frye later gives the example of the *Decameron*. Max Schumacher and Howard Beale are the “lonely old men.” Beale’s wife has died, and Schumacher is no longer faithful to his wife, simply because she no longer excites him sexually.
Schumacher and Beale tell stories about their ‘glory days’ in addition to their old jokes (but even Schumacher, for instance, admits: “nobody wants a dumb ... book about the great years of television”).

Further, in Network, the unknown narrator frequently interjects his matter-of-fact commentary, as if to help us believe we really saw what just took place on the screen and that we didn’t imagine it. This narrator makes Network the “reported tale” (203) that Frye identifies as a characteristic of Romance Sixth Phase. The narration is spoken in an objective, matter-of-fact voice, but the narrator does interpret the story for us by the statements in the narration (i.e. “this was the story of Howard Beale, the first known instance of a man who was killed because he had lousy ratings”). This last statement, of course, is actually criticism of Christensen and Hackett’s actions. The narrator is perhaps there to show us that Christensen and Hackett’s actions are not endorsed in the case, in the media’s profit-driven world, we are tempted to believe the movie is portraying Christensen and Hackett as heroes.

**Other Movies Examined and Categorized According to Frye’s Phases**

![Figure 8: Comedy and Romance Second Phase](image)

*Annie Hall (1977) Comedy Second Phase*
Comedy Second Phase Characteristics.

1. The comic hero “does not transform a humorous society but simply escapes or runs away from it, leaving its structure as it was before” or the society surrounding a hero is unable to affect him (180).

2. The hero is usually a whimsical runaway.

3. In lighthearted comedies, the comic ending sweeps “over all quixotic illusions” (180).

Annie Hall is based on Woody Allen’s real life early 1970’s romance with Diane Keaton (born Diane Hall) who plays Annie Hall (Allen and Keaton, by 1977, had broken up). According to Frye, Comedy Second Phase is “a comedy in which the hero does not transform a humorous society but simply escapes or runs away from it, leaving its structure as it was before” (180). In Annie Hall, Woodie Allen stars as an aging Alvy Singer, who has fallen in love and then broken up with Annie Hall. Much of the movie is about this break-up and, further, the humorous (whimsical) society surrounding Alvie and Annie. This society seems to be an explanation for Alvy’s neuroses. For instance, among other things, Alvy’s family grew up in a house directly underneath a roller-coaster, which Alvy believes might partially explain his neurotic behavior.

In one scene, Alvy is about to ride with his friend Rob (Tony Roberts) in Rob’s car, and Rob dons what seems to be the headpiece of a spacesuit. When Alvy asks him why, Rob replies: “ Keeps out the alpha rays, Max [Rob throughout the movie addresses Alvy as Max, although the movie never tells us why13] . You don’t get old.” Even with this scene, Rob is not the most eccentric character in a movie filled with habitual drug users, women who habitually smoke marijuana just before having sex (Annie), cocaine fiends, and other assorted eccentric characters. Undoubtedly, this eccentric, highly honest, society surrounding Alvy is very humorous (in the whimsical sense).

There is also a sense in which, in Annie Hall, a “society ... constructed by or around a hero ... proves not sufficiently real or strong to impose itself” (180). Alvy is dealing with the classic problem of a life which is sometimes irritating and which, even more often, doesn’t give him what he wants. So, in much of Annie Hall, he tries to create for himself the perfect life. For instance, while Annie and Alvy are waiting in line at The New

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13Peter Cowie tells us "Allen idolised Max Shulman, the writer, when he was young and toyed with adopting Max as his first name" (25-26).
Yorker theatre, a highly pretentious academic behind them is making fatuous, trivial remarks about, among other things, Marshall McLuhan. Alvy is becoming increasingly irritated with each remark. Finally, Alvy speaks directly to the camera: “What do you do when you get stuck in a movie line with a guy like this behind you? It's just maddening.” However, Alvy has a solution for the problem. Suddenly, he brings out the real-life Marshall McLuhan, who tells the pretentious academic: “You, you know nothing of my work .... How you ever got to teach a course in anything is totally amazing.”

Of course, this is not a believable event from real life. The Marshall McLuhan cameo is only something that can happen on a film in which Woody Allen has the clout to invite McLuhan for a cameo. In real life, Alvy would simply have to listen to the academic’s pretentious statements, without the definitive response of the actual critic. Allen is using the movie as a way for him to live the ideal life temporarily as he can’t live it in real life.

As Timothy Dirks (p. 5 par. 27) points out, there is a connection between this McLuhan scene and another scene later in the movie, where Alvy is watching a rehearsal of his own play about his experience with Annie, which includes the same exact lines spoken in the movie when Alvie and Annie break up. However, in the play, they are later reunited. Alvy then turns directly to the camera and says: “You know how you're always trying to get things to come out perfect in art because, uh, it’s real difficult in life.” The play, then, is a way for Woody Allen (through Alvy) to self-consciously create a better society than actually exists in reality.

Indeed, the whole movie is that way. It is a way for Alvy to explain why his relationship with Annie didn’t work and to repair imaginatively what didn’t work practically. It is a “society constructed by or around a hero” but it “proves not sufficiently real or strong to impose itself” (Frye 180). At the movie’s end, despite Alvy’s attempt to use the movie to work through his relationship with Annie, to listen to all the random advice he gets from the people on the street (which is obviously his own advice being tossed around in his head), Annie and Alvy are still not together.

So in one of many scenes where Alvy is thinking about his relationship problems with Annie, he is immediately approached by a random old lady, who tells him to learn to deal with reality. Of course, this character—who Alvy doesn’t seem to have met before, and who seems to know what he is thinking without even having heard of Alvy and
Annie’s story—must simply be a figment of Alvy’s mind, a way for him to work through his relationship with Annie in the movie.

Then, confronted by this sudden advice, Alvy suddenly decides to begin asking others on the street for advice. Alvy asks an old man: “With your wife in bed, does she need some kind of artificial stimulation, like, like marijuana?”

The reply: “We use a large, vibrating egg.”

Seemingly needing more advice, Alvy approaches a random couple: “You look like a very happy couple .... How do you account for it?”

The woman replies: “I’m very shallow and empty and I have no ideas and nothing interesting to say.”

The man’s response: “And I’m exactly the same way.” Of course, all of these characters are only in Alvy's mind. They are only part of Alvy’s thought process, a way for him to struggle with his difficult break-up.

The movie ends with this last statement by Alvy: “This guy goes to a psychiatrist and says, ‘Doc, uh, my brother's crazy. He thinks he's a chicken.’ And uh, the doctor says, ‘Well why don't you turn him in?’ And the guy says, ‘I would, but I need the eggs.’ Well, I guess that's pretty much now how I feel about relationships. You know, they're totally irrational and crazy and absurd and, but uh, I guess we keep going through it ... because ... most of us need the eggs.” At the movie’s end, Alvy recognizes that his movie is not the only society which he has constructed to deal with his breakup with Annie. For Alvy, romances themselves are constructed to fill a basic need (although they don’t have much substance to them) because we need their psychological benefits of companionship.

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**Annie Hall Comedy Second Phase Analogue: Irony/Satire Second Phase**

**Irony/Satire Second Phase Characteristics.**

1. A successful “rogue ... makes conventional society look foolish without setting up any positive standard” (229).
2. The emphasis is on surviving in everyday life, as opposed to attempting to understand life philosophically (229).

3. Consequently, this phase does not set up a moral imperative (229).

4. Stereotypes and dogmas are shown to be inapplicable when set against real life (230).

Frye writes: “The central theme in the second or quixotic phase of satire, then, is the setting of ideas and generalizations and theories and dogmas over against the life they are supposed to explain” (230). Alvy has gone through life trying to find an ideal spouse, based on his “ideas and generalizations and theories and dogmas” about what an ideal spouse would be. At the movie’s end, he replaces all these theories with the realization that all relationships are ultimately “totally irrational and crazy and absurd.”

But even that statement, of course, is a theory and dogma just like his previous theories and dogmas about women. As Frye admits in describing this phase: “Skepticism itself may be or become a dogmatic attitude” (230), and perhaps even this theory and dogma will not prove true, but it is Alvy’s theory based on experience, not upon an abstract theory about women. “Insofar as the satirist has a ‘position’ of his own, it is the preference of practice to theory, experience to metaphysics” (Frye 230). Alvy comes to the conclusion that relationships are “totally irrational and crazy and absurd,” because that is what he has experienced, even though there could be theories which explain away even his experiences.

Frye further writes of the characters in Irony/Satire Second Phase: “[T]hey had the eiron’s distrust of the ability of anyone’s reason, including their own, to transform society into a better structure” (232). Woody Allen (in his monologue before we are introduced to his fictional self Alvy Singer) quotes Groucho Marx: “I would never want to belong to any club that would have someone like me for a member.” Alvy would never want to be considered a member of anything, because that would mean he’d have to probably subscribe to a fixed viewpoint of life. Alvy distrusts anybody’s ability “to transform society into a better structure” (Frye 232).

One of Annie Hall’s most interesting characteristics is that Allen is actually criticizing his own conception of romantic relationships, which has been heavily influenced by the Western conception of romantic relationships. Frye describes Irony/Satire Second Phase protagonists as “intellectually detached from the conventions they lived with, and ...
capable of seeing their anomalies and absurdities as well as their stabilizing conservatism” (232). Relationships, especially marriage relationships, are a stabilizing force in society, which keep people within the society in a very static, controllable position. But, on the other hand, Alvy (and Allen) both consider a relationship lasting for the rest of one’s life as an absurd situation, because even relatively short relationships (like all of Alvy’s) are “totally irrational and crazy and absurd.” Alvy wants to break up what Frye calls the things “that impede the free movement (not necessarily, of course, the progress) of society” (233). For Alvy, these are relationships.

Finally, as Frye writes: “In Don Juan we simultaneously read the poem and watch the poet at work writing it: we eavesdrop on his associations, his struggles for rhymes ... his decisions whether to be “serious” or mask himself with humor” (234). Alvy writes a play within the movie (play) Annie Hall in which the only difference is that in the play the relationship works, as opposed to falling apart as it does in the movie (and did in real life). Allen’s remark, mentioned earlier, is that: “You know how you’re always trying to get things to come out perfect in art because, uh, it’s real difficult in life.” So, in Alvy’s play, we have a glimpse of how Woody Allen (Alvy) is working through, in a work of art, his life. Also, the movie is also full of shots where Alvy directly addresses the camera and the audience, while he temporarily steps outside of the world of the story and consciously becomes the auteur.

![Figure 9: Comedy and Romance Sixth Phase](image)
Dr. Strangelove, Or I How Learned To Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb (1964)

Comedy Sixth Phase

Comedy Sixth Phase Characteristics.

1. Social units disintegrate into one isolated individual (185).
2. There is the “sense of individual detachment from routine existence,” “secret and sheltered places, forests in moonlight, secluded valleys” (185).
3. Sometimes this phase is closely connected “psychologically with a return to the womb” (186).

Dr Strangelove is the story of the insane nuclear attack of American Brigadier General Jack D. Ripper (Sterling Hayden) on Russia. The Brigadier General, convinced that the Russians are slowly weakening Americans physically by encouraging fluoridation of American water, decides to send all the bombers in his wing (stationed—in case of nuclear war—within two hours of prescribed targets in Russia) to immediately bomb Russia. The bombers are only instructed to abort if they receive a secret radio transmission based on a code only Ripper knows. Ripper then cuts off all communication lines at his base and instructs his soldiers to shoot at any Russians (which Ripper claims would be disguised as American soldiers) trying to infiltrate the base. As Ripper’s planes near their target, the President (Peter Sellers) and his cabinet learn that the Russians have a Doomsday Machine, designed to explode over the entire world’s surface if America attacks Russia with nuclear bombs.

After Ripper, in a fit of depression after his soldiers surrender his base, commits suicide, Ripper’s subordinate Captain Lionel Mandrake (Peter Sellers) discovers the secret radio transmission code and is finally able to advise Washington of it. Almost all of the planes are turned away, except for the plane of Major T.J. Kong (Slim Pickens). Kong’s plane has been hit by a missile and has lost its radio transmission. Unable to receive the signal, the plane drops a nuclear bomb, touching off a nuclear explosion and then, ultimately, the Russian response of the Doomsday Machine, which destroys the earth’s surface.

Frye writes that Comedy Sixth Phase chronicles “collapse and disintegration” (185). Frye writes further that “[i]n this phase the social units of Comedy become small and esoteric, or even confined to a single individual” (185). Individual isolation (very
common in the modern world) is the reason for nuclear destruction in *Dr. Strangelove*. Indeed, the isolation of American individuals in the government and the military, a lack of checks and balances and of mutual interdependence, is what leads to nuclear annihilation. Because Ripper is able to send off his planes on nuclear bombing runs by himself as a mere Brigadier General, the movie presents one man (who is not relatively very powerful compared to the American President, for instance) being able to destroy the entire world.

Further, the advanced technology of the radio on Kong’s plane, supposedly leading to greater communication over longer distances, is knocked out by a Russian missile’s explosion. Essentially, advanced technology does not always bring human beings closer, because other advanced technology (like the missile) negates the usefulness of advanced technology like the radio. Further, human beings—hubristically assuming advanced technology like the radio would always work—have positioned themselves so that, when the advanced technology does not work, they are isolated from each other (in *Dr. Strangelove*, the bombers poised to respond to Russia’s nuclear threat are already pre-positioned at their failsafe points when they receive the Plan R order). Kong's plane is aptly named *Leper Colony*.

Gerald Mast notes how in *Dr. Strangelove* the world's nuclear destruction is unavoidable, because the characters are so concerned with and mired in their trivial situations which isolate them from everybody else: "[A]ll these trivialities become more significant than the destruction of the earth and everyone on it" (337). This is a result of the modern individual isolation. Ripper is portrayed as an isolated man with his own bathroom and his own dark office (with venetian blinds which he often uses) in which he basically lives. He might have avoided his gradual demise into insanity if he had had somebody to talk with him and reason with him about flourider's true purpose. But he has so isolated himself and isolated his base (which he orders "sealed tight") that the order to drop the bomb cannot be stopped. Mast writes: "That mistake in priorities … will surely lead us to horror. Once we write manuals for dropping the atomic bomb broken down into step-by-step procedures that can be read rationally, dispassionately, clinically, then the bomb will surely fall" (337).
Frye writes: “Secret and sheltered places, forests in moonlight, secluded valleys, and happy islands become more prominent,” as well as “the sense of individual detachment from routine existence” (185). All of the establishing shots for Kong’s plane are flying over wooded mountains, valleys and other geographical details. Interestingly, we never see Kong’s plane flying over a city. The intent is to show us how alone and detached from the (urban) world Kong’s plane is and, therefore, how difficult it will be to stop.

For Frye, this is the world of “the kind of imaginative withdrawal portrayed in Huysmans’ *A Rebours*” (186). Frye writes that Des Esseintes is “a dilettante trying to amuse himself” (186). This seems similar to Major Kong’s attitude. Indeed, Kong’s mission to destroy nuclear sites in Russia seems almost fun to him. As the mission begins, he replaces his pilot’s helmet with a cowboy hat, as if he were riding a familiar horse. At the movie’s end, Kong has to manually repair and open the bomb bay, which he is able to do only just as the bomb is dropped. As the bomb falls from the plane, we see Kong riding it down. He is twirling his cowboy hat in the air, yelling happily as if he were, again, riding a rodeo horse. Yet he is falling, of course, to his destruction and also that of the planet. Mast notes that “[h]e takes the destruction of the earth about as seriously as winning a football game” (335).

Frye writes that, at the end, “[t]he comic society has run the full course from infancy to death, and in its last phase myths closely connected psychologically with a return to the womb are appropriate” (186). Just after the bomb drops, Dr. Strangelove (the German scientist who seems to have greatly influenced American nuclear armament) and the President and his Cabinet are discussing their next move once the Doomsday Machine destroys the planet’s surface. Strangelove proposes using underground mine shafts to repopulate the human race until the earth’s surface radioactivity dwindles. Strangelove says: “Radioactivity would never penetrate a mine some thousands of feet deep, and in a matter of weeks, sufficient improvements in drilling space could easily be provided.” This, of course, is the return to the earth’s womb deep inside it.
**Dr. Strangelove, Or I How Learned To Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb**

**Comedy**

**Sixth Phase Analogue: Romance Sixth Phase**

**Romance Sixth Phase Characteristics.**

1. There is a movement from “active to contemplative adventure” (202).
2. “A characteristic feature of this phase is the tale in quotation marks, where we have an opening setting with a small group of congenial people, and then the real story is told by one of its members” (202).
3. “The history is conceived not only as a progression but as a cycle of which the audience is the end, and, as the last page indicates, the beginning as well” (203).
4. There is a “cosmic disaster destroying the whole fictional society except a small group, which begins life anew in some sheltered spot” (203).

Frye writes: “A central image of this phase, a favorite of Yeats, is that of the old man in the tower, the lonely hermit absorbed in occult or magical studies” (202). This is Dr. Strangelove himself. His “occult or magical studies” are his nuclear studies, which, of course, would seem “occult or magical” to many. In a similar way, Kong and his plane represent a modern version of “the old man in the tower” in that nobody outside the plane can communicate to those inside it (once the Russian missile knocks out the plane’s radio communications system).

Further, Frye notes the “increasing popularity of the flood archetype. This usually takes the form of some cosmic disaster destroying the whole fictional society except for a small group, which begins life anew in some sheltered spot” (203). The flood, of course, is the nuclear destruction. At movie’s end, the American leaders and the Russian ambassador are considering how they would use their ‘Ark’ (i.e. mine shafts) in the most pleasant way (in sexual intercourse with specially selected women chosen for their physical attractiveness), while the world is inundated with nuclear activity.
This “brings us around again to the image of the mysterious newborn infant floating on the sea” (203). *Dr. Strangelove* ends with various pictures of nuclear destruction, but there is at least some hope, because a singer croons as the nuclear bombs explode: “We'll meet again, don't know where, don't know when, but I know we'll meet again, some sunny day. Keep smiling through, just like you always do, till the blue skies drive the dark clouds far away.” The implication, of course, is that some have survived, although perhaps not many. Whatever the number of survivors, they certainly would have almost no autonomy on a radioactive, wasteland earth. Their new level of autonomy might only be as much as that of Frye’s “mysterious newborn infant floating on the sea” (203).

![Figure 10: Comedy and Romance Fifth Phase](image)

**The Lady Eve (1941) Comedy Fifth Phase**

**Comedy Fifth Phase Characteristics.**

1. A very sad tinge. “[T]he comic ending is less a matter of the way the plot turns out than the perspective of the audience” (184).
2. Contains tragedy (184).
3. The audience views “the action … from the point of view of a higher and better ordered world” (184).
4. “[T]he usual symbol for the lower or chaotic world is the sea, from which the cast, or an important part of it, is saved” (184).
*The Lady Eve* is the story of the seduction of Charles Pike (Henry Fonda), a wealthy inheritor of the fortune of Pike’s Ale, by Jean Harrington (Barbara Stanwyck), who, on cruise ships, works to help her father Colonel Harrington (Charles Coburn) (a professional cardsharp) swindle wealthy socialites, whom Jean lures into card games with her father.

However, in attempting to lure Charles, Jean actually falls in love with him and convinces her father to restrain himself. Charles and Jean begin planning marriage, but soon Charles is tipped off by his watchful bodyguard Muggsy (William Demarest) that the Harringtons are “professional gamblers.” Stunned that Jean has been pretending to be somebody she is not, Charles breaks off contact with her, although she tries to explain to him that she really does love him. “You don’t think I was going to marry you without telling you?” But Charles does think exactly that, and he refuses to speak with Jean, leaving the Harringtons behind when he leaves the boat.

Desperately wanting revenge, Jean learns that one of her father’s friends (also a professional swindler), who is masquerading as a certain Sir Alfred McGlennan Keith (Eric Blore), is in the same social circle as the Pikes. Plotting to take revenge, she asks Keith for an introduction, and shows up to a Pike dinner party as the Lady Eve Sidwich. “Sir” Keith eventually reveals to Charles that Lady Eve Sidwich has a renegade twin sister, Jean Harrington, who is a well-known swindler. He mentions this to explain the physical resemblance between Lady Eve Sidwich and Jean.

Eventually, Lady Eve Sidwich traps Charles into falling in love with her. He proposes to her, the two marry and, on the honeymoon ride on the train, just before the two consummate their marriage, she begins to list all the men she has slept with. Upset, Charles decides that he wants an annulment. However, Jean/Lady Eve refuses to give it. In later negotiations after Charles has bolted from the train, Lady Eve learns that Charles is on another ship, trying to relax from his difficult experience. Meeting him on the steamship, she is again Jean Harrington and, after his experience with Lady Eve, Charles is ecstatic to see her again. The two almost immediately go to Charles’ room. Charles is apparently willing to commit adultery, although, of course, he doesn’t know that Jean is actually also his wife the Lady Eve. The movie ends with Muggsy leaving the room.
which Charles and Jean have entered alone, apparently to have sex, and Muggsy mutters: “Positively the same dame.”

Frye writes: “In the fifth phase of Comedy, we move into a world that is still more romantic, less Utopian and more Arcadian, less festive and more pensive, where the comic ending is less a matter of the way the plot turns out than of the perspective of the audience” (184). Of course, *The Lady Eve* is actually a story which contains much Tragedy. Professional thieves, who manipulate the rich for money, would be a fairly tragic real-life occurrence. Worse, the professional thieves are never appropriately punished by the movie’s end, as far as we know. Finally, the movie ends with the hero willingly committing what he believes is adultery (although actually it is not). The comic ending is certainly a matter of the audience’s perspective, because the ending actually shows Charles Pike’s corruption (although, technically, as the audience knows but Charles doesn’t, it’s not). As Frye writes, Fifth Phase Comedies “do not avoid tragedies but contain them” (184).

“The action seems to be not only a movement from a ‘winter’s tale’ to spring, but from a lower world of confusion to an upper world of order” (184). Of course, *The Lady Eve* is entirely about confusion. Who exactly is telling the truth about who they are in this movie (besides Charles Pike)? In this case, Charles isn’t even enlightened by the movie’s end, although, of course, it’s implied that he will be enlightened in the very near future after the movie ends. So the movie moves from confusion to order.

Frye writes: “[T]he usual symbol for the lower or chaotic world is the sea, from which the cast, or an important part of it, is saved” (184). Of course, the temptation takes place on a ship in the middle of the sea. Jean even comments, noticing that Charles seems particularly stressed while he drinks at the ship’s bar (he has just discovered that she and her father are professional gamblers), that he must be worried because he has fallen “in love with a girl in the middle of an ocean.” That is, the sea is a dangerous place in *The Lady Eve*, because this is where the cardsharps, like the Harringtons, prey on the rich (we know that yachts are probably a prime hunting ground for the Harringtons, because the criminal file photo of them shows them leaving another, different ship).

Frye writes that “[t]he materials of the *cognitio* of *Pericles* or *The Winter’s Tale* are so stock that they would be ‘hooted at like an old tale,’ yet they seem both far-fetched and
inevitably right, outraging reality and at the same time introducing us to a world of childlike innocence which has always made more sense than reality” (184). Indeed, some of *The Lady Eve* seems unrealistic, especially the fact that Charles is so naïve as to believe that Lady Sidwich is simply a good twin sister of the corrupt Jean Harrington. That he would marry her so quickly, without finding the time to know her sexual history (especially since it seems so important to him when he discovers that she has quite a sexual history), seems psychologically impossible.

However, there is something deeply appealing about Charles’s naivete. We would want there to be more people like Charles, and less like his highly skeptical assistant Muggsy, because people like Charles certainly seem to have more adventure. Charles is somebody who trusts those around him, and, of course, without that naivete, the plot structure of *The Lady Eve* wouldn’t be so interesting. Further, we know that naïve people like Charles certainly seem to make up a good part of the world. Charles’s naivete might sometimes seem psychologically impossible but, of course, it isn’t. There are many people in the news headlines who have been revealed to be that naïve and even more.

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*The Lady Eve* Comedy Fifth Phase Analogue: Romance Fifth Phase

**Romance Fifth Phase Characteristics.**

1. Emphasis on the natural cycle being viewed from above (202).
2. “[T]he mood is a contemplative withdrawal from or sequel to action rather than a youthful preparation for it” (202).
3. Erotic experience is “comprehended and not … a mystery” (202).
4. The true lovers are at the top of the scale, and the scale moves down towards greater and greater lust and perversion (202).

Frye writes that this phase “deals with a world very similar to that of the second phase except that the mood is a contemplative withdrawal from or sequel to action rather than a youthful preparation for it” (202). Jean, at least, has had enough of her dangerous, unsteady, illegal youth and is now ready to settle down. Similarly, Charles has had his
adventure down the Amazon, and also seems ready to find somebody to marry with whom he can build a more stable life (probably not on the Amazon).

Further, Jean explains to Charles, very frankly, her motives for falling in love with him: “If you waited for a man to propose to you from natural causes, you'd die of old maidenhood. That's why I let you try my slippers on.” Jean feels she is getting old, and this is what leads her to be so forward in her advances with Charles. Lady Eve Sidwich tells Charles of her extensive sexual past, but, interestingly, we are never told that she is lying about it, perhaps hinting that sexual intercourse in her marriage to Charles is a “sequel to action rather than youthful preparation for it” (202).

Figure 11: Comedy and Irony/Satire Second Phase

*The Seven Year Itch* (1955) Comedy Second Phase

**Comedy Second Phase Characteristics.**

1. The comic hero “does not transform a humorous society but simply escapes or runs away from it, leaving its structure as it was before” or the society surrounding a hero is unable to affect him (180).

2. The hero is usually a whimsical runaway.

3. In lighthearted comedies, the comic ending sweeps “over all quixotic illusions” (180).

*The Seven Year Itch* is also an example of a Comedy Second Phase, in that “the hero does not transform a humorous society but simply escapes or runs away from it, leaving its structure as it was before” (180). The humorous society, in this movie, consists of
Manhattan men whimsically interested in sex when their families leave for summer vacation. The movie opens with a shot of a map of Manhattan island. We are then told that five hundred years ago, men of the Manhattan tribe sent their women away during the hot summer. We then see the Manhattan men turn from watching their women and children leave and immediately follow an attractive squaw walking past them, who apparently has been left behind.

*The Seven Year Itch* narrator points out that not much has changed in hundreds of years. “Manhattan husbands still send their wives and kids away for the summer and they still remain behind in the steaming city to attend to business, setting traps, fishing, and hunting”—the implication is that women are the prey. We see the protagonist Richard Sherman (Tom Ewell) dropping off his wife Helen (Evelyn Keyes) and son Ricky (Butch Bernard) at the train station. After they have left, Sherman notices a kayak paddle, which his son has left behind, but he can’t return it to him, because the train station attendant won’t let Sherman in without a ticket.

The movie is held together by constant reminders from various people that Sherman has an obligation to his son to send him the paddle. He finds this difficult to do while he is engaged in pursuing “The Girl” (Marilyn Monroe), i.e. ignoring his familial responsibility of fidelity which seems to be intertwined with forgetting to send his son his kayak paddle. Whenever Sherman remembers his son’s paddle, he is focusing on sexual faithfulness (as he decides at the very end simultaneously to take his son the paddle and to be faithful to his wife). When he hasn’t thought about the paddle for some time, he has been thinking about marital unfaithfulness.

Then, we see a parallel scene to the earlier one of the Manhattan Indians some five hundred years before, where a group of men, apparently many of whom have just dropped off their wives at the train station, crowd after an attractive brunette who has just walked by. At first, Sherman is about to join them, but then he stops and reminds himself of his obligations to his wife. He is determined (he tells himself) not to give into the temptations of sexual adventures while his wife and son are away.

Just after he has come home to his apartment, he hears his doorbell ring. It is “The Girl,” staying at some friends’ apartment upstairs during the summer, who has forgotten her key and rung Sherman’s doorbell to ask him to buzz her in. Sherman lets her in,
watches her walk up the stairs and then chastises himself for not asking her in for a drink. “Just being neighborly. Make her feel at home.”

Frye mentions that the hero of this phase “is usually himself at least partly a comic humor or mental runaway” (180). Later, as Sherman is reading a chapter of a book by a certain Dr. Brubaker, entitled "The Repressed Urge of the Middle-aged Male: Its Roots and Its Consequences,” he begins to construct the society of which Frye has spoken, as a way to boost his ego. Sherman imagines that his wife is sitting next to him (we actually see the ghost-like shape of Helen Sherman) and that he is explaining to her how many “women have been throwing themselves at me for years. That's right Helen. Beautiful ones. Plenty of them. Acres and acres of them.”

We are then given a string of scenes, obviously imagined, in which women do throw themselves at Sherman. In one, his secretary Miss Morris (Marguerite Chapman), criticized by Sherman for a large number of typos in a document, immediately takes off her dress coat, revealing a racy undergarment, and claims that the mistakes were made because she is distracted by her love for Sherman. In another scene, Sherman is lying on his bed after a surgery when a Nurse Finch (Carolyn Jones) enters and proclaims her enduring love for him. Richard protests, saying that she is taking advantage of his situation, and then he finally rings an emergency bell. Within one or two seconds, there is a storm of feet outside his door, and a large group of doctors and nurses rush into Sherman’s hospital room and whisk Miss Finch away.

The incredibly quick response of such a large number of the doctors and nurses shows, of course, that this is a fantasy where everything happens that Sherman would want. There is no basis in reality. Sherman constructs these imaginary women so that he can feel better about himself and his sex-appeal, not because any women have necessarily thrown themselves at him.

On the other hand, Sherman’s numerous fantasies about “The Girl” falling in love with him have a stronger basis in life. “The Girl” definitely, whether consciously or unconsciously, encourages him in his fantasies. She brings down a bottle of champagne to drink with him. She asks to spend the night in his house, and when Sherman reluctantly sends her back upstairs with the handiman Kruhulik (Robert Strauss), she takes out the nails from a board which has closed off his stairway from her apartment and
comes down again, hinting with words that she wants to do this all summer. She even kisses Sherman several times.

When Sherman does make passes at her, she refuses to do anything “drastic,” and, ultimately, his fantasies are never realized. Sherman then imagines, in what might be masochistic self-punishment for his behavior, that his wife knows that he has a “blonde” in their apartment, and that she is returning home with a gun to shoot him. He constructs such dreams perhaps as penance, as a way of self-consciously punishing himself for his bad behavior. Although we see a sequence where Sherman’s wife Helen shoots down the door and then shoots him, this turns out to be a dream sequence too.

He is somewhat relieved when he calls his wife and finds that she is still in Maine. But in the call he discovers that his wife has gone on a hayride with an old boyfriend, Tom MacKenzie (Sonny Tufts), who is a notorious dandy. With this information he creates another fantasy situation, imagining that his wife and MacKenzie are sleeping together. He uses this fantasy, for which he does not have much real-life evidence, as an excuse to further develop his relationship with “The Girl,” which leads to a movie date and then the famous scene where Monroe, standing on a subway vent, has her skirt lifted as two subway trains pass by.

Near the movie’s end, “The Girl” tells Sherman that his somewhat plain looks don’t matter. She thinks he is attractive, because he is sensitive and “nice and sweet”—qualities she thinks are more important than any good looks. But, as mentioned before, “The Girl” never sleeps with Sherman. As Frye writes: “we have ... a hero’s illusion thwarted by a superior reality” (180). Sherman’s belief that “The Girl” wanted to sleep with him was a fantasy, but the reality is that he is attractive to women, despite his fairly plain looks, although that attraction is in his caring and sensitivity. So, as Frye writes, “the comic resolution” is “strong enough to sweep over all quixotic illusions” (180).

Near the movie’s end, Tom MacKenzie (Helen’s supposed beau) walks in, looking for little Ricky Sherman’s kayak paddle, which Sherman has forgot to send. Although Sherman finds that MacKenzie didn’t go on the hayride with his wife after all, and that she went with sixty-four other people anyway, Sherman knocks MacKenzie out with rather senseless jealousy. He then declares that he is going to take his son’s kayak paddle to him personally and visit his wife also for an extended period of time (he tells “The
Girl” she can stay in the Sherman apartment in the meanwhile). As mentioned before, remembering his son’s paddle coincides with renewed faithfulness to his wife.

_The Seven Year Itch_ Comedy Second Phase Analogue: Irony/Satire Second Phase

Ironic/Satirical Second Phase Characteristics.

1. A successful “rogue ... makes conventional society look foolish without setting up any positive standard” (229).
2. The emphasis is on surviving in everyday life, as opposed to attempting to understand life philosophically (229).
3. Consequently, this phase does not set up a moral imperative (229).
4. Stereotypes and dogmas are shown to be inapplicable when set against real life (230).

Frye writes: “Anti-intellectual satire proper, however, is based on a sense of the comparative naivete of systematic thought, and should not be limited by such ready-made terms as skeptical or cynical” (230). The intellectual in _The Seven Year Itch_ is Dr. Ludwig Brubaker. Sherman is reading Brubaker’s book _Man and the Unconscious_ for possible publication by the publishing firm, Brady and Co., the company for which Sherman works.

While reading Chapter Three: “The Repressed Urge of the Middle-aged Male: Its Roots and Its Consequences,” Richard begins to think about his own repressed urges, which he attributes partly to his wife Helen’s beliefs that he is plain and homely. Irritated, he develops fantasies (which he has begun to believe actually happened) about how many women have approached him sexually.

When he had seen “The Girl” earlier walking up the stairs, Richard had thought about asking her down for a drink but decided against it. After reading Brubaker’s work which has focused him on his urges and his resentment for his wife, he seems more bold in approaching “The Girl” upstairs. Although Brubaker’s work isn’t directly what leads Sherman to begin philandering, it undoubtedly has focused his thoughts further on his “repressed urge.” That night he makes a pass at “The Girl.” It seems quite possible that,
subconsciously, Brubaker’s highly intellectual book has helped him rationalize his desire to commit adultery (the book is essentially the only external media influence on Sherman throughout the movie).

While in the office the next day, Sherman begins reading Chapter Six, which is about “The Seven Year Itch,” the supposed tendency of men after seven years of marriage to long for extramarital flings. Richard explains his problem to Dr. Brubaker, who has come in for an appointment to discuss the book, and Dr. Brubaker’s reply seems only meant to egg him on: “If something itches my dear sir, the natural tendency is to scratch.” The highly intellectual doctor actually seems to be encouraging Richard toward extramarital escapades, when the final point of the film is that one should remain faithful to one’s family—wife and children. So we see how the movie works against the intellectual—especially the intellectual, detached tendency to simply describe patterns in life, such as extramarital “adventures” (which threaten to destroy the Sherman family), as opposed to fighting against them (which is what the movie attempts to do).

Other things Doctor Brubaker says show how he is truly a parody of a psychiatrist. He mentions he is early to his appointment with Sherman because “my 3:00 patient jumped out of the window in the middle of his session. I have been running fifteen minutes ahead of schedule ever since.” When Sherman has even begun to contemplate murder as a revenge impulse against Tom McKenzie, Brubaker advises: “Until you are able to commit a simple act of terror, I strongly advise you to avoid anything as complex as murder.” Brubaker’s detached, intellectual method of looking at life, without considering the moral consequences, actually leads him to advise somebody to “work up” to being a murderer. Undoubtedly, in *The Seven Year Itch*, intellectual objective detachment is associated with immorality.

Frye writes about Irony/Satire Second Phase: “Yet once a hypocrite who sounds exactly like a good man is sufficiently blackened, the good man also may begin to seem a little dingier than he was” (232). Richard Sherman, of course, is somebody who would make most married couples nervous. On the outside, he seems to be a responsible, mature, sincere husband, who wouldn’t sleep with somebody besides his wife. However, if he gives into pursuing other women, what about other, seemingly faithful, husbands watching the film, for instance? Might they not also give into the same struggle? Might
not their appearance of fidelity be only an appearance? Such men would feel especially uncomfortable at the point where the psychiatrist Dr. Brubaker writes of the frequency of “The Seven Year Itch,” and certainly would feel somewhat blackened, even if they had never even come close to extramarital affairs.

Frye writes about the characters of this phase: “[T]hey were also intellectually detached from the conventions they lived with, and were capable of seeing their anomalies and absurdities as well as their stabilizing conservatism” (232). This is true of the Manhattan custom of sending the wives and children away from New York in the summer. This tradition gives the man an opportunity for a release of his natural desires, which allows him, after the summer, to settle back with his wife and children in a very disciplined way. Richard sees the absurdity of the convention, but, at least at the movie’s beginning, he also sees how it might make his marriage more stable.

Frye writes about people like Richard: “[H]e has no dogmatic views of his own, but he grants none of the premises which make the absurdities of society look logical to those accustomed to them. He is really a pastoral figure, and like the pastoral, a form congenial to satire, he contrasts a set of simple standards with the complex rationalizations of society” (232). These are the simple standards which Richard’s wife Helen gives him at the movie’s beginning: no smoking, no alcohol, and Richard adds his own ... no extramarital affairs. Of course, holding to these seemingly simple standards becomes very difficult when “The Girl” is living upstairs and makes comments about putting her underwear in the icebox to keep it cool. “[W]e have just seen that it is precisely the complexity of data in experience which the satirist insists on and the simple set of standards which he distrusts (232). *The Seven-Year Itch* is proof, as something of a satire, how it is difficult for a faithful man to adhere to simple standards in a complex world where he has many desires.
Figure 12: Comedy and Irony/Satire Second Phase

*Some Like It Hot* (1959) Comedy Second Phase

**Comedy Second Phase Characteristics.**

1. The comic hero “does not transform a humorous society but simply escapes or runs away from it, leaving its structure as it was before” or the society surrounding a hero is unable to affect him (180).

2. The hero is usually a whimsical runaway.

3. In lighthearted comedies, the comic ending sweeps “over all quixotic illusions” (180).

*Some Like It Hot* is a story of two musicians’ flight from Chicago mobsters during the Prohibition era. Joe (Tony Curtis) and Jerry (Jack Lemmon) play saxophone and bass, respectively, in a Prohibition speakeasy disguised as a funeral parlor owned by Mafia boss Spats Columbo (George Raft). The speakeasy is busted by the police on a tip from Spats’ rival Mafia boss Toothpick Charlie (George Stone). Joe and Jerry, however, escape the bust through a window.

But now they have no work early in 1929, and both men are desperate. They try to secure jobs through several talent agencies. A secretary at one, Nellie (Barbara Drew) is in love with Joe, but he has stood her up for a date. As a kind of revenge, she tells him that there is an opening for a saxophone and bass in a band going to Florida, but later in the interview Joe and Jerry learn it is actually an opening for a *female* saxophone and
*female* bass. Disgruntled, Joe and Jerry angrily persuade Nellie to agree to loan them her car to play a show in Urbana, as atonement for her bad joke.

The car, however, is parked in the same garage where the famous St. Valentine’s Day Massacre occurs, just as Joe and Jerry are having Nellie’s car filled with gas. They witness the massacre (where Spats’ thugs dressed as policemen shoot Toothpick Charlie and his gang).

Joe and Jerry are able to escape only because a wounded Toothpick Charlie tries to reach for the phone just before he dies, and Joe and Jerry exit while Spats and his men have turned their backs to finish off Toothpick Charlie.

Joe and Jerry decide to pose as female saxophone and bass players in order to escape Chicago (where, if they stay, they are sure they will be hunted down and killed). This, of course, is Frye’s description of “a Comedy in which the hero doesn’t transform a humorous society but simply escapes or runs away from it, leaving its structure as it was before” (180). The humorous society is the Mafia. Movies portray Mafia members, of course, as whimsically murderous, not caring whether those around them live or die. *Some Like It Hot* is no exception. Joe and Jerry can only hope to escape such a society. Mob activity, in this movie (as well as historically), is something which is very difficult to change for the better, perhaps because very few people would want to try to change a mobster.

On the train, dressed as girls named Josephine (Joe) and Daphne (Jerry) they meet the all-girl band’s singer and ukelele player, Sugar Kowalczyk (Kane for short) played by Marilyn Monroe. Sugar is an alcoholic who has joined the all-girl band, because she is irresistibly attracted to male saxophone players, who have misused her and maltreated her in many ways. As she tells Joe, who (as a male saxophone player) is deeply interested in this revelation, “That's why I joined this band. Safety first. Anything to get away from those bums.” Sugar reveals to Joe that she is going to Florida to hunt a young Millionaire with glasses.

Later, the train arrives in Florida, and Joe pursues Sugar by pretending to be a Shell Oil Millionaire (“Junior”) wearing glasses. Daphne, on the other hand, is pursued by a true Millionaire, Charles Osgood III (Joe E. Brown), who desperately wants to marry her.

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14 This is, of course, based on the original St. Valentine’s Day Massacre, where Al Capone’s men, pretending to be police officers, lined rival Mob boss Bugs Moran’s men against a wall and shot them.
and won’t be put off for any reason. Joe orchestrates a clever ploy where he sends Daphne out dancing with Osgood, while “Junior” takes Sugar out to Osgood’s empty yacht.

Meanwhile, Spats Columbo and his henchmen have arrived at the same resort for a “Lovers of Italian Opera” convention (the convention is simply a front for a Mafia get-together). Eventually, Josephine and Daphne are recognized as the two witnesses of the Valentine’s Day Massacre and, after a lengthy chase, Josephine and Daphne hide under two banquet tables. Of course, the mobsters enter the very same room for their banquet, and Spats Columbo sits exactly where Josephine and Daphne are under the table. The leader of the banquet is the head mobster Bonaparte (Nehemiah Persoff), who actually wants revenge for the St. Valentine’s Day Massacre. Spats Columbo and his henchmen are then killed by one of Bonaparte’s thugs as he bursts out of a cake and machine-guns them to death.

At this point, Josephine and Daphne again try to escape the resort. Daphne tells Osgood she wants to elope with him and for him to wait for her with a getaway boat. Meanwhile, Josephine reveals to Sugar that he is really Junior, and that Junior is actually a male saxophone player named Joe. Sugar, despite Joe’s pretension to be a Millionaire, decides (very spontaneously) she can also love him as a saxophone player. Daphne also reveals to Osgood that she is actually a man. Osgood’s classic line: “Well, nobody’s perfect” ends the movie.

“When the tone is more light-hearted, the comic resolution may be strong enough to sweep over all quixotic illusions” (Frye 180). In Some Like It Hot, everybody holds quixotic illusions. Osgood believes Daphne is his soul-mate. Sugar believes Junior to be her perfect man. Of course, neither is the case, but the movie lightheartedly sweeps over that, and the movie ends with both Sugar and Joe, and Osgood and Jerry, riding away into the night, although it is not exactly clear what will follow. Osgood and Sugar are both incredibly “light-hearted” to accept Joe and Jerry, especially when Joe and Jerry have been claiming to be somebody they are not.
Some Like It Hot Comedy Second Phase Analogue: Irony/Satire Second Phase

Irony/Satire Second Phase Characteristics.

1. A successful “rogue ... makes conventional society look foolish without setting up any positive standard” (229).
2. The emphasis is on surviving in everyday life, as opposed to attempting to understand life philosophically (229).
3. Consequently, this phase does not set up a moral imperative (229).
4. Stereotypes and dogmas are shown to be inapplicable when set against real life (229).

“The central theme in the second or quixotic phase of satire, then, is the setting of ideas and generalizations and theories and dogmas over against the life they are supposed to explain” (Frye 230). Sugar, in Some Like It Hot, has two generalizations about who her ideal lifetime partner will be. He will not be a saxophonist and he will be a rich Millionaire who wears “glasses .... Men who wear glasses are so much more gentle, and sweet, and helpless. Haven't you ever noticed it?” Of course, at movie’s end, she has fallen in love with Joe, who is a saxophonist, who is certainly not a Millionaire and doesn’t need glasses in real life.

“Anti-intellectual satire proper, however, is based on a sense of the comparative naivete of systematic thought, and should not be limited by such ready-made terms as skeptical or cynical” (230). As we know, Sugar is a fairly naïve person, who seems like a dupe to fall in love with Joe and leave with him, especially since all the time she has known him, until the end, he has been posing as somebody else. Her actions at the movie’s end show that she remains as naïve as she was at the movie's beginning.

“Insofar as the satirist has a ‘position’ of his own, it is the preference of practice to theory, experience to metaphysics” (230). Sugar—despite her avowed generalizations that saxophonists are not good for her—still, ultimately, judges Joe individually on her experience with him. Joe (as Josephine and Junior) has seemed fairly likable to her so far, so this trumps her past experience with saxophonists (once again). Even Sugar’s song near the end of the movie (which she sings after learning Junior is leaving her) “I’m Through With Love” is a generalization that only lasts for a few moments until Joe kisses her and reveals that he is Junior (as well as Josephine).
A fairly easy criticism to make about *Some Like It Hot*’s ending is that the relationships between Joe and Sugar and Osgood and Daphne are too hasty. They are thinking more about bodily desires and emotions than thinking their relationships through objectively or, similarly, philosophically. The whole movie and its ending privileges bodily desires and emotions, by seeming to present a “happily ever after ending.” Even the fact that Daphne is actually a man who has been posing as a woman seems to be no problem to Osgood, when, it should be pointed out, that he has already been divorced “seven or eight times,” as he says (so many that he can’t remember exactly which), from women who certainly didn’t misrepresent themselves as Daphne (Jerry) has done.

But this criticism seems like, as Frye writes, “philosophical pedantry” with the lighthearted ending, where everybody is happy. One feels almost like a grouch pointing out how hastily the movie ends without much realistic thought. Frye writes: “[t]hus philosophical pedantry becomes, as every target of satire eventually does, a form of romanticism or the imposing of over-simplified ideals on experience” (231). The movie encourages us to think simply that everybody is happy, regardless of the likelihood of that happiness lasting. *Some Like It Hot*’s ending affirms a Gerald Mast assertion about Wilder that for him “the essential human function is feeling” (274).

Frye writes that Irony/Satire Second Phase criticizes any rational attitude which, “like all rational attitudes, still refuses to examine all the evidence” (231). Essentially, Joe and Jerry’s rational thought process that, by dressing as women to leave Chicago and go to Florida, they can escape Spats Columbo, of course, isn’t true, because Spats Columbo shows up at their exact same hotel in Florida. After that, any viewpoint, even a rational one, is suspect.

The fear of death is what drives Joe and Jerry to dress as women to escape Spats. At one point in the movie, when Josephine and Daphne are once more in desperate straights, Josephine suggests, as a means of escape, that Daphne call Osgood, so that they can have a getaway boat. Daphne asks: “What am I gonna tell him?"

Josephine: "You're gonna elope with him."

Daphne: "Elope. Elope! But there are laws, conventions."

Josephine: "There's a convention, all right [referring to the Mafia “Lovers of Italian Opera” convention]. There's also the ladies’ morgue.” Joe and Jerry are forced to act
like Josephine and Daphne, because death is almost always the alternative. This, as Frye describes the *danse macabre*, is an example of where “the simple equality of death is set against the complex inequalities of life” (233).

Figure 13: Comedy and Romance Fourth Phase

*Revenge of the Nerds* (1984) Comedy Fourth Phase

**Comedy Fourth Phase Characteristics.**

1. Two social planes, one of which is portrayed as better than the other (182).
2. “A Comedy originates in a “normal world,” enters into a “green world,” changes there, and then “returns to the normal world” (182).
3. The green world contains within it “the victory of summer over winter” (183).
4. The rebirth usually results from the feminine (183).
5. The dream world “collides with the stumbling and blinded follies of the world of experience” (183).

Frye writes that in Comedy Fourth Phase: “[I]t is also possible for a Comedy to present its action on two social planes, of which one is preferred and consequently in some measure idealized” (182). *Revenge of the Nerds* is the story of the tussle in college between a group of highly intellectual “nerds”, led by Louis Skolnick (Robert Carradine) and Gilbert Lowell (Anthony Edwards), and the athletic “jocks” at Adams College—led
by the football team quarterback and fraternity council president, Stan Gable (Ted McGinley). The jocks, all members of the fraternity Alpha Beta, accidentally burn down their fraternity house during a party. The school then forces the freshmen out of their dorm to live in the gym, where basketball practices are held etc., so that the jocks can live in the freshmen dorms. After finding their own house and establishing their own fraternity, the nerds are maliciously terrorized by the jocks (who run pigs through the nerds’ house, for instance) and both groups exchange a long string of nasty practical jokes.

Louis has fallen in love with Stan Gable’s girlfriend, Betty Childs (Julia Montgomery). At a carnival, Gable has dressed as an ape and made a liaison to meet Betty at a tent, because she tells him that she is feeling “horny.” However, Louis steals Gable’s ape suit and meets Betty at the tent instead. After the sexual intercourse, Louis reveals himself to be the leader of the nerds and not Stan Gable. Betty, interestingly, decides that she liked him better than Stan and that she wants to break up with Stan and become Louis’s girlfriend.

In the climactic scene, after the jocks have trashed the nerd fraternity house once again, Gilbert has decided that he can no longer bear the jocks’ intimidation. He marches over to a pep rally and begins the movie’s climactic and most important speech, where he proclaims that he is a nerd and that “he’s pretty proud of it.” Louis, apparently emboldened by his recent experience with Betty Childs, then takes the mike and says: “I’m a nerd too. I just found that out tonight.” Louis then asks all those who have ever felt demeaned by others, because they were a nerd, to step forward and join all the nerds around the mike, “because no one’s going to be really free until nerd persecution ends.” Many of the college students (including Betty Childs) and alumni then step down to join the nerds, and the movie ends with the nerds triumphing over the jocks, because the nerds have the college masses on their side.

Frye gives an example for Comedy Fourth Phase of The Two Gentlemen of Verona, where “the hero Valentine becomes captain of a band of outlaws in a forest” (182). In many ways the nerds are that band of outlaws in the forest, who are in an unfriendly world, where the jocks control even the college administration. Further, Frye writes: “In the rituals and myths the earth that produces the rebirth is generally a female figure, and
the death and revival, or disappearance and withdrawal, of human figures in romantic
Comedy generally involves the heroine” (183). This female figure in *Revenge of the Nerds* is Betty Childs. Her desire to become Louis’s girlfriend instead of Stan Gable’s after she has sexual intercourse with Louis gives Louis the confidence he needs to state before all the students and alumni that he is a nerd, because Betty is willing to like him as a nerd. Without Louis’s willingness to be classified as a nerd, the movie would not end with the united appeal of the nerds to the masses and, consequently, the masses acknowledging some of themselves as nerds also.

Frye writes that “[t]he green world has analogies, not only to the fertile world of ritual, but to the dream world that we create out of our own desires. This dream world collides with the stumbling and blinded follies of the world of experience, of Theseus’ Athens with its idiotic marriage law, of Duke Frederick and his melancholy tyranny” (183-184). But then, Frye points out, the dream world “proves strong enough to impose the form of desire on” (184) the world of law. In this case, the dream world for the nerds is social ascendance over the jocks. Of course, in the movie, the college administration (represented by Dean Uhlich (David Wohl)), supports the jocks, even if it means forcing the nerds out of their freshmen housing, when the jocks need a place to stay. This policy is in place apparently because the jocks bring more money to the school than the nerds. The dream world, in the movie’s opening, seems to have been lost to the tyranny of the jocks, until the movie’s end, when the dream world of equality between nerds and jocks finally triumphs.

*Revenge of the Nerds* Comedy Fourth Phase Analogue: Romance Fourth Phase

Romanne Fourth Phase Characteristics.

1. A “happier society is more or less visible throughout the action” (200).

2. The emphasis is on “maintaining of the integrity of the innocent world against the assault of experience” (201). By innocence is meant “the temperate mind [which] contains its good within itself, continence being its prerequisite” (201). By experience,
Frye means intemperance, which “seeks its good in the external object of the world of experience” (201).

3. An important image is “the beleaguered castle,” (201) apparently representing innocence, assaulted by experience.

Frye writes: “In romance the central theme of this phase is that of the maintaining of the integrity of the innocent world against the assault of experience” (202). The nerds, led by Gilbert Lowell, represent the innocent world, which is virginal and awkward in sexual encounters, for instance. Both Gilbert and Louis are inexperienced sexually. When Gilbert and Louis enter the Alpha Beta fraternity house (to inquire about the possibility of joining) they are asked whether they have ever “made love” to a woman. Gilbert replies: “No,” but Louis answers “Yes.” After a disbelieving look from Gilbert, Louis finally admits: “No.” Both Gilbert and Louis’s virginity parallels their faint-hearted attitude toward confrontation (especially with the jocks) at the movie’s beginning. Over time, as they become more aggressive toward girls (Louis even pretends to be Stan Gable in his sexual liaison with Betty Childs), they also strike back against the jocks, as in the final scene at the Homecoming rally, where they, supposedly, maintain "the integrity of the innocent world" (201).

Frye writes: “A central image in this phase of romance is that of the beleaguered castle, represented in Spenser by the House of Alma, which is described in terms of the economy of the human body” (201). The beleaguered castle in this case is the fraternity house the nerds have had to rent after they have been kicked out of their freshmen dorms. It is one of the important battlegrounds between the nerds and the jocks, when, for instance, the jocks send pigs through the house, breaking up a nerd party. Indeed, the last time the jocks trash the house actually gives the nerds impetus to seize the microphone at the Homecoming prep rally and rally the students and alumni together as nerds.

Conclusion

Frye compares each of his four mythoi to one of the four seasons, and his seasonal analogue for Comedy (the "integration of society" (43), usually, specifically, of the hero) is Spring. This seems largely because an important symbol for Comedy's ending is the fulfillment of the hero's desire--what Frye calls the "closing embrace" (164). Frye states that the overcoming of "the obstacles to the hero's desire" is "the comic resolution" (164),
and Spring, of course, is the season of love. Frye specifically mentions cinema as particularly apt for the consummation of love, because in the movie, "darkness permits a more erotically oriented audience" (164).

Not coincidentally, then, many of this chapter's Comedy films are also love stories or, at least, contain substantial love story elements. As Frye writes: "What normally happens is that a young man wants a young woman, that his desire is resisted by some opposition, usually paternal, and that near the end of the play some twist in the plot enables the hero to have his will" (163). In *It Happened One Night* the *senex iratus*, Mr. Andrews, first resists then ultimately encourages (after seeing Warne's integrity) Peter Warne to marry his daughter Ellie. In *The Lady Eve*, cardsharp Jean Harrington falls in love with Charles Pike, but she can only marry him by ultimately repudiating her father's cardsharp business and so joining the mainstream of responsible citizens. In *Some Like It Hot*, the Mafia functions as a type of *senex iratus*, because without the Mafia ("the obstacles to the hero's desire"(164)) chasing Joe his pursuit of Sugar would be much less complicated. In *Revenge of the Nerds*, Louis Skolnick wins the cheerleader Betty's love over the college quarterback Stan Gable, despite the college administration's (the *senex iratus*) privileging of the athletes over the 'nerds.'

Frye writes that the "tendency of comedy is to include as many people as possible in its final society: the blocking characters are more often reconciled or converted than simply repudiated" (165). Comedy abounds with plots where the protagonist is the blocking character. Gilligan inadvertently creates trouble in almost every episode of the series *Gilligan's Island*. But yet we know by the next episode he has been accepted back into the Gilligan's Island society, even if only because, on a remote island, there is no place else for him to go.

*The Seven Year Itch*'s blocking character is also the movie's protagonist. Richard Sherman's wife and children are vacationing in Maine, while he works in New York City. In the movie, Sherman's thoughts alternate between fidelity to his wife and infidelity with "The Girl" (Marilyn Monroe). Ultimately, he realizes that his intended lovemaking with "The Girl" will separate him from his family, and so he chooses to remain faithful and is integrated back into his family's society. *Our Gang Follies of 1938* is another example of the blocking character as protagonist. Alfalfa is a blocking character in that he refuses to
croon and instead decides his lifelong dream is to sing opera, which Spanky won't let him sing for the Follies. The young girls in love with Alfalfa's crooning chant angrily in response: "We want Alfalfa; we want Alfalfa," and the Our Gang Follies cannot be successful without him. Fortunately, Alfalfa is converted by movie's end to return to crooning.

*Annie Hall* is yet another example of the blocking character as protagonist, with a special twist. Alvy Singer's foibles have become faults in the eyes of his girlfriend Annie Hall. Consequently, their relationship has broken up, which would seem to mean the separation of the hero from society and point to tragedy, not comedy. But, actually, Alvy's basic point at the end is that all relationships, even the best, most sustaining ones, are absurd, and this point functions to place his absurd relationship with Annie back in society's mainstream, because all of society's relationships, even the successful ones, are just as absurd as Alvy's relationship with Annie. Alvy Singer joins billions of human beings who have failed at relationships.

Chaplin's *City Lights* may be an exception to the blocking character's reconciliation. In *City Lights*, the drunken millionaire gives the Tramp the requisite money to pay for a blind girl's operation so that she can see, and then the Tramp is thrown into jail when the millionaire sobers and summons the police, so that the millionaire remains a blocking character even at movie's end. However, the Tramp has been able to give the money to the blind girl before he goes to jail, so that the blocking character is of no permanent significance after the Tramp eventually leaves jail and is reunited with the formerly blind girl.

Frye writes: "The more ironic the comedy, the more absurd the society, and an absurd society may be condemned by, or at least contrasted with, a character that we may call the plain dealer, an outspoken advocate of a kind of moral norm who has the sympathy of the audience" (176). Jefferson Smith is such a plain dealer in *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*. Smith's cynical secretary, Saunders, is the first to be converted to Smith's visionary politics. The movie ends with Senator Paine, the senator who led Jefferson Smith's censure in the Senate, admitting to his own corruption, so that the movie's most hypocritical blocking character is converted.
Network also exhibits an absurd society in the television network managers, who privilege profit over everything else and, almost absurdly, are willing to kill those, like Howard Beale, who don't give them those profits. Dr. Strangelove is another example of such an absurd society, in that the instability and vapidness of the institutional Air Force, the generals who run it, and even the President, are lost somewhere in the gigantic, bureaucratic institution they have created and, therefore, have no control over. The result of such unwieldy institutions is doomsday. Although they might not seem like comedies in the Frye sense, Network and Dr. Strangelove actually do unite their characters in folly and destruction, and so complete the whole range of Frye's Comedy.
CHAPTER FIVE

MOVIES ILLUSTRATING FRYE'S IRONY/SATIRE PHASES AND THEIR ANALOGUES

Irony/Satire Introduction

Frye described Socrates as an eiron (in ancient Greek, somebody who "says less than he thinks" ("Eiron")), because he pretended not to know the answer to the questions he asked or was asked. Frye writes that "[t]he term irony, then, indicates a technique of appearing to be less than one is" (40). For Frye, Irony is mixed with Satire, which is the ridicule of "prevailing vices or follies" ("Satire") commonly found in the society. For Frye, then, the Irony/Satire mythos emphasizes the "'realistic' level of experience" (366). As will be detailed later, the emphasis on everyday life and vices translates into modern film as Film Noir, which often shows no-nonsense characters dealing with everyday worlds of crime.

The first three phases of Irony/Satire are analogous to the first three phases of Comedy. Comedy, as a mythos, emphasizes the integration of the hero into society (Frye Anatomy of Criticism 43). In films like The Maltese Falcon and North by Northwest, the (professional or amateur) detective hero sets about to show the police (or others) that he is not a criminal, because this detective has somewhat embarrassing ties to criminals. Essentially, the detective is trying to be integrated back into society and, at the movie's end, succeeds.

The last three phases of Irony/Satire are analogous to the last three phases of Tragedy, which emphasizes the hero's isolation. Movies like Taxi Driver and Sunset Boulevard show the heroes becoming segregated from their societies. Ultimately, Travis Bickle in Taxi Driver and Joe Gillis in Sunset Boulevard are wrenched apart from their societies, when Travis goes insane and kills Sport and when Joe Gillis is killed by his insane lover, Norma Desmond. Travis, luckily, has killed a pimp and so is seen somewhat as a hero, although, importantly, he still remains isolated in his taxi cab from the rest of the world.

The Term 'Film Noir'

1930s Hollywood was a conventional, classical cinema rooted in tradition. Films were made relatively quickly and in a homogenous way, so much so that critics like John
Belton have compared the studio system apparatus to a factory (62). Cinematography, for instance, was highly standard. Films were shot with many of the same camera angles over and over again, lots of medium long shots (from the knees up—so frequently used they became known as American shots) (Belton 46), and unobtrusive editing.

This conservative method of filmmaking also translated into the film’s subject matter. As Belton writes of typical Frank Capra films like *Mr. Deeds Goes to Town* (1936) and *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), (both movies are excellent examples of 1930s movies generally) “[t]hese films celebrate nineteenth-century agrarian values, such as hard work, frugality, honesty, good neighborliness, self-sufficiency, egalitarianism, common sense, personal authenticity (as opposed to phoniness) and moral sincerity” (208).

However, World War II’s beginning subtly began to change American cinema. The darker life of average, everyday Americans—with war looming on the horizon and then, finally, engulfing America in 1941—led subtly to an imperceptibly darker cinema beginning in the early 1940s and a different camera style (what J.P. Telotte calls a "stylistic emphasis on shadows, unbalanced compositions, and strange angles" (227)). Specifically, Telotte writes that this cinema and camera style meant to "effectively distort our perspective and call into question the 'normal' view we take on our world, the view classical film narrative apparently fostered" (227).

According to Belton, American critics did not notice this trend while it was happening (184). But French movie critics (barred from watching American films during the Nazi occupation from 1940 to 1944) noticed an immediate difference when they saw the banned American films within the space of a few months in 1945 (Belton 184-186). French critics denominated the new American cinema style: Film Noir (French for ‘black film’ (“Film Noir”)), because of the new films’ dark quality.

*Film Noir and Frye’s Irony/Satire Genre*

How is Film Noir defined? Raymond Borde and Etienne Chaumeton--among the first academics to define Film Noir in their 1955 article "Towards A Definition of Film Noir" (translated from the French by Alain Silver in *Film Noir Reader*)--argued that Film Noir is characterized by the removal of "psychological reference points" (Borde 25). For instance, instead of films narrated from the perspective of unambiguously good
policemen, Film Noir is often narrated "from the point of view of the criminals" (Borde 20), and, for the audience, these criminals are ambiguous, sometimes good and sometimes bad. This leads the audience to become alienated, having lost the traditional points of reference of good and bad etc. (Borde 25).

John Belton is a critic who believes similarly. Belton defines Film Noir films in the chapter “Film Noir: Somewhere in the Night” in his book American Cinema/American Culture—as films produced in the 1940s and 1950s, characterized by “the disturbance or disorientation that is necessary to give the audience an unsettling twist or distressing jolt” (187). Important Film Noir characteristics, like the femme fatale and organized crime, were undoubtedly ‘unsettling’ and ‘distressing’ jolts for the 1940s and 1950s American (although they were less so beginning in the 1960s when there was much more sex and crime portrayed on the screen, and so such portrayals were less shocking). This is especially because Films Noirs are often from the point of view of the femme fatale and organized crime. Film critics like Paul Schrader (screenwriter of Taxi Driver) agree: "Film noir is not a genre …. It is not defined, as are the gangster and western genres, by conventions of setting and conflict, but rather by the more subtle qualities of tone and mood" ("Notes on Film Noir" 8).

Belton also notes other frequent characteristics of Film Noir. As Belton wrote in an e-mail to the author: “[D]isorientation is not the sole criterion for noir—it’s a combination of factors.” The most prominent factors, according to Belton, were the Hayes Code and the backlash against early twentieth century feminism (a movement most salient in the 1940s and 1950s).

The Hayes Code, written by former postmaster general Will Hayes, developed an exhaustive list of phrases or subject matters not to be allowed in film. The Code began in 1930, although it wasn't widely enforced until several years later. Filmmakers, of course, quickly tired of the Hayes Code restrictions, especially because audiences wanted to see those very things which had been restricted (if only because of the suspicion they had been restricted). The plots of the hard-boiled novel (adapted into Film Noir) made it easier for directors to make references to the seedy, more restricted aspects of the ‘dark’ life (i.e. sex, adultery, drugs) without directly referring to them. This explains some of
Film Noir’s popularity in that Film Noir often hinted at taboo things, which audiences had hardly ever before been given even a hint of.

Take, for instance, the scene Timothy Dirks (p. 2 par. 29) has noted in the middle of *The Maltese Falcon* to exemplify this concept. In his apartment, Sam Spade (Humphrey Bogart) kisses his love interest Brigid O’Shaughnessy (Mary Astor), and then the camera focuses on one of his windows and then on the street outside, where the henchman Wilmer is waiting, perhaps for O’Shaughnessy to leave Spade’s apartment. However, we are never shown O’Shaughnessy meeting Wilmer, and our next shot of Wilmer is when Spade confronts him in a hotel lobby elsewhere. A likely implication is that O’Shaughnessy spent the night with Spade (Timothy Dirks believes this to "undoubtedly" be the case (p. 2 par. 29)).

Although never certain or inescapable, these types of conclusions are frequently implied in many Films Noirs and are an important subtext for an astute audience. It is the closest to titillation Films Noirs can bring the audience, but it can, in fact, be more titillating than otherwise, because it relies on subtle, clever implication. These delicate references (and there are many in Film Noir) would prove shocking and interesting to audiences exactly because the referent was prohibited. The audience was encouraged in Film Noir, as Frye writes in Irony/Satire First Phase, to take “for granted a world which is full of anomalies, injustices, follies, and crimes, and yet is permanent and undisplaceable” (226), even though such a world could not be unambiguously referred to.

Once such a world became permitted with the loosening of the Hayes Code in the 1960s, the newness and shock value of such “injustices, follies, and crimes” wore off. Originally, Schrader writes, filmmakers and actors loved working with Film Noir: "Film noir seems to have been a creative release for everyone involved. It gave artists a chance to work with previously forbidden themes" ("Notes on Film Noir" 13). As Belton notes, when such forbidden themes were no longer forbidden, the end of the original Film Noir began. This is why Belton writes that, beginning in the 1960s, nudity and adultery, for instance, became more commonplace in movies and, consequently, Film Noir began to

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1 This is because, as Tom Conley writes, "Original noir films were shot on low budgets and in tight shooting schedules and were shown as second features in double bills" (203). Conley implies that, because the Films Noirs did not receive as much exposure as the first feature, they had to compensate with violence
lose some of its attractive shock value (193-194). Suddenly, the ‘real thing’ made mere hints at it seem tame. Belton consequently categorizes Films Noirs from the 1960s forward as pseudo-Noir or neo-Noir and not as the original Noir. Such later films were and are in the same vein and style as earlier Noirs, and sometimes even went much further in portraying the ‘dark’ life. But they did not hold the same shock value for their audience that 1940s and 1950s Films Noirs did, because, from the 1960s on, audiences were becoming used to the shock, because they saw it so much. As Belton writes: “[t]he trauma of the Depression and the shell-shock of the war years, which destabilized American identity briefly in the postwar era, has supposedly been treated and cured” (198). Schrader notes:

As the rise of McCarthy and Eisenhower demonstrated, Americans were eager to see a more bourgeois view of themselves. Crime had to move to the suburbs. The criminal put on a gray flannel suit and the footsore cop was replaced by the 'mobile unit' careening down the expressway. Any attempt at social criticism had to be cloaked in ludicrous affirmations of the American way of life. ("Notes on Film Noir" 12)

Another characteristic of Film Noir was the backlash against early twentieth century feminism. In Film Noir, the representation of this early twentieth century feminist is the femme fatale (French for ‘deadly woman’ (“Femme”)—the film’s most important female character who is aggressively pursuing her own interests. Femme fatales are everywhere in Film Noir. The femme fatale is dangerous for the male characters surrounding her, usually her husband (if she has one) and also another male interested in sleeping with her.

According to Belton, the constant portrayal of femme fatales in Film Noir were a response to rising feminist power in the early twentieth century with American women gaining the right to vote and, even more threateningly, taking civilian (especially factory) jobs from men who fought overseas during World War II. When these men returned to America, women did not easily give up their civilian jobs, and so the cinema femme

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2 In this chapter, however, I will consider even movies from the sixties on as Film Noir. Although they do not perfectly fit Belton’s definition of Film Noir, because their context is different from original Noir, they still maintain the same characteristics as original Noir. Indeed, they often exhibit those characteristics to an even greater degree than forties or fifties Noir.
fatale can be read as a political criticism of women who went beyond their roles as mothers and nurturers at home. Belton writes: “[i]n leaving the private sphere of home and family to enter the public sphere of work, women . . . , it is assumed, have abandoned—or at least neglected—the domestic needs of their sweethearts, husbands, and/or children” (198).

If they went at all beyond domesticity, the implication seems, and began to plot how to improve their natural lot in life, the sad result was adultery and murder of their husbands. Very often, these femme fatales were not good mothers or stepmothers (as the evil stepmothers in Double Indemnity or Murder, My Sweet). As Belton writes: “Film Noir registers the antifeminist backlash by providing a picture of postwar America in which there is no family or in which family exists chiefly as a negative phenomenon” (198), because women are not staying at home, tending to the children.

Figure 38: Irony/Satire and Comedy First Phase

The Maltese Falcon (1941) Irony/Satire First Phase

Ironic/Satire First Phase Characteristics.

1. No displacement in the story of myth of the humorous (capricious, whimsical, natural) society (226).
2. One feels very close to the demonic and nightmarish (226).
3. A world full of crime and injustice is ‘taken for granted (226).’
4. To stay alive, one must observe more and say less (226).
5. The emphasis is on pragmatism (226).

*The Maltese Falcon* fits all five Irony/Satire First Phase Characteristics. It is one of many of Dashiell Hammett's stories of Sam Spade (played in this movie by Humphrey Bogart), a private detective whose partner Miles Archer (Jerome Cowan) is shot and killed while waiting to meet a certain Brigid O’Shaughnessy (Mary Astor), who has claimed to need protection from a thug named Thursby.

On an intense hunt for Archer’s killer, Spade learns more and more about an international criminal ring which is searching for the Maltese Falcon, a medieval bird crafted by the Knights of Rhodes. According to tradition, the bird was enameled in the eighteenth or nineteenth century to hide the stunning jewels (plunder of the crusading knights) interspersed all over its surface. Spade, who has been hired by Brigid (whom he knows has some association with the Falcon), is thought by the two principal criminals—Joel Cairo (Peter Lorre) and Kaspar Gutman (Sydney Greenstreet) aka ‘The Fat Man’—to know important information about the Falcon. Spade manipulates them into continuing to believe he does have the Falcon. A little later a dying ship captain, Captain Jacobi (Walter Huston) mysteriously appears at Spade’s office door with the Falcon in his arms. Spade is no longer pretending that he has the Falcon at all.

At this point, it is important to explain the Captain’s seemingly random and unexplainable appearance before continuing with the movie’s narrative. By the movie’s end, Spade learns that O’Shaughnessy and Thursby had been employed by Gutman to pick up the Falcon in Istanbul. However, O’Shaughnessy and Thursby had stolen the Falcon themselves. Soon, of course, Gutman and Cairo were chasing O’Shaughnessy and Thursby. Hoping to lose Gutman and Cairo, O’Shaughnessy and Thursby had had the Falcon sent by Jacobi’s ship to be delivered by the captain personally to Spade’s

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3 O’Shaughnessy had originally used the name Miss Wonderly, but she then admits to Spade that her real name is O’Shaughnessy.
4 Although, of course, we will discover that this Falcon Spade has, which everybody has been chasing after, is not the real Falcon at all. The real Falcon’s location is a mystery at the movie's end.
office, by which time O’Shaughnessy had hoped to have secured Spade as a lover and protector.\(^5\)

However, before the Falcon’s arrival in San Francisco, O’Shaughnessy has decided that she no longer wanted to share the Falcon with Thursby. In an almost inexplicable (and incredibly complicated) twist, she has decided to lure Archer out to a remote place where she hopes either Thursby would kill him and be arrested for the murder or that Archer would kill Thursby (she had told Archer and Spade she was being stalked by Thursby). Cairo and Gutman, meanwhile, had discovered that Jacobi had the Falcon and that Spade was involved, whether knowingly or involuntarily, in facilitating the Falcon’s safe arrival for O’Shaughnessy. Arriving in San Francisco, Gutman has had his henchman Wilmer Cook (Elisha Cook Jr.) kill Thursby after Archer’s death\(^6\) in hopes of convincing O’Shaughnessy to join Cairo and Gutman and share the Falcon with them (again, a somewhat inexplicable, irrational, whimsical thought). Arriving to intercept the Falcon on Jacobi’s ship, Wilmer was only able to mortally wound Jacobi before Jacobi escaped and made it to Spade’s door with the Falcon as he was dying.

Spade then puts the Falcon in a bus terminal storage area, mailing the receipt stub to himself. In meeting with Cairo and Gutman (and Gutman’s henchman Wilmer), Spade tries to orchestrate a plot where Archer’s, Thursby’s and Captain Jacobi’s murder is blamed on Cook. As mentioned before, Cook did murder Thursby—(Miss O’Shaughnessy’s partner in the search for the Falcon) in order to intimidate O’Shaughnessy into joining Cairo and Gutman—and Jacobi. Cook, however, had not murdered Archer.

We soon find out who did. O’Shaughnessy, as one can see, has had everything well planned out. Of course, the one person she has underestimated is Spade, who continually states throughout the movie how much he distrusts her and her lies. In the movie, Spade’s criticisms of O’Shaughnessy are portrayed almost as if they are highly romantic flirting, and the movie seems to be laying a foundation for the two falling in love and

\(^5\) We are never told why O’Shaughnessy specifically decides—even while she is thousands of miles away on another continent—that Spade would be a good man to protect the Falcon for her. She has never met him. Indeed, perhaps the movie’s point is that her arrogance—her assumption that she can manipulate any man into being her protector—leads to her failure to get the Falcon. She will not be able to manipulate Spade to get whatever she wants.
living happily ever after. So the audience is stunned to learn at the movie’s end that
O’Shaughnessy killed Archer (Spade has suspected this all along, mostly because he
knows nobody except for a woman could approach Archer without Archer keeping his
guard up) with Thursby’s gun, which she had stolen from Thursby, to frame Thursby for
Archer’s murder. O’Shaughnessy makes a last attempt to tell Spade that she loves him,
but it is, too obviously, only an attempt to keep Spade from turning her into the police.
Spade turns her in, partly because he distrusts her professions of love for him (for good
reason) and partly because of an ethical code among detectives that one should always
avenge one’s partner. Steven Gale writes: "when Spade rejects O’Shaughnessey at the
end of The Maltese Falcon, he is exhibiting the highest order of integrity by refusing to
let his personal desires overcome his societal responsibilities" (146).

Frye writes that, in Irony/Satire First Phase, “there is no displacement of the
humorous society” (226). By displacement, Frye means “[t]he adaptation of myth and
metaphor to canons of morality or plausibility” (365), and there is none of this in The
Maltese Falcon. By humorous, Frye means what we would call capricious, whimsical,
natural etc. That is, the villains, and even sometimes the hero in The Maltese Falcon, are
not written by the screenwriters to fit early twentieth century mores. The male and
female villains are dastardly evil. Even Sam Spade can seem evil at times (perhaps only
because he is trying to discover more about the criminals’ identity but also, perhaps,
because he has some of the same criminal tendencies as the organized criminals).7

We learn at the movies’ end that O’Shaughnessy tried to implicate her partner
Thursby in Miles Archer’s murder, so that she could have the Falcon herself. This overly
clever behavior seems especially capricious, because it really doesn’t make sense.
Brigid, as Spade tells us, had hoped that Archer and Thursby would touse, and either
Archer would kill Thursby, or Thursby would kill Archer, and then she could turn in
Thursby for Archer’s murder. When neither of these things happens, Brigid—seemingly
without much thought—kills Archer with Thursby’s gun, hoping to frame Thursby for
the murder.

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6 Somewhat inexplicably—how was Cook able to find Thursby so easily, especially after Thursby had
tricked Gutman and his men and certainly wanted to avoid them?
7 As Stephen Bauer, Leon Balter, and Winslow Hunt argue about hard-boiled American crime fiction, “[i]t
is important that the American detective is almost a criminal” (278).
It seems it would have been much easier to simply murder Thursby as opposed to murdering Archer and then framing Thursby for the murder and hoping the police would catch Thursby and then be able to convict him. Later in the movie, we learn that O’Shaughnessy has chosen Spade’s office as the drop-off point for Captain Jacobi to deliver the Maltese Falcon, although she doesn’t even know Spade at that point. Capriciously, she simply assumes that she can seduce Spade (whoever he is and whatever his morals and integrity are) into being her protector against even the law. This assumption is her major miscalculation, because Spade ultimately won’t be seduced to protect her against the law. Her humorous, capricious behavior is exactly what leads to her downfall.

The more one studies O’Shaughnessy’s behavior the more one realizes her only goal seems to be to hurt more people. For instance, she kills Archer only because she wants to frame Thursby for his murder, although there were easier, less complicated ways she could have lost Thursby without having to kill Archer. Frye writes about this phase: “[o]nce we have finished with it, deserts of futility open up on all sides, and we have … a sense of nightmare and a close proximity to something demonic” (226). O’Shaughnessy is demonically evil, in that she seems to take pleasure in showing how many people’s lives she can manipulate and destroy, even if such brazenness makes it more likely for her to be caught.

Frye writes that, in Irony/Satire’s First Phase world, “anyone who wishes to keep his balance in such a world must learn first of all to keep his eyes open and his mouth shut” (226). This, of course, is important for Spade. When Gutman and Cairo think it likely that Spade knows the whereabouts of the Falcon, Spade’s ability to bluff—and his refusal to reveal too quickly that he doesn’t know anything about the Falcon—allows him to find out more about Gutman and Cairo and, ultimately, Archer’s murderer than he would have otherwise.

Frye writes that Irony/Satire First Phase “takes for granted a world which is full of anomalies, injustices, follies, and crimes, and yet is permanent and undisplaceable” (226). Spade, of course, is the quintessential private eye of the first Film Noir. This means that he is always cynical, always assuming the seemingly normal person in front of him is a murderer or a thief, until he knows for certain otherwise. This is how he stays alive. As
Bauer et al. argue “[w]e, in our foolish trust, are ready to fall in love with Brigid, but Spade sees her as a betraying seductress .... It is the strength of his relentless skepticism, his refusal to trust, which particularly arouses our admiration” (284).

Near *The Maltese Falcon*’s end, Brigid O’Shaughnessy—realizing that Spade has identified her as Miles Archer’s murderer—begins to beg him to fall in love with her and so (as part of that relationship) not turn her in. Spade admits to being tempted, but he finally doesn’t give into the temptation, telling O’Shaughnessy: “I've no earthly reason to think I can trust you, and, if I do this and get away with it, you'll have something on me that you can use whenever you want to. Since I've got something on you, I couldn't be sure that you wouldn't put a hole in me some day.” So Spade ultimately turns Brigid in, largely because of an instinctive distrust of human nature and her history with men who fall for her looks (like Miles Archer).

It is, after all, Archer’s gullible trust in Brigid which has led him to be killed. Spade realizes O’Shaughnessy is Archer’s murderer, because he understands basic human psychology. He tells O’Shaughnessy:

> Miles hadn't many brains but he'd had too many years experience as a detective to be caught like that by a man he was shadowing up a blind alley with his gun in his hip and his overcoat buttoned. But he'd have gone up there with you, angel. He was just dumb enough for that. He would have looked you up and down and licked his lips and gone, grinning from ear to ear. And then you could have stood as close to him as you liked in the dark and put a hole through him with a gun you got from Thursby that evening.

Spade emphasizes pragmatism, as Frye writes: “The *eiron* of the low norm takes an attitude of flexible pragmatism; he assumes that society will, if given any chance, behave more or less like Caliban’s Setebos in Browning’s poem, and he conducts himself accordingly” (226). Browning’s Caliban tries to hide things from his master Prospero, because the two are basically antagonistic (“If he caught me here, O'erheard this speech, and asked ‘What chucklest at?’ ‘Would to appease him, cut a finger off’” (Browning lines 269-271). Criminals act towards Sam Spade like Caliban to Prospero, suspicious, antagonistic—angry at him for their lack of freedom from the law which he is there to remind them of and generally abides by.
A private investigator like Sam Spade is, of course, the perfect eiron, a word used to refer to Socrates, who was adept at asking those around him questions to show their errors. As mentioned before, the word eiron is a root word for ‘irony’, because Socrates often claimed not to know what the answer to the questions were, in order to tease out the illogical viewpoints of others. In Spade’s case, he pretends not always to know exactly what’s happening in order to draw out the characters to prove what he is actually sure has happened. He tells Brigid, for instance, “they'll talk when they're nailed about us. We're sitting on dynamite. We've only got minutes to get set for the police.” Constant prods such as these finally lead Brigid to confess.

The Maltese Falcon Irony/Satire First Phase Analogue: Comedy First Phase

Comedy First Phase Characteristics.

1. Humorous (capricious, whimsical, natural) society is undefeated or, in irony, “simply disintegrates without anything taking its place” (177).
2. The demonic is always nearby (178).
3. There is a ritual death from which the characters are barely saved by a cognitio (recognition) (179).

The Maltese Falcon fits all three of the characteristics of Comedy First Phase, although, of course, the humorous society is not undefeated. Rather, as Frye writes: the humorous society “simply disintegrates without anything taking its place,” (177) as all the criminals go to jail. Even the beautiful Brigid O’Shaughnessy—heretofore able to romance her way to freedom from the law—will only “be out of the Tehachapi in 20 years,” as Spade tells her. The movie is almost a happy ending, in that Spade has cleared the streets of a few criminals who could kill innocent detectives (like Miles Archer) or policemen. The world is a little safer, because these criminals will have nobody with the same financial resources and the same acumen to replace them.

In Comedy First Phase and in Irony/Satire First Phase, the “demonic world is never far away” (178). This is especially true for Brigid O’Shaughnessy, who despite her innocent,
vacuously beautiful appearance, treats the women and especially the men around her as if their lives are worthless. They are only disposable pawns for her to get at what she wants.

Finally, Frye writes how in this phase, there is “a point near the end at which the tone suddenly becomes serious, sentimental, or ominous of potential catastrophe” (179). Near the movie’s end, O’Shaughnessy begs Spade not to turn her into the police, because she loves him and wants them both to escape the police together. This is Frye’s “sentimental” plot turn, and it reeks of catastrophe for Spade. Allowing Brigid to escape the law with him seems likely to lead to his death (like it led to the deaths of Archer and Thursby).

However, after flirting with this ritual death, he chooses not to believe her, and the moment of ritual death passes with the cognitio (recognition). Frye uses this term in the Aristotelian sense to apply to the recognition of the true hero who has survived the ritual death. Although this is true for Spade, the most common, more colloquial, sense of recognition also applies here. Spade ‘remembers again,’ or recognizes, how O’Shaughnessy has treated his partner Archer and other men infatuated or in love with her. He does not make the same mistake his partner had made.

Figure 39: Irony/Satire and Comedy Second Phase

*Citizen Kane* (1941) Irony/Satire Second Phase
Irony/Satire Second Phase Characteristics.

1. A successful “rogue . . . makes conventional society look foolish without setting up any positive standard” (229).
2. The emphasis is on surviving in everyday life, as opposed to attempting to understand life philosophically (229).
3. Consequently, this phase does not set up a moral imperative (229).
4. Stereotypes and dogmas are shown to be inapplicable when set against real life (230).

*Citizen Kane* fits all four characteristics of Irony/Satire Second Phase.

*Citizen Kane* is the story of Charles Foster Kane (Orson Welles), an early twentieth century media mogul (Kane was based on real-life yellow journalist William Randolph Hearst). Kane’s early, idyllic life in Colorado ends when some of his mother’s property (given to her by an insolvent border) is discovered to be a literal gold mine. Kane leaves his reclusive mother and his father and becomes the ward of banker Walter Parks Thatcher (George Coulouris) until he reaches the age of twenty-five, at which point he fully comes into the world’s sixth largest inheritance.

The movie begins with Kane’s death, as he mutters the enigmatic word ‘Rosebud.’ This strange last word, overheard by his butler, is reported in the press, and a certain journalist named Jerry Thompson (William Alland) is commissioned to discover its true meaning. Either meeting with personally, or in one case reading the memoirs of, five people who knew Kane, Thompson discovers nothing about the meaning of the word ‘Rosebud.’ As Robert Carringer notes: “Kane’s associates[’] … pitiful efforts to explain him reveal almost as much about themselves and their own limitations as about Kane” (187). Although the interviewees often contradict each other, Thompson learns enough

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8 I am considering *Citizen Kane* to be a Film Noir in the sense that it is a somewhat shocking film as well as a very dark film, emphasizing the interplay between light and darkness. It is not, necessarily, a Film Noir in the hard-boiled detective sense, although Thompson does seem to have a hard-boiled detective’s cynicism. I am not the only one, of course, to believe *Citizen Kane* to be film noir. Thomas Schatz in his *Hollywood Genres* argues that *Citizen Kane* is actually far more a film noir than *The Maltese Falcon* (116). Schatz actually believes *Citizen Kane*, and not *The Maltese Falcon*, to be the first film noir (115-117).

9 Interestingly, Orson Welles, like Kane, also became the ward of a wealthy man at a young age after the death of his father ("Orson Welles: Biography").
to know that Kane began life as, more or less, an idealist and later in his life became more and more self-centered.

However, just as Thompson has given up the search at Kane’s warehouse at his Xanadu estate at the movie’s end, the camera pans over Kane’s art and furniture collection to where workers are throwing some useless junk into a furnace. One of them throws a sled into that furnace. This is the sled on which Kane had sledded as a young child in Colorado. Just before the sled burns away in the fire, the camera focuses on the word ‘Rosebud’ painted on the sled. The movie ends with ‘Rosebud’ ultimately seeming to represent Kane’s innocent life before he had been taken from his parents and, later, was corrupted by his fortune.

Frye writes that in Irony/Satire Second Phase “the successful rogue … makes conventional society look foolish without setting up any positive standard” (229). Kane has decided at the movie’s beginning that he wants to be a journalist (“I think it would be fun to run a newspaper”), and he writes a “Declaration of Principles”: “I'll provide the people of this city with a daily paper that will tell all the news honestly. I will also provide them with a fighting and tireless champion of their rights as citizens and as human beings.”

Kane then signs his Declaration, but he consequently does not live by it. The Declaration simply proves to be an attempt to get more newspapers sold. Only a few minutes later, Kane is standing before his in-town competitor’s Chronicle office, longingly looking at the picture of its newspaper staff, supposedly the best news staff in the world. He is also entranced by the Chronicle’s statement that it sells 495,000 papers a day. ” As James Maxfield notes: "his true goal is to build up the circulation of the Inquirer" (198).

We soon learn that, six years later, Kane has hired away that very same Chronicle staff to work for the Inquirer. Importantly, in talking on that day, Kane does not boast about the quality or the objectivity of his news. His best boast that day is: “It will make you all happy to learn that our circulation this morning was the greatest in New York, 684,000.” Gradually, Kane’s emphasis has become not on whether his newspaper tells the truth (which he claimed at the beginning) but on whether Kane has sold more newspapers than anybody else. Kane’s “Declaration of Principles” are his
generalizations and dogmas about how he will conduct his journalistic career, and they turn out to be impossible for him to follow, as he becomes more and more centered on himself.

Of course, Kane begins the Spanish-American War (as Hearst historically did in real life), and in doing so, he makes conventional society look very foolish, in that they throw themselves into war for no truly justifiable reason. Historically, the explosion that destroyed the U.S.S. *Maine*—found in a 1975 U.S. Navy study to have almost certainly been a boiler explosion (Rickover 91)—was decried by Hearst (Kane in the movie) as an attack by Spain and ultimately led to the Spanish-American War.

In this phase, Frye contrasts the difference between the satirist and the philosopher. He describes the philosopher as teaching “a certain way or method of living; he stresses some things and despises others; … he continually passes moral judgements on social behavior” (229). In contrast to the philosopher’s “dogmatic” attitude, the satirist’s attitude is “pragmatic.” Essentially, Kane begins his journalistic career as a philosopher, promising to help the common man, but his life gradually develops into that of a satirist. He is more concerned about what, practically, will make him look good and what will help the *Inquirer* sell the most copies in the city than in what he should do.

As Jedidiah Leland (Joseph Cotten), Kane’s college buddy and the *Inquirer* drama critic (before Kane fired him for writing a negative review of Kane’s wife’s opera performance) says of Kane: “I don't suppose anybody ever had so many opinions. But he never believed in anything except Charlie Kane. He never had a conviction except Charlie Kane in his life.” When Kane’s first wife Emily complains to Charles (apparently about something she has read in the *Inquirer*): “People will think …,” he cuts her off and finishes her statement for her: “what I tell them to think.”

Kane's first wife divorces him after a political opponent breaks the story about Kane's affair with a certain young Susan Alexander. Kane's race for governor, as a result, ends in defeat, and in this sense Susan Alexander is his femme fatale. Because of his affair with her, his public image is destroyed. From this point on, Kane tries to live his life through other people, affirming himself by making other people successful.

After the divorce to his first wife, Kane funds his second wife Susan’s career as an opera singer (although even the opera hands know she is bad; listening to her sing, one
pinches his nose) because—if she can become a renowned singer—it shows what he can do. As Timothy Dirks says of Kane: “Susan's career has become a test not of her own singing or talent, but of Kane's own power and deluded judgment” (p. 5 par. 5). As Kane tells Susan: “We’re going to be a great opera star.” The famous Jean-Paul Sartre, in his essay on Citizen Kane, writes that Kane "forces his mistress, who can't sing, to present herself everywhere in spectacle. Modest and aware of her fate, she suffers greatly from this" (63).

All this is done so that Kane can be loved. Leland finally says of Kane: “Love. That's why he did everything. That's why he went into politics. It seems we weren't enough. He wanted all the voters to love him too. Guess all he really wanted out of life was love. That's Charlie's story, how he lost it. You see, he just didn't have any to give.” Kane even makes a toast to love at one point in the movie: “A toast, Jedediah, to love on my terms. Those are the only terms anybody ever knows - his own.”

Yet even Leland’s statements about Kane, although they ring true, do not adequately describe a man of so many facets and characteristics. Kane is somebody about whom it is difficult to make generalizations and stereotypes, again showing “the setting of ideas and generalizations and theories and dogmas over against the life they are supposed to explain” (230). As the narrator states about Kane, he “spoke for millions of Americans, was hated by as many more.” Kane, in one “News on the March” scene, is called first a Communist and then, by another person a little later, a Fascist: two viewpoints considered diametrically opposed, at least before World War II.

Most importantly, Thompson’s interviews show how differently Kane is seen. The gamut is run from his manager Bernstein’s favorable portrayal of somebody who sadly, essentially unfairly “lost almost everything he had” to Leland’s mild annoyance (mixed with an admiring tone—“I suppose he had some sort of greatness”) to Susan Alexander Kane’s deep dislike and antipathy. As Laura Mulvey writes, “[b]y its very use of inconsistency and contradiction, the film warns the audience against any reliance on the protagonists as credible sources of truth” (23).
Citizen Kane Ironic/Satire Second Phase Analogue: Comedy Second Phase

Comedy Second Phase Characteristics.

1. The comic hero “does not transform a humorous society but simply escapes or runs away from it, leaving its structure as it was before” or the society surrounding a hero is unable to affect him (180).
2. The hero is usually a whimsical runaway.
3. In lighthearted comedies, the comic ending sweeps “over all quixotic illusions” (180).

Citizen Kane fits these three characteristics of Comedy Second Phase (except that it does not have a lighthearted ending). Frye writes that there are two forms of this Comedy phase. The first is that “in which the hero does not transform a humorous society but simply escapes or runs away from it, leaving its structure as it was before” (180). This is not exactly the case in Citizen Kane, because Kane does have a huge influence on the world around him as a newspaper mogul, although one could certainly argue that he tries to escape and run away from society (by building Xanadu, for instance—in this last sense, Kane is “at least partly a comic humor or mental runaway” (180)).

Citizen Kane, however, does fit the second form of Comedy Second Phase, when “a society is constructed by or around a hero, but proves not sufficiently real or strong to impose itself” (180). This fits Citizen Kane exactly, because it is a story of a man who tries to create a society which will give him the love and self-esteem he never got from his parents as a child. Carringer writes that Kane “was a man continually driven to idealize his experience as a means of insulating himself from human life” (192). The newspapers and Susan Alexander Kane’s opera career (which he funds) are both simply excuses for him to show how much influence he has i.e. how great he is. But it is all an illusion and, at the end of his life, this society is shown to mean nothing. Kane dies as an

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10 Mulvey writes that Kane holds onto Susan “like a precious object that can fill the void which opened up at the moment he was separated from his mother” (63).
empty, lonely man longing for the days when he had a family, because the society of admiration he set up around him ultimately didn’t fulfill.

Figure 40: Irony/Satire and Comedy Third Phase

North by Northwest (1959) Irony/Satire Third Phase

Irony/Satire Third Phase Characteristics.

1. Even common sense is seen as a dogma (234).

2. Constant shifts in perspective permeate this phase, so that characters are consistently seen from different angles, close-ups and long shots, so to speak (234).

3. Even the senses should be distrusted, because often what we think we see isn’t what we have really seen (235).

North by Northwest fits all three characteristics of Irony/Satire Third Phase. North by Northwest is the story of a certain Roger Thornhill (Cary Grant), who is mistaken for the nonexistent American secret agent George Kaplan in a restaurant. As he is trying to call his mother, Kaplan raises his hand to flag a waiter at the exact same time that the waiter is paging George Kaplan. Two thugs (part of an international crime ring) see this (they have orchestrated a caller to call the restaurant and ask for Kaplan) and automatically assume Thornhill is George Kaplan. Thornhill is kidnapped, interviewed by a certain
Lester Townsend (James Mason) (actually Phillip Vandamm, an international spy and criminal), made to drink a bottle of bourbon and then forced to drive (in hopes of killing him). He survives, only to find that the police don’t believe his story. A little later, he is framed for the murder of the real Lester Townsend (Phillip Ober) (whose house Vandamm had used to masquerade as Townsend while the real Townsend was out of town).

In his attempts to find Kaplan (who doesn’t exist) and escape from the police, who have set up a dragnet for his arrest, Thornhill runs into Eve Kendall (Eva Marie Saint), who very strangely takes him under her wing, although the audience soon discovers that she is the paramour of Phillip Vandamm. Even more strangely, Kendall sets up for Thornhill a meeting with George Kaplan in a wheat field, where Thornhill finds no George Kaplan but is almost killed in the famous crop duster sequence. The plane (hired by Vandamm’s henchmen) tries to kill Thornhill with its wheels, and somebody from the plane shoots a machine gun at Thornhill. He is finally able to duck under the front of a gas truck just before the plane smashes into it.

Convinced that Kendall is now out to kill him, Thornhill continues to pursue her, as his only possible link to Kaplan. Thornhill is almost captured. However, in an interview with a certain Professor (Leo G. Carroll), Thornhill discovers that Kendall is actually an American intelligence agent, tracking Phillip Vandamm, a spy trying to sneak top-secret, highly sensitive photos out of America. American intelligence arranges a meeting between Thornhill and Vandamm and Kendall near Mt. Rushmore. In an almost perfectly arranged plot, the Professor gives Kendall a pistol which has only blanks in it, with which she then shoots Thornhill, and Thornhill pretends to die. This is done to try to convince Vandamm that Kendall is not a double agent. Kendall then runs off into the woods.

Thornhill is whisked away to spend a few moments with Kendall, since they have fallen in love, and then Kendall returns to Vandamm’s mansion, near Mt. Rushmore. However, Thornhill, fearing for her life, follows her and finds through eavesdropping on Vandamm that Vandamm now knows she is an American agent. Thornhill informs Kendall that Vandamm is on to her. In the climactic scene on Mt. Rushmore, Kendall
and Thornhill escape and are almost killed by a Vandamm henchman before the Professor arrives, captures Vandamm, and saves Kendall and Thornhill.

_North by Northwest_ opens on a blue screen (after the MGM lion roars), and black lines begin to cross from the screen’s top right to the screen’s bottom left. Brief milliseconds later other black lines begin crossing from the upper right to the bottom right. And then, finally, black lines from the bottom left begin to rise up toward the top left—crossing across the first lines falling to the bottom left. It is all very difficult to follow, purposefully so. The opening is a brief microcosm of the movie—everything is going every which way, and any audience will be hard-pressed to know what is going on, until the very end. Finally, all the lines form a strange lattice work of some diagonal lines and many more straight lines. The credits then roll on this grid-like latticework, different parts shifting from different directions with every new credit.

We see the title: _North by Northwest_ with part of the letter N pointing, as expected, northward. However, the T of Northwest, unexpectedly, is pointing southwest. Again, there is confusion, the unexpected. What are eventually identifiable as streetcars appear behind the grid, and then, suddenly, the grid seems to turn into what looks like a skyscraper’s windows. We realize (we think) that we are looking at a skyscraper’s windows reflecting cars on the street below. However, based on the confusion of what has come before, can we be sure? Lastly, the credits roll as we see harried New Yorkers rushing every which way, including Alfred Hitchcock on whom a bus door closes just as he is about to board it (not surprisingly, the working title for the movie was _Breathless_). The movie’s theme, confusion and uncertainty, is apparent from the beginning.

Thornhill is an important progenitor of this confusion, as a New York advertising executive. Only a few seconds after we first see him, he jumps in front of another man for a taxi with his assistant, Maggie (Doreen Lang)—he tells the man that Maggie is a “very sick woman here,” which is not true—because he is late for a meeting. Thornhill tells her, when she reproves him for telling a lie, that there is not such a thing as a lie, only an “expedient exaggeration.” In a sense, because of his early behavior, Thornhill will deserve the agony he goes through as he becomes intertwined with a world of double agents (expedient exaggerators) and international espionage where most people around him, who are liars themselves, think he is lying. As Frye writes: “[H]ere we must let go
even of ordinary common sense as a standard. For common sense too has certain implied
dogmas, notably that the data of sense experience are reliable and consistent, and that our
custumary associations with things form a solid basis for interpreting the present and
predicting the future” (234). Common sense is very difficult to use in a world where
most people are hiding something.

As mentioned before, Frye says the third phase is where "we must let go even of
ordinary common sense as a standard. For common sense too has certain implied
dogmas, notably that the data of sense experience are reliable and consistent, and that our
custumary associations with things form a solid basis for interpreting the present and
predicting the future" (234). Much of *North by Northwest* simply seems to defy common
sense. There are so many switches, role reversals etc., that we know we can never rely
on somebody being what they seem.

Kendall first tells Thornhill: “I'm Eve Kendall. I'm twenty-six and unmarried. Now
you know everything.” Of course, as the movie’s remainder shows, this isn’t even close
to being 'everything', and it is the many lies like this in the movie which make the
characters unable to trust each other. In the secretive, dissembling, conniving, whimsical
Hitchcock world, it is difficult to predict what will happen in the future, and that is
probably part of what made his movies so popular.

The movie's title--about moving in a direction with constant readjustment--fits well
with the characters' constant posturing. Almost all the main characters slightly or
radically adjust their personas depending upon the context. Stanley Cavell believes the
movie's title comes from Hamlet's statement that he is "but mad north-north-west"
(*Hamlet* 1.2.378) (Cavell "North by Northwest" 764). The rest of Hamlet's line runs:
"When the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a handsaw" (lines 378-379). Cavell
notes that Hamlet, like Thornhill and Kendall and Vandamm and all the others, is
feigning:

Hamlet's line occurs as the players are about to enter, and … *North by Northwest* is
notable … for its obsession with the idea of acting; and considering that both the
play and the film contain play-within-the-play in both of which someone is killed,
both being constructed to catch the conscience of the one for whose benefit they
are put on. (764-765)
Frye earlier wrote: “The satirist … will show us society suddenly in a telescope as posturing and dignified pygmies, or in a microscope as hideous and reeking giants, or he will change his hero into an ass and show us how humanity looks from an ass’s point of view” (234). At various points in the movie, especially when something bad is about to happen to Thornhill, the camera shows him in extreme long shots. In these instances, he is a very small person dwarfed by very large buildings of a hotel lobby (just before he is about to be kidnapped) and the United Nations building (just before he is about to be framed for Lester Townsend’s murder). We are aware of how small Thornhill is relative to the forces which, by chance, have led him into his mess. Also, early in the movie, Vandamm forces Thornhill to drink large amounts of bourbon, and then Vandamm forces Thornhill behind the wheel of a car, to make it look as if Thornhill died, because he drove after having far too much to drink (an ass in a sense). Neither the characters nor the audience can be very sure of their perspective in North By Northwest.

North by Northwest Irony/Satire Third Phase Analogue: Comedy Third Phase

Comedy Third Phase Characteristics.

1. A senex iratus “gives way to a young man’s desires” (180).
2. The father and son of the father are “frequently rivals for the same girl” (180).

North by Northwest fits these aspects of Comedy Third Phase. “The third phase of comedy is the normal one that we have been discussing, in which a senex iratus or other humor gives way to a young man’s desires” (180). In North by Northwest, the senex iratus is Vandamm, who is the main obstacle between Kendall and Thornhill’s romantic relationship. In order for Thornhill to get Eve, Vandamm has to be removed, which is exactly what happens.

Frye also writes of: “[t]he doubling of the senex figure [with] sometimes a heavy father and benevolent uncle, as in Terence’s Adelphoi and in Tartuffe, and so on” (181). The benevolent uncle in North by Northwest is the Professor, who first tells Thornhill that
Kendall is actually an American agent—thereby encouraging him to remain involved in the plot to help Kendall in her machinations. The Professor, ironically like Vandamm, keeps Thornhill and Kendall from their relationship, at least temporarily, because Kendall must remain Vandamm’s mistress to allow her access to the microfilm so important to America’s national safety interests. In this sense Vandamm and the Professor are doubled. So when Thornhill protests loudly that Kendall shouldn’t return to Vandamm (Thornhill: “I don't like the games you play, Professor … If you fellas can't lick the Vandamms of this world, without asking girls like her to bed down with him and fly away with him and probably never come back, perhaps you ought to start learning how to lose a few cold wars”), the Professor is forced to have Thornhill knocked out by a state trooper (the type of thing Vandamm has been doing to Thornhill all along).

Kendall and Thornhill’s secret love and love-making have to be hidden from the Hayes Code film audience. However, the pair’s sly, backhanded references to sex are much funnier and more clever than if they could be absolutely open about them. In one early scene on the train, Kendall says: “I am a big girl” and Thornhill replies: “Yeah, and in all the right places, too.” After Thornhill has been supposedly shot by Eve, the two are reunited. Eve, after a long, obviously sexually charged, kiss tells Thornhill: “You’re supposed to be critically wounded.”

He responds: “I’ve never been more alive.” So much of the movie’s comedy results from Thornhill and Kendall’s romantic conversations about sex, which had to be accommodating to the censors. As Frye writes: “The presiding genius of comedy is Eros, and Eros has to adapt himself to the moral facts of the society” (181).

Frye writes: “The action of comedy, like the action of the Christian Bible, moves from law to liberty. In the law there is an element of ritual bondage which is abolished, and an element of habit or convention which is fulfilled” (181). The law, in *North by Northwest*, is Kendall’s status as an American spy. She must keep this as her primary obligation, and this keeps her and Thornhill from developing a romantic relationship and even from seeing each other. Once the law has been abolished, once Kendall and Thornhill have taken the microfilm from Vandamm, liberty follows and Kendall and Thornhill can spend the rest of their life together, married.
Irony/Satire Fourth Phase Characteristics.

1. “The fall of the tragic hero … is so delicately balanced emotionally that we almost exaggerate any one element in it merely by calling attention to it” (236).
2. The emphasis is on the everyday aspects of a human being, not their heroism (237).
3. Much of the suffering portrayed is seen as avoidable (237).

*Taxi Driver* (1976) Irony/Satire Fourth Phase

*Taxi Driver* fits all three of the Irony/Satire Fourth Phase Characteristics. *Taxi Driver* is the story of New York cab driver Travis Bickle (Robert De Niro), apparently a Vietnam Veteran (although the movie never explicitly states so, only mentioning that he has been released from the Marines in 1973). Bickle struggles with insomnia, so he finds a taxi job, which will pay him for staying up late at night (which he would do anyway). As he drives the taxi, through Bickle’s internal monologue, we are shown a young man who is almost crazed with loneliness (Andrew Swenson notes how this loneliness is archetypal in the Fryean sense (269)).

The movie’s main goal in the beginning is to endear Bickle to its audience and then present Bickle’s homicidal rage as a serial murderer at the movie’s end, meant to make the audience uncomfortable and question their values. For instance, to assuage his loneliness, Bickle pursues a young volunteer at New York Governor Charles Palantine’s presidential candidate headquarters, Betsy (Cybil Shepherd). The first time we see her
walking in slow motion into the campaign headquarters, Bickle is writing in a diary and De Niro’s voice-over slowly rolls over the words, almost heartbreaking: “S-h-e i-s a-l-o-n-e. T-h-e-y c-a-n-n-o-t t-o-u-c-h h-e-r.” Bickle here, and later, is obviously in love and often reminds one of a child innocently wanting friends or siblings to say that they like him, to prove he is worth something.

Amazingly, after Bickle tries to convince Betsy how lonely she is (after he has been watching her through the windows of the campaign office from his taxi cab for days, hours upon end), she agrees to go for “coffee and pie” with him. Ecstatic, Bickle suddenly believes in life again. The first date goes well, but without thinking on the second date, Travis takes Betsy to a porno theatre, where she is immediately revulsed. His difficult life on the streets has led him to see nothing strange and deviant about porno movies. He is genuinely stunned that, after this, she refuses to return his calls (again, Bickle’s honest, mind-boggling naivete leads the audience to feel empathy for somebody who doesn’t quite understand how the world outside him works all the time).

Upset at the loss of a seemingly promising relationship for a reason he can’t understand, Bickle becomes more and more angry and psychotic. He becomes convinced that he needs to rid the city of its “seedy side.” He begins to train for such an operation with a tough physical regimen, healthy diet and by learning how to use several guns, a .44 Magnum and others. He begins to shift his anger against Betsy (for breaking off her romantic relationship with him) upon her superficial, smarmy boss Palantine and Palantine’s empty, hollow, obviously politically motivated, promises.

At the same time, Bickle has twice bumped into, on the street, the twelve year old prostitute Iris Steensma (Jodi Foster), whom he wants (even at the time he is plotting to kill Palantine) to free from the world of prostitution. Iris’s pimp, Sport (Harvey Keitel) represents for Bickle all that is evil and corrupting in the world. In numerous conversations with Iris, Bickle attempts to convince her to give up prostitution and return to her parents. However, denying she needs help, Iris refuses.

Bickle ratchets up his desire to rid New York of its seediness. Bickle begins to sport a new Mohawk (in Vietnam, before a dangerous assignment, soldiers sometimes gave themselves such Mohawks to show “they were in killer mode” (Taubin 68)). He watches one of Palantine’s political speeches from a few feet away (without shooting him,
although he could have easily done so). As Palantine leaves the rostrum, Bickle makes his way towards Palantine and reaches inside his army fatigues for his gun. However, he never even pulls the gun out as a Secret Service agent notices the (intentionally?) obvious gesture and steps between him and Palantine. Travis begins running away and escapes, running through and against the crowd moving towards Palantine.\footnote{Despite his warlike demeanor, Travis’s assassination attempt seems botched intentionally. It is almost as if Travis tries to fail. He doesn’t shoot Palantine from a distance (which would have been much easier). He also makes very obvious moves when he gets closer to Palantine. Of course, there is no denying that Bickle is somebody who wants to assassinate politicians like Palantine. But this seems to be more his psychotic loneliness than actual evil. Further, he later turns his homicidal energies towards saving Iris from her pimp, which makes him seem one of the most heroic serial murderers ever.}

So needing some way to release his angry energies, Travis finds his way to Iris’s pimp, Sport, and kills him (as well as those around him who have helped Sport set up his child prostitution ring). Travis attempts to commit suicide, but there are no more bullets left in his gun, and he is found by police and taken away. His homicidal rage is especially unsettling for the audience which has empathized with some of his problems earlier in the movie.

The movie ends with Travis, without the Mohawk, returning to his job as taxi driver, which, for \textit{Taxi Driver}'s screenwriter Paul Schrader represents his isolation from society. Schrader detailed, in an interview with Richard Thompson, his nervous breakdown which became the subject matter for \textit{Taxi Driver}:

\begin{quote}
When I got out of the hospital I realized I had to change my life because I would die and everything … that was when the metaphor hit me for \textit{Taxi Driver} …. The absolute symbol of urban loneliness …. The man who is completely surrounded by people, yet has no friends. The film is about a car as the symbol of urban loneliness, a metal coffin. (Schrader "Screenwriter: \textit{Taxi Driver}'s Paul Schrader"
(Schrader 12-13)
\end{quote}

The movie ends with Travis Bickle seemingly accepted by society. But he is driving off again in his taxi and, as Timothy Dirks notes: "How cleansed and saved is Travis really? How long will it be before the pathological killer turns back to more ritualistic violence and bloody retaliation, confusing murder with sacrifice?" (p. 4 par. 21).
Frye writes: “The fall of the tragic hero, especially in Shakespeare, is so delicately balanced emotionally that we almost exaggerate any one element in it merely by calling attention to it” (236). One could say that Betsy’s rejection of Travis explicitly leads to Travis’s breakdown, but to simply ascribe his breakdown only to that is too simple. Travis’s loneliness, his army experience, rampant New York crime, all affect significantly his actions at the movie’s ending, not just Betsy’s rejection of him (although that may be the spark that lights the fire). As Frye writes: “King Lear attempts to achieve heroic dignity through his position as a king and father, and finds it instead in his suffering humanity” (237). Like King Lear, we like Travis not necessarily because of anything he has attempted to do but because he is a suffering human being experiencing horrible things.

Frye writes that, in the fourth phase “. . . there is no attempt to make fun of the character, but only to bring out clearly the ‘all too human,’ as distinct from the heroic, aspects of tragedy” (237). It is difficult to make fun of such a sad, pathetic character (since all of us have felt sad and pathetic at least some time in our life). Further, the camera tries to position us to be Travis Bickle, by looking directly into Travis Bickle’s eyes. Throughout the movie, we see frequent shots of his eyes innocently staring straight ahead or a shot of Travis’ rearview mirror as he looks into it. When Iris wants to take Bickle’s taxi, but her pimp Sport forcefully prevents her, as Taubin notes: “there’s a cut to a close-up of Travis’s wary eyes reflected in the front rear-view mirror” (46-47). By looking in his eyes, we are meant to identify with Travis’ predicament.

Just after the movie’s beginning, there is a shot from the passenger seat of the car looking through the rainy windshield out into the florescent lights and seedy joints of New York where Taxi Driver was shot. Although this shot is not directly a pov shot from Travis Bickle, the implication is clear. Taubin writes again, we roughly “see what those eyes are seeing: Broadway at night, through a rain-drenched windshield” (34). We are seeing as Travis sees.

Frye writes that this phase “supplies social and psychological explanations for catastrophe, and makes as much as possible of human misery seem, in Thoreau’s phrase, ‘superfluous and evitable’” (237). The explanations for Travis’s homicidal rage are his loneliness and, quite possibly, his Vietnam War experience. Frye writes further: “As a
phase of irony in its own right, the fourth phase looks at tragedy from below, from the moral and realistic perspective of the state of experience” (237). All of *Taxi Driver* shows the audience life from the seamy side of a New York City taxi cab driver, even from inside the cab, the same cab from which Travis cleans out the blood in the morning. “This is the phase of most sincere, explicit realism” (237). There is no glamorous James Bond figure here or Cary Grant romancing and adventurously tiptoeing through a world of international espionage. It is New York with prostitution, drugs, and crime.

*Taxi Driver* Irony/Satire Fourth Phase Analogue: Tragedy Fourth Phase

**Tragedy Fourth Phase Characteristics.**

1. The hero falls “through hybris and hamartia” (221) and crosses the line of innocence into experience.

Frye writes for Tragedy Fourth Phase, that this is “the typical fall of the hero through hybris and hamartia that we have already discussed. In this phase we cross the boundary line from innocence to experience, which is also the direction in which the hero falls” (221). Simply put, the story shows us a fairly innocent taxicab driver who is destroyed by the environment around him, so that he eventually becomes homicidal, although, fortunately, he kills the ‘right’ pimps in the society so that he is not punished for his serial murders. Despite the fact that most of Travis’s problems are rooted in his environment, he still makes the choice to do what he does.
Irony/Satire Fifth Phase Characteristics.

1. Emphasis is on ineluctable fate or fortune. Everything important has already happened or is set unavoidably to happen (237).
2. Thus an emphasis on stoicism (237).
3. The practical situation is more important “than the theoretical explanation of it” (238).

*Sunset Boulevard* (1950) Irony/Satire Fifth Phase

*Sunset Boulevard* fits all three characteristics of Irony/Satire Fifth Phase. *Sunset Boulevard* begins with a homicide squad driving to a house on Hollywood’s Sunset Boulevard, where a man has just been shot and is floating, face down, in a pool. The movie’s narrator then begins a narrative about the whole affair. At the movie’s beginning, Joe Gillis (William Holden) is a struggling screenwriter who is desperately in need of money. Trying to escape from repossession agents who are after his car, he pulls into the driveway of a seemingly deserted mansion on Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood. He soon finds the mansion is actually inhabited by aging silent film star Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson) who believes she is still a famous, beloved movie star, even though she hasn’t been in a picture for decades. Desmond hires Gillis to rewrite a script of hers, and Gillis becomes a kept man, despite a burgeoning, much more real, romance with Paramount reader Betty Schaefer (Nancy Olson). After Desmond discovers Gillis’s romance with Schaefer, she confronts Gillis and eventually shoots and kills him, and he
falls into her pool, so that the man floating dead in the pool at the movie’s beginning is revealed to be Gillis.\footnote{Kaytlin Trowbridge notes about the title \textit{Sunset Boulevard} that “[b]esides designating a real street in Los Angeles, this adjective ‘Sunset’ also denotes a road which leads to a literal death for Joe Gillis, and in Norma Desmond’s case, a symbolic one” (294).}

Fatalistically, this opening is also, essentially, the movie’s ending, as if the ending is ordained from the beginning and simply has to be played out. As Frye writes, “[t]he fifth phase, corresponding to fatalistic or fifth-phase tragedy, is irony in which the main emphasis is on the natural cycle, the steady unbroken turning of the wheel of fate or fortune” (237). Gillis seems as good as dead (although we are not specifically told this is him at the beginning) from the film's opening,\footnote{This is especially the case for the second time one watches the movie, because one knows \textit{for certain} Gillis is the dead man in the pool, while a first-time audience of \textit{Sunset Boulevard} might at best only have a suspicion that is the case.} even while the story of the last days of his life is explained, and he is presented as alive. As Frye writes, ‘experience’ is seen “with the point of epiphany closed up” (237).

Frye writes there is “a stoicism not of the ‘invictus’ type, which maintains a romantic dignity, but rather a sense, found also in the parallel second phase of satire, that the practical and immediate situation is likely to be worthy of more respect than the theoretical explanation of it” (238). The movie seems to criticize Hollywood generally as an industry full of people much more concerned with the ‘practical’ demands of making money than with any other theoretical considerations (like making a good film or an important statement). Screenplay writer Gillis is a perfect example of this. Although he began in Hollywood by trying to write the best scripts with redeeming theoretical statements (as Betty Schaeffer puts it: “a picture should say a little something”) he has become desperate to write anything that will make any money.

This is why Schaeffer, as an exception to the Hollywood focus on money, as a reader doesn’t like Gillis’s latest screenplay \textit{Bases Loaded}, which is simply a hack plot and star vehicle about a baseball player throwing a World Series. She believes it is written from ‘hunger’ (i.e. from simply a desire to be accepted and paid for as opposed to being written from a desire to say something important and original.) Gillis shoots back: “Exactly what kind of material do you recommend? James Joyce, Dostoevsky?” Gillis’s point is that although both these authors are famous today for their unique or thoughtful
viewpoints, both were exceedingly poor men most of their lives. Schaeffer notes how she was surprised in reading *Bases Loaded*, because she had always heard Gillis “had some talent.”

Gillis responds: “That was last year. This year I’m trying to earn a living.” Again and again in the movie, “the practical situation,” (238) a lack of money, demands more attention than anything else.

Desmond hires Gillis ostensibly to revise her screenplay *Salome*, in which she is to return to the screen in the title role. The essence of *Salome*, for Desmond, is, as she puts it with a wicked sneer: “[t]he princess in love with a Holy Man. She dances the Dance of the Seven Veils. He rejects her, so she demands his head on a golden tray, kissing his cold, dead lips” (of course, later in the movie, Desmond will kill Gillis like Salome killed John the Baptist). After so many of Desmond’s creepy, twisted monologues, Gillis seems foolish to remain in her house as her paid scriptwriter (and really her romantic interest). But he accepts her job because of the ‘practical’ money she is offering him. As he says later: “I wanted the job; I wanted the dough.” If Gillis was thinking abstractly (‘theoretically’), and not solely thinking about the money, he would have realized the trap into which she was leading him (even he admits: “Maybe I’d been an idiot not to have sensed it was coming.”) But for him the practical situation is more important “than the theoretical explanation of it” (238).

Earlier in the movie, Gillis realized his ‘theoretical’ problem, which is the fact that Hollywood is a difficult, selfish place, where breaks, if they come at all, generally come with a price. We are given his internal monologue, while he is driving onto Sunset Boulevard back to his apartment after being rejected by his agent for money: “Apparently, I just didn’t have what it takes, and the time had come to wrap up the whole Hollywood deal and go home.” But he chooses to ignore the theoretical problem and its solution which is to leave. Rather, he focuses on his desire to stay in Hollywood and the practical ways to do so (“I wanted the job; I wanted the dough”).

The best way to really survive in Hollywood for a handsome man like Gillis is to sell one’s self, romantically (of course, something that can lead to personal problems). Gillis is so obsessed with the practical challenge of staying in Hollywood that he ultimately
puts himself in a dangerous place as Desmond’s ‘kept man.’ As her kept man who must stay in her house to edit the script (she won’t let him take it to his apartment), his death is not far away.

Betty Schaefer, the reader who had originally disliked Gillis’s first work, tells Joe near the movie’s end that she wants to work on another of his scripts that she really likes—a script entitled *Dark Windows*. They begin to work on the script together and, eventually, fall in love. However, Betty discovers Gillis’s situation as a ‘kept man’ with Desmond. Betty confronts Gillis at Desmond’s house, demanding that he either leave Desmond or lose her. Gillis, strangely, nonsensically, chooses Desmond and tells Betty: “Look sweetie, be practical. I've got a good deal here. A long-term contract with no options. I like it that way. Maybe it’s not very admirable. Well, you and Artie [Schaefer’s former boyfriend] can be admirable.” Once more, we see how Gillis privileges the “practical and immediate situation” (238) (money) over the theoretical (morally virtuous) love.

*Sunset Boulevard*

Ironic/Satirical Fifth Phase Analogue: Tragedy Fifth Phase

**Tragedy Fifth Phase Characteristics.**
1. The heroic decreases, and there is an emphasis on simple, everyday experience, and the characters often look like very small human beings part of large, machine-like populations (221).
2. The characters are “in a state of lower freedom than the audience” (221).
3. There is the “tragedy of lost direction and lack of knowledge” (222).

Frye writes: “In the fifth phase the ironic element increases, the heroic decreases, and the characters look farther away and in a smaller perspective” (221). Once Gillis has decided that he desperately wants to survive in Hollywood, he begins to look smaller and smaller, especially because, once he has made the decision to stay in Hollywood, he has no control over his fate. Gillis is much like a chess piece on a chessboard. As Frye writes, “[t]he ironic perspective in tragedy is attained by putting the characters in a state
of lower freedom than the audience” (221). This is literally the case for Gillis, who begins the movie dead in a swimming pool.

Frye writes: “The tragic action of the fifth phase presents for the most part the tragedy of lost direction and lack of knowledge” (222). Obviously, Gillis is so focused on staying in Hollywood that he has lost the proper direction in life. At one point, he even tells Betty that he no longer wants to be a writer in Hollywood. He has even lost sight of why he wanted to be in Hollywood in the first place (to write). But yet again he changes his mind. Only a few days later, he is working on a script with Betty again, revealing his confusion, his “lost direction.” Also, although even Gillis sees that Desmond is mad, he chooses to ignore it, and this pretended ‘lack of knowledge’ actually leads to his death.

Further, as Frye writes of Tragedy Fifth Phase, “[A]ll tragedies and tragic episodes … seem to raise metaphysical or theological questions rather than social or moral ones” (222). The essential question of Sunset Boulevard is the question of reality (which metaphysics and, sometimes, epistemology studies). Both Desmond and Gillis construct their own false realities around themselves (Gillis compares Desmond to a sleepwalker when his dreams of becoming a famous scriptwriter in Hollywood also seem to resemble sleepwalking). Both want to be respected in Hollywood, and these false realities ultimately lead to their destruction.

![Figure 43: Irony/Satire and Tragedy Sixth Phase](image)

*Figure 43: Irony/Satire and Tragedy Sixth Phase*
Silence of the Lambs (1991) Irony/Satire Sixth Phase

Irony/Satire Sixth Phase Characteristics.


2. The assumption made is that the ruling class takes sadistic pleasure in torturing people indefinitely, “which is precisely the assumption one has to make about devils in order to accept the orthodox picture of hell” (238).

Silence of the Lambs\textsuperscript{14} (1991) fits all the characteristics of Irony/Satire Sixth Phase. It is the story of Hannibal Lector (Anthony Hopkins), a serial murderer who has been caught and jailed. The police covet Lector’s cooperation in helping them find other serial murderers, because Lector has an especially well-developed and unique psychological profile, which may provide insights into the psychological profile of other serial murderers. One such serial murderer, Buffalo Bill (Ted Levine), has captured an American senator’s daughter, Catherine Martin (Brooke Smith), so the police are especially desperate to find Buffalo Bill. An intelligence agent in training, Clarice Starling (Jody Foster) is assigned to attempt to reach Lector, who has refused to cooperate, again.

Because Lector, apparently, thinks Starling is attractive (and also an interesting psychological case study herself), he agrees to cooperate, providing that he be given more freedom and better access to books. However, he uses this greater freedom to escape from his cell, after giving Starling enough information to capture Buffalo Bill (whom Lector had known personally) himself. The movie ends with Buffalo Bill dead (shot by Starling), the Senator’s daughter saved, but Hannibal Lector is free.

Frye writes that this phase is where human life is presented "in terms of largely unrelieved bondage. Its settings feature prisons, madhouses, lynching mobs, and places of execution, and it differs from a pure inferno mainly in the fact that in human

\textsuperscript{14} The movie’s title The Silence of the Lambs refers to a childhood experience in which Clarice, as a young child, heard lambs screaming as they were about to be slaughtered for meat in her hometown. She tried to pick one up and save it by walking away with it, but, after a few miles, she was stopped by a police officer and taken home. This story is the metaphor for why Clarice has gone into law enforcement, so that she can save more lambs. Ironically, when Lector escapes from his prison, he orders a meal of lamb chops (as he makes a point of telling Clarice). The world is full of sacrificial lambs for Lector and Buffalo Bill. The sacrificial lambs are screaming (Catherine Martin (Brooke Smith), for example), and Clarice wants to save them.
experience suffering has an end in death" (238). These settings include Lector’s prison and Buffalo Bill’s basement den, in which he has dug a huge pit to keep his victims. The bondage, however, is more than that in which Hannibal is in. The characters, obviously, are also in bondage to the terror of the cleverness of those like Hannibal and Buffalo Bill.

Frye writes: “The assumption is made in this story that the lust for sadistic power on the part of the ruling class is strong enough to last indefinitely, which is precisely the assumption one has to make about devils in order to accept the orthodox picture of hell” (238). Of course, the only safe assumption around Hannibal Lector is that he is continuously plotting to kill somebody (in a horrible, cannibalistic way) at the first possible chance. Lector, after all, has eaten out a nurse’s tongue when security became too careless (as Lector’s psychiatrist Dr. Chilton reminds Starling—more on this later), and when, in the movie, he is given more freedom in his confinement, he escapes. The minute one begins to trust Hannibal Lector and begins to forget his unmitigated evil, one becomes even less safe around him than one was before.

“The human figures of this phase are, of course, desdichado [mad, miserable] figures of misery or madness, often parodies of romantic roles” (238). Besides the fact that he has killed so many people, Hannibal Lector could be a charismatic romantic hero. For instance, at one point when Lector is speaking with Senator Martin (Diane Baker), after saying horrible things about her daughter (and giving information about Buffalo Bill) in a terribly quick, crisp tone, Lector says one more thing: “Senator, just one more thing … love your suit.” The statement is humorous, although, of course, Senator Martin doesn’t see it that way. It is part of Lector’s romantic, strange attraction. He is an intelligent, funny, charming man, but he is also a serial killer.

Like a romantic hero, at one point Lector tells Clarice “your problem is you need to get more fun out of life.” In another example, when Clarice first hears that Lector has escaped from his Memphis prison, she tells her informant: “he won’t come after me ….” After Clarice’s informant expresses skepticism about Clarice’s matter-of-fact statement, she responds: “He won’t. I can’t explain it. He—he would consider that rude.” Like a romantic hero, Lector has strange code of honor, which doesn’t always make sense but is nevertheless there. Karen Mann, for instance, goes so far as to claim Lector is something
of a "father figure … for Clarice" (595), despite the fact that he's a serial murderer. That seems exactly how Lector would like to be portrayed.

_Silence of the Lambs_ Irony/Satire Sixth Phase Analogue: Tragedy Sixth Phase

Tragedy Sixth Phase Characteristics.

1. “[A] world of shock and horror” which “shocks as a whole” (222) and is characterized by _sparagmos_ or the tearing apart of flesh (222).

2. The hero usually has the characteristics of a villainous hero, because the dire situation makes him a little Machiavellian (222).

3. There is a demonic epiphany of complete and utter hell (223).

_Silence of the Lambs_ fits all three aspects of Tragedy Sixth Phase. Frye writes that “_Oedipus Tyrannus_, however, is already moving into the sixth phase of tragedy, a world of shock and horror in which the central images are images of _sparagmos_, that is, cannibalism, mutilation, and torture. The specific reaction known as shock is appropriate to a situation of cruelty or outrage” (222). Buffalo Bill is a serial killer who takes off some of the skin from his victims in order to make a special coat. This is _sparagmos_ specifically, which in Greek means “tearing” (“Sparagmos” def. 1). The word was often used in the classical world to refer to the tearing of flesh (in Euripides’ _The Bacchae_, for instance). As Clarice learns, Buffalo Bill is tearing off the skins of his victims so that he can make his own suit, made completely from human flesh.

“Any tragedy may have one or more shocking scenes in it, but sixth phase tragedy shocks as a whole, in its total effect” (222). The first scene (of many scenes) in which we are truly shocked is when Dr. Chilton, Hannibal Lector’s research psychiatrist, tells Clarice that Hannibal has mistreated a young woman (almost in Clarice’s exact position) before and, therefore, she must be utterly careful in dealing with him:

On the afternoon of July 8, 1981, he complained of chest pains and was taken to the dispensary. His mouthpiece and restraints were removed for an EKG. When
the nurse leaned over him, he did this to her . . . .[Chilton holds up a photo apparently showing the face of a mutilated woman.] The doctors managed to re-set her jaw more or less, and save one of her eyes. His pulse never got above eighty-five, even when he ate her tongue.

It would seem somewhat difficult, after this, to shock the audience even more than they have been shocked here (even when we don’t see the picture), but the movie continually shocks in even greater and greater amounts. Hector’s mangling of the nurse’s face seems a little tame after, later in the movie, one of the police officers guarding Lector in Memphis is killed, eviscerated and then hung up in the cage in a spread-eagle position.

Frye writes:

In such tragedies the hero is in too great agony or humiliation to gain the privilege of a heroic pose, hence it is usually easier to make him a villainous hero, like Marlowe’s Barabas, although Faustus also belongs to the same phase. Seneca is fond of this phase, and bequeathed to the Elizabethans an interest in the gruesome, an effect which usually has some connection with mutilation (222). There is something strangely attractive about Lector, specifically his intelligence, self-assuredness and calmness. His sense of humor, smooth manner, excellent education, and openness would be admired in most other occupations—besides that of a serial murderer.

Other Movies Examined and Categorized According to Frye's Phases
Figure 44: Irony/Satire and Tragedy Fifth Phase

*Blade Runner (1982)* Irony/Satire Fifth Phase

**Irony/Satire Fifth Phase Characteristics.**

1. Emphasis is on ineluctable fate or fortune. Everything important has already happened or is set unavoidably to happen (237).
2. Thus an emphasis on stoicism (237).
3. The practical situation is more important “than the theoretical explanation of it” (238).

The movie *Blade Runner* is set in the year 2019 in Los Angeles, California, in a world where clouds of pollution obscure the sun and where colonization to other planets is encouraged, because earth’s conditions have deteriorated so much (interestingly Scott designed Los Angeles' cityscape in the film to mirror Hong Kong (Chevrier 52), because Scott saw and sees Eastern, Chinese style dictatorship "as conforming to the Orwellian model" (Chevrier 52)). A brilliant scientist named Tyrell (Joe Turkel) has founded the Tyrell Corporation, which has produced a group of human-like androids called replicants to basically be slaves for the human race. However, the most advanced replicants have been given a life-span of only four years, to keep them from developing human-like qualities (although all have some sort of memory implanted into them) and overcoming
their human creators. As Bryant (M. Emmet Walsh)—in charge of police who exterminate replicants (given the name Blade Runners)—says about replicants: “They were designed to copy human beings in every way except their emotions. The designers reckoned that after a few years, they might develop their own emotional responses. You know, hate, love, fear, anger, envy. So they built in a fail-safe device … Four year life span.” After a violent revolt at an off-world colony of replicants, replicants were outlawed on earth. The law declared that any replicant found on earth would be immediately shot. Special police units, Blade Runner units, were charged with eliminating replicants on sight.

At the film’s beginning, six of these replicants have revolted in an off-world colony, and four have actually been able to make it to earth, where they hope to find Tyrell so that he can reprogram them for longer lives before their time runs out. Rick Deckard (Harrison Ford) has retired from his position as a Blade Runner, stating that he has had "a bellyful of killing," because, as Joseph Slade notes, "in 'retiring' replicants he functions as a machine" (13). However, as the best Blade Runner, he is asked by Bryant to return to the job, because of the four outlawed replicants.

While on the job, Deckard begins to fall in love with replicant Rachael (Sean Young) (at the Tyrell Corporation), a specimen of a special brand of replicant meant to be even “more human than human.” Their romance, almost grotesquely, continues as Deckard hunts down replicant after replicant. One, Zhora (Joanna Cassidy), is killed by Deckard on the street after he finds her at a dance club. The next, Leon, almost kills Deckard (in revenge for Zhora’s death), but Deckard is saved by Rachael (who has absconded from the Tyrell Corporation) when she shoots Leon in the head. The remaining replicants, Pris (Darryl Hannah) and Roy Batty (Rutger Hauer), however, have found a Tyrell Corporation employee, J.F. Sebastian (William Sanderson) who is able to get them into Tyrell’s lair. Batty confronts Tyrell and then kills him after Tyrell maintains that he can’t change Batty’s (or Pris’s) programming. Batty also kills Sebastian, as Slade notes: "the latter offstage, presumably because depicting the murder of so gentle a man would detract from audience sympathy with the rebels" (16).

15 As Susan Doll and Greg Faller point out, “scientific technology may be destructive and dangerous, because of the possibility that machines will replace or control natural life” (94).
Deckard, meanwhile, finds his way to Sebastian’s home after Tyrell and Sebastian’s bodies are discovered. There, Deckard shoots and kills Pris. Batty, finding Pris’s body and Deckard in Sebastian’s house, tortures Deckard, breaking two of Deckard’s fingers. Eventually, in a chase scene, Deckard almost falls off the rooftop of Sebastian’s house. However, just before Batty dies (having, apparently at that second, exactly lived out his four programmed years) Batty mysteriously saves Deckard, perhaps in a final moment of empathy for a human being who is also destined to die (although perhaps only a little later).

The movie has various endings. In one ending, Deckard and Rachael fly away together into the unpolluted countryside, safe. In another, almost inexplicably, a unicorn runs through a forest across the screen (as Timothy Dirks notes, this is probably a hint that Deckard is a replicant, because the unicorn is a false memory for Deckard (p. 4 par. 21); all replicants’ memories have been gleaned from a human one; Deckard's memories have apparently been gleaned from another human Blade Runner unit, Gaff (Edward James Olmos), who, as a sort of human boss for Deckard, lurking in the shadows, strangely plants all kinds of origami around Deckard, including an origami of a unicorn which is probably from his own imagination and therefore Deckard's). The final scene common to all the endings is where Deckard comes back to pick up Rachael. As he is leaving, we hear Gaff say “She won’t live, but then again who does?” The meaning is that, like Rachael, all of us are replicants, in that we all have only a short time to live (regardless of the length, it is not long enough). As Vernon Shetley and Alissa Ferguson write: "in Blade Runner humanity is defined by transience, and the shared recognition that acknowledging that transience produces" (73).

For example, in one earlier scene, Leon is beating up Deckard and is about to kill him. Leon’s entire point is that he wants Deckard to feel like a replicant feels (with his short life span). He tells Deckard: “Nothing is worse than having an itch you can never scratch [a reference to Leon’s desire to live as long as humans].” Deckard states—almost as if he is surprised at how he can identify with Leon: “Oh, I agree.” The point is clear. Human beings have much more in common with replicants than they have differences.

\[16\] Amazingly, we learn that Deckard was told by Tyrell that Rachael has an unknown termination date that is much longer than other replicants.
As Deckard states about Batty near the end: “All he'd wanted were the same answers the rest of us want. Where did I come from? Where am I going? How long have I got?”

In the fifth phase, "... the main emphasis is on the natural cycle, the steady unbroken turning of the wheel of fate or fortune" (237). The replicants will die in a certain period of time of four years, and that is fate. Indeed, the idea that we cannot escape fate really seems to be everywhere in the movie's sinister atmosphere. There is the sense "that the practical and immediate situation is likely to be worthy of more respect than the theoretical explanation of it" (237), which is exactly the replicants' viewpoint. The most important question Bratty broaches with Tyrell is how to stop his impending death. Anything else (even if it is important) is relatively unimportant until his life can be extended.

Interestingly, Ridley Scott in a July 2000 interview ("Trivia for Blade Runner") stated publicly what many have guessed all along—that Deckard is actually a replicant.17 Indeed, one of the ways in which Bryant convinces Deckard to return to the Blade Runner unit is that he tells him: “You know the score, pal. If you’re not cop you’re little people.” Deckard interprets this to mean that he has ‘no choice’ (his interior monologue tells us that he’d ‘rather be a killer than a victim’). The best explanation (which, of course, is Scott’s statement) is that Deckard is a replicant and that both Bryant and he know it. If Deckard will not try to track down illegal replicants on earth, he will become an illegal replicant on earth, and this is why he realizes he must accept the assignment. If Deckard were a human being, this conversation would make little sense, because, if he were a human being, Deckard would certainly have plenty of ‘choices’ even if he refused the assignment.18

Frye writes: "In the fifth phase the ironic element increases, the heroic decreases, and the characters look further away and in a smaller perspective" (221). Deckard is an anti-hero. He makes his living by killing replicants who are simply trying to survive, much like human beings are. It is difficult to see Deckard as a hero for killing human-like

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17 But, once again, the point of Blade Runner is that there's not much difference between replicants and humans anyway (only a different life span).

18 Interestingly, later, when Rachael asks Deckard if he had ever taken the Voight-Kampf test (to see if he is replicant), he doesn’t answer her and promptly falls asleep.
replicants, even though he's played by Harrison Ford (who often played the hero early in his career in movies like *Star Wars* and *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark*).

In *Blade Runner*, all human beings have been much too corrupted by their ideology of being better than replicants. Even the replicants are corrupted by their desire to live longer than they are programmed to live (this leads them to kill other people). Batty (the replicant leader) does save Deckard at the end selflessly, but he is not really a hero either, since he has killed a rather innocent J.F. Sebastian only a few hours earlier (and many others before that). The movie portrays people who are a society of villains, because their society has made them that way. As W. Russel Gray argues, *Blade Runner* emphasizes:

> the moral emptiness of a society that condones the creation of artificial human beings uncomfortably like humans, but with a technologically predestined life span and no provision for such side effects as human-like desires for longevity and continued association with acquired comrades. And which then enslaves them.

(73)

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**Blade Runner Irony/Satire Fifth Phase Analogue: Tragedy Fifth Phase**

**Tragedy Fifth Phase Characteristics.**

1. The heroic decreases, and there is an emphasis on simple, everyday experience, and the characters often look like very small human beings part of large, machine-like populations (221).

2. The characters are “in a state of lower freedom than the audience” (221).

3. There is the “tragedy of lost direction and lack of knowledge” (222).

*Blade Runner* fits all three characteristics of Irony/Satire Fifth Phase. Frye writes: "In the fifth phase the ironic element increases, the heroic decreases, and the characters look further away and in a smaller perspective” (221). In *Blade Runner’s* world, all the
characters are small, especially because there are so many of them fighting to stay alive in Los Angeles. Characters like the replicants are unimportant next to the humans, and the humans are only a longer-living type of replicant. The movie’s emphasis is on human beings’ limitations (“how small they are”), namely in that they die, as opposed to a more optimistic treatment of the human race’s possibilities.

Frye writes: “The ironic perspective in tragedy is attained by putting the characters in a state of lower freedom than the audience” (221). The replicants are in such a state. First, of course, they are slaves. Secondly, the human beings watching the film in 1982 can expect to live a total of seventy or, perhaps, eighty years usually, or at least close to that. The replicants only live four years at the most, some less than that.

Frye writes: “The tragic action of the fifth phase presents for the most part the tragedy of lost direction and lack of knowledge, not unlike the second phase except that the context is the world of adult experience” (222). Essentially, the quandary of replicants is their four-year life span (and, to a lesser extent, humans with the same problem at the end of a relatively longer life span). The replicants are trying to find ways to extend their life, and, in that sense, they have ‘lost direction.’ They don’t know exactly who to try to convince to extend their lives, although when Batty finally is able to meet Tyrell face-to-face, Tyrell can’t help him.

![Figure 45: Irony/Satire and Tragedy Fourth Phase](image-url)
Monsieur Verdoux (1947) Irony/Satire Fourth Phase

Irony/Satire Fourth Phase Characteristics.

1. “The fall of the tragic hero … is so delicately balanced emotionally that we almost exaggerate any one element in it merely by calling attention to it” (236).
2. The emphasis is on the everyday aspects of a human being, not their heroism (237).
3. Much of the suffering portrayed is seen as avoidable (237).

Monsieur Verdoux fits all three characteristics of Irony/Satire Fourth Phase. Monsieur Verdoux is the story of an unemployed bank-clerk, Henri Verdoux (Charles Chaplin), during the Great Depression, who becomes an antiseptic and methodical killer of women for their money.\textsuperscript{19} The movie reveals that Verdoux does this to support a wife and child. Verdoux kills a certain Detective Moreau (Charles Evans), who has shadowed him all over the country and catalogued his various murders. However, Verdoux loses all his money in stock devaluation during the 1930s and, in his poverty, his wife and child die. Verdoux wanders the streets without a home. Eventually, a relative of one of Verdoux’s murder victims recognizes him, and the police capture Verdoux, who is then tried and executed for his murders.

The movie opens at Monsieur Verdoux’s gravestone. We hear his voice-over: “For thirty years, I was an honest-paying clerk until the Depression of 1930 in which year I found myself unemployed. It was then I became occupied in liquidating members of the opposite sex. This I did as a strictly business enterprise, to support a home and family.” Importantly, Verdoux is portrayed as a serial murderer, the movie would have us believe, because he did not have much choice in the matter, and so the movie emphasizes the environment’s role in shaping human beings. Verdoux simply does what is required of him. He has to provide for a family and, to him, the vocation of a serial murderer and robber is the best possible vocation for the task.

The opening monologue’s antiseptic language is especially important. Instead of chuckling evilly like some serial murderers (like Buffalo Bill or Hannibal Lector in

\textsuperscript{19} Interestingly, Charles Maland notes that Chaplin's work on Verdoux in 1942 coincides with his relationship with the neurotic Joan Barry, who at one point threatened Chaplin with a gun. Maland believes the "film's hostility toward women is related" to this relationship (47).
Silence of the Lambs), Verdoux states very formally: “It was then I became occupied in liquidating members of the opposite sex.” It is as if he is describing his previous job as a banker instead of describing himself as a serial murderer. Most portrayals of serial murderers, of course, emphasize the insanity and evil of such people. However, in this phase, Frye writes “[s]uch tragic irony differs from satire in that there is no attempt to make fun of the character, but only to bring out clearly the ‘all too human,’ as distinct from the heroic, aspects of the tragedy” (237).

Frye writes: “One of these elements is the elegiac aspect in which irony is at a minimum, the sense of gentle and dignified pathos” (236). Pathos, of course, denotes emotion felt in pity for someone or something (“pathos”). As mentioned before, Verdoux has (pitiably) lost his bank job after many years with the bank. As Verdoux tells his wife: “These are desperate days, my dear. Millions starving and unemployed. It’s not an easy task for a man of my age to make a living.” We are meant to think we would be Verdoux if we were in his situation. As Gerald Mast writes in Comic Mind, Verdoux "is indeed kind, polite, and refined. He simply must murder to survive and support his wife and child" (118).

Frye explains that: “The fall of the tragic hero, especially in Shakespeare, is so delicately balanced emotionally that we almost exaggerate any one element in it merely by calling attention to it” (236). After his murder of a certain Lydia Floray (Margaret Hoffman) and the stealing of her seventy thousand francs (Verdoux wires it to his stockbroker), the movie cuts to a shot of a blonde-haired young boy looking off-screen left. We go from a woman’s murder to a shot of the serial murderer’s son. We then see Verdoux walking through a fence gate, and he is met by this boy, Peter (Allison Rodan), who cries out: “Daddy” and waves. The music swells and finally crescendos when Verdoux lifts up Peter.

Then, Verdoux walks with Peter, holding his hand, to see Mona (Mady Correll), Verdoux’s wife, who is confined to a wheelchair as a result of polio. The camera emphasizes Mona’s legs\(^\text{20}\) and, later, Verdoux says: “You and Peter: all that I love on this earth.” Again, the music begins to swell, and there is not any sarcasm or deception in

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\(^{20}\) As Charles Maland writes: “Partly to soften our attitude to Verdoux himself, his wife is crippled, wearing braces on both legs, and always sitting in a wheelchair” (54).
Verdoux’s very serious, sad manner. The movie obviously means for us to believe that Verdoux truly loves his wife and son, and so this explains and even perhaps excuses his murders. As Charles Maland writes: “Verdoux uses his family as the end to justify his murders” (54). As Verdoux says (in response to Mona’s statement that at least he has a job): “If I lose one [job], I can always find another.”

The most important scene in Monsieur Verdoux is Verdoux’s conversation with an obviously starving young woman, called only The Girl (Marilyn Nash), whom Verdoux has met on the street and has invited into dinner. Verdoux’s original intention with the Girl was to experiment on her with a poison (C2 H C) he has learned about from a pharmacist friend, Maurice Bottello (Robert Lewis) (according to Bottello, C2 H C kills by causing something much like a simple heart attack, and there are no traces of the poison left anywhere in the body). To test this, Verdoux places the poison in The Girl’s wine.

However, Verdoux and The Girl happen to begin talking about love. Verdoux learns that The Girl’s former husband had died. The Girl states: “He was wounded in the war, a hopeless invalid.” Verdoux jumps at the word, responding: “An invalid?” He too cares for an invalid, his wife (Maland notes how The Girl is meant be a “parallel to Verdoux” (55)). The Girl further says about her husband: “He needed me, depended on me. He was like a child. But he was more than a child to me. He was a religion—my very breath. I’d have killed for him” (like Verdoux is killing for his wife and child). Almost immediately after, when The Girl reaches for her glass of (poisoned) wine, Verdoux stops her and says: “Pardon me, I think there is a little cork in that wine. Let me get you another glass.” Verdoux replaces the poisoned wine with fresh, unpoisoned wine.

Frye writes that Irony/Satire Fourth Phase “makes as much as possible of human misery seem, in Thoreau’s phrase, ‘superfluous and evitable.’” (237). Verdoux seems to see another human being formed by exactly the same poverty-stricken environment that formed him, and he feels sympathy for her. Her statement that she could have killed for her husband shows how something like the Depression can make people exactly like Verdoux. At their meeting’s end, Verdoux gives her an apparently large sum of francs,
and the Girl begins to cry, finally saying: “I was beginning to lose faith in everything, and then this happens, and you want to believe all over again.”

The audience is meant to think that Verdoux, through his kindness and with just a few francs, has averted another hunger-crazed, desperate human being from becoming a murderer like himself. So Verdoux’s serial, homicidal behavior is explained as resulting from the Great Depression (he never had somebody to help him with a few francs). Supposedly, Verdoux’s behavior was "evitable" (237) if only society had cared a little more about people like him.

The death of Verdoux’s wife and children, after his stock market portfolio has been wiped out by another stock market crash (apparently after the original one in 1929), show how criminal the world is. While Verdoux killed women illegally, it is legal for the circumstances of society to lead to the death of Verdoux’s wife and children. That is seldom punished. “As a phase of irony in its own right, the fourth phase looks at tragedy from below, from the moral and realistic perspective of the state of experience” (Frye 237). That is, Verdoux’s wife and child find themselves at the lowest rung of the social ladder, and their tragedy is seen “from below.”

Some years later, we find that The Girl has become the kept mistress of a “munitions manufacturer,” who, of course, is destined to become even more wealthy with the advent of World War II several years later. Verdoux comments that munitions manufacturing is the business he should have been in (instead of murdering women and stealing their money). The movie’s implication, however, is that the two businesses (so to speak), ammunition manufacturing and Verdoux’s serial murder and robbery, are not that much different. Indeed, the Girl talks about how her munitions manufacturer is quite “ruthless in business,” and her use of the word is certainly meant to remind us of Verdoux’s “business.”

Verdoux, in his defense before the jury, points this out:

As for being a mass killer, does not the world encourage it? Is it not building weapons of destruction for the sole purpose of mass killing? Has it not blown unsuspecting women and little children to pieces and done it very scientifically? Heh. As a mass killer, I am an amateur by comparison.
Monsieur Verdoux Irony/Satire Fourth Phase Analogue: Tragedy Fourth Phase

Tragedy Fourth Phase Characteristics.

1. The hero falls “through hybris and hamartia” (221) and crosses the line of innocence into experience.

Of course, the truth is that Verdoux, despite being a product of the Great Depression, still chooses to murder women and steal their money as an occupation. No matter how much starvation there is, that doesn’t justify killing numerous women. At one point, he could have been like The Girl, innocent and also misused by the people around him—yet choosing to remain innocent. But instead Verdoux chooses to live a life of murder.

Indeed, Verdoux’s most glaring weakness is his arrogance about his own high intelligence. He begins his last statement to the court by saying: “However remiss the prosecutor has been in complimenting me, he at least admits that I have brains. Thank you, Monsieur, I have.” He obsesses on his own intelligence. Further, he is a serial murderer who, in his last speech of the trial, emphasizes society’s problems without expressing remorse for his own. By the movie’s end, he even seems to be refusing to believe in sin (specifically, his own) at all. Of course, refusing to examine one’s faults is an excellent example of hubris. One of Verdoux’s last statements to a confessing priest is: “who knows what sin is, born as it was from heaven, from God’s fallen angel?” Verdoux seems to use this question as an excuse not to examine his own errors.
Figure 46: Irony/Satire and Comedy First Phase

Murder, My Sweet (1944) Irony/Satire First Phase

Ironic/Satire First Phase Characteristics.

1. No displacement in the story of myth of the humorous (capricious, whimsical, natural) society (226).
2. One feels very close to the demonic and nightmarish (226).
3. A world full of crime and injustice is ‘taken for granted’ (226).
4. To stay alive, one must observe more and say less (226).
5. The emphasis is on pragmatism (226).

Murder, My Sweet fits all seven characteristics of Irony/Satire First Phase. Perhaps one of the most complex Films Noirs ever made (which is saying quite a bit), it also seems to be one of the most underrated Films Noirs, perhaps because of its mind-boggling complexity.\footnote{Such complexity probably didn’t play well in theatres where one couldn’t rewind the tape over and over again to understand the breathlessly fast dénouement where Marlowe exposits all the movie’s crimes, as one is able to do with a videotape. One probably had to see the film many times in the theatre to begin to understand it, and even then … This perhaps explains why the film was not as popular as it otherwise deserved.} It is a Phillip Marlowe story and begins with the Los Angeles police interrogating Marlowe (Dick Powell), whose eyes are mysteriously bandaged, so
that he can’t see. The police want Marlowe to talk about some recent murders they don’t understand which Marlowe was mixed up in. Detective Nulty (Paul Phillips) says: “Now look, Marlowe, we’re arraigning you. It ain’t personal; we don’t like you, but it ain’t personal. We just got a certain routine to follow ....” After a while, Marlowe begins telling his story, and the movie’s narrative begins.

A recently released ex-convict, Moose Malloy (Mike Mazurki), has hired Marlowe to find a former girlfriend named Velma Valento, who Moose hasn’t seen since he was thrown in jail eight years ago. Moose takes Marlowe to the bar where he last saw Velma as a dancer. From there, Marlowe, on his own, interviews the former wife of the deceased bar owner Mike Florian, Jesse Florian (Esther Howard). Mike Florian had owned the bar where Velma worked. Jesse Florian, drunk, claims not to have heard of Velma, but then Marlowe, snooping in her bedroom behind her back, finds a picture of Velma that Jesse has hidden from him. Jesse—who finds Marlowe snooping and sees that he has found the picture—claims that Velma is dead and that she doesn’t know who Moose is, and Marlowe is asked (loudly) to leave.

However, a few seconds later, when Marlowe looks back into Jesse Florian’s window, he notices she no longer seems drunk and that she is using and talking on the telephone with a very steady hand and body, like “somebody making funeral arrangements for a murder, not yet committed.” Back at his office, Marlowe meets another prospective client, Lindsay Marriott (Douglas Walton), who wants Marlowe to ride with him as protection to a deserted forest area, where Marriott will exchange an unstated amount of money for a jade necklace stolen from a friend of his. Marlowe agrees.

While waiting at the car, Marlowe is knocked out and wakes up to find Marriott dead, his head smashed in with a truncheon. Marlowe later discovers that the jade necklace belonged to a certain Mrs. Helen Grayle (Claire Trevor). He learns this through Mrs. Grayle’s stepdaughter Anne Grayle (Ann Shirley), who visits him the day after he is murdered. Eventually, Ann Grayle mysteriously warns Marlowe that he will be manipulated by Mrs. Grayle, although she has no specifics for him.

As Frank Krutnik notes, the Film Noir hero “is often in a marked situation of impairment, powerlessness or predicament” (128) in many Films Noirs openings.
Marlowe has met Mrs. Grayle and her husband (Miles Mander), a wealthy, old, doddering jade collector. Later, Marlowe is invited for a drink by Mrs. Grayle to the Cocoanut Beach Club. There, Marlowe happens to meet Moose Malloy again. Malloy forcefully takes Marlowe to meet Mrs. Grayle’s psychologist, Jules Amthor (Otto Kruger). There, at gunpoint, Marlowe is asked whether he has the jade necklace and, of course, he doesn’t. He is knocked out by Amthor and taken to an unknown room where he is drugged with truth drugs. After several hazy days, he finally escapes. However, a few seconds later, on the street, he coincidentally meets (whom he now realizes to be) Amthor’s henchman, Moose. Amthor has been telling Moose that Marlowe can lead Moose to Velma. Importantly, Marlowe finally convinces Moose that Amthor is lying, and Moose leaves Marlowe hurriedly, apparently to confront Amthor.

In an interview with Mr. Grayle, Marlowe learns that Helen Grayle has been missing for hours. He finally is given directions to her husband’s beach house, where Marlowe and Anne find her. A little later, Marlowe finally realizes intuitively (with help from the picture he had taken from Mrs. Florian) that Mrs. Helen Grayle is Velma Valento. He tells Moose to meet him at the Grayle beach house to talk with Velma (Helen) the next day. That night, in paying a visit to Amthor, Marlowe finds that Amthor has been murdered, snapped like a pretty woman might snap a “celery stick,” in a way that Marlowe is sure only Moose could do (Moose has punished Amthor for lying to Moose about Velma).

At the beach house, Marlowe instructs Moose to wait outside for his signal while he talks to Helen Grayle—Velma Valento. In the beach house confrontation, the whole plot becomes clear, partly through what Marlowe reveals he has learned (although it is not always clear how he has learned it) and partly through what Helen confesses. Helen has always used men to get what she wants: money, revenge, whatever. Eight years ago, as Velma Valento, she had used Moose’s love for her to make him commit a horrible act which is never identified (“was it murder or something serious?” Marlowe asks her without receiving an answer). Whatever the crime, Moose had been thrown in jail for it.

Later, Velma had married the doddering Mr. Grayle. However, she still needed the love of virile men, and Mr. Grayle couldn’t satisfy that need often enough. She had gone to psychologist Jules Amthor for help. He put her into contact with the gigolo Marriott.
However, Amthor had learned, apparently through psychoanalysis, of what unnamable thing Helen Grayle, as Velma, had led Moose to do. Amthor, Marriott and, to a lesser extent, Jessie Florian began to require and receive blackmail payments from Helen in exchange for keeping silent.

This is why Moose’s reappearance and his hiring of Marlowe to find Velma had created such a stir. All three were afraid that Moose would reveal Velma’s role in his crime or that Marlowe would discover it, which he does (although, maddeningly, the movie never tells us how), and tell the police. This would end the blackmail possibilities for all three.

Lastly, we learn that Helen had been blackmailed for a jade necklace of her husband (worth $100,000). In order to keep the necklace from her blackmailers, she pretended to have had it stolen. She then told Marriott that the thieves have contacted her to exchange the necklace for a sum of money much smaller than its worth ($8,000). She suggested that he hire Marlowe (whom the three blackmailers want to kill, because he is finding out too much about Velma’s past and so might stop their blackmailing possibilities) as protection to go and exchange it in a lonely spot in a forest with the robbers. Marriott agrees, since he wants the jade necklace and hopes to kill Marlowe. Of course, there are no robbers and Helen has set up both Marriott and Marlowe to kill them. Marriott is killed, but Marlowe, with his hard head (as he puts it), survives Helen’s blow to his head and is only knocked out.

In the denouement, Ann Grayle is revealed to have been listening at the door (something she has done at various doors throughout the movie) with her father. Both enter the room and watch while Helen holds Marlowe at gunpoint. Mr. Grayle then takes away Marlowe’s gun. Helen states that she is going to shoot Marlowe right there, but just before she does Mr. Grayle shoots her to save Marlowe (even if he is shooting his wife). Hearing the shot, Moose rushes into the beach house, where he sees Velma (Helen) shot dead. Upset that Mr. Grayle has shot Velma, Moose impulsively attacks Mr. Grayle. Moose is shot twice, and the sting of the gunpowder from the shots blinds Marlowe’s eyes, and he is knocked out.

23 The censors following the Hayes Code seemed to have played a part here.
So Marlowe’s narration of the story ends, and Marlowe asks the detective Lieutenant Randall (Don Douglas) what happened after Marlowe’s eyes were blinded. He is told that Moose, just before he died from his two gunshot wounds, wrested the gun from Mr. Grayle and shot him once, killing him. Marlowe quickly asks: “The kid’s okay then?”—meaning Ann Grayle. Then the camera pans to a corner of the interrogation room, where we see that Ann Grayle has been listening all along, in order to back up Marlowe’s story (and for Marlowe to back up hers). Both are now to be freed, and so the movie ends.

Frye writes that the “first phase corresponds to the first phase of ironic comedy in which there is no displacement of the humorous society” (226). Helen Grayle represents the humorous [whimsical, natural] society. She is a lustful woman (of course, such women can often be described as whimsical and natural; Helen says about sex: “remembering does something to my stomach”). This exposes her to all kinds of trouble, because she visits the quack psychologist Amthor, who eventually discovers her criminal past. After this, she can only work her way out of the mess by killing three people, a task, of course, fraught with difficulty.

She is willing to do it, however, because, like the typical femme fatale, she only cares about herself. Again, like most Films Noirs, Murder, My Sweet reminds one that people are often not what they seem. Such cynical thinking about the people around one, that they are really only selfishly looking out for themselves, is depressing. As Frye writes, “Once we have finished with it, deserts of futility open up on all sides, and we have, in spite of the humor, a sense of nightmare and a close proximity to something demonic” (226).

This phase “takes for granted a world which is full of anomalies, injustices, follies, and crimes, and yet is permanent and undisplaceable. Its principle is that anyone who wishes to keep his balance in such a world must learn first of all to keep his eyes open and his mouth shut” (226).” Phillip Marlowe, as the quintessential private detective, fits this role perfectly. He never assumes that anybody is telling him the truth, and this allows him to find the truth much more easily. Frye writes how the “eiron … assumes that society will, if given any chance, behave more or less like Caliban’s Setebos in Browning’s poem, and he conducts himself accordingly” (226). Like a good private
detective, with Helen Grayle, he reveals that he knows she murdered Marriott and tried to murder him only after he has been able to tease out of her all the details of why she did it.

Like a typical femme fatale, Helen is able to survive because she manipulates men to do anything, even crimes, for sex with her. “This is the main reason for the predominance in fictional satire of the Omphale archetype, the man bullied or dominated by women” (228). She was able to manipulate Moose into committing the crime for which he went to jail (although she didn’t). She even tries this near the movie’s end with Marlowe, even after she admits she tried to kill Marlowe. “But I can’t go back now, when I’m so close to peace. So close. Just Amthor … but I can’t face him alone” (she doesn’t know at this point that Moose has already killed Amthor). Helen places her head on Marlowe’s shoulder. She wants him to help her kill Amthor. But he points out to her that she is attempting exactly what she had done with Moose earlier, to make a man fall for doing what she wants.

“Sorry,” he tells her, “but it won’t work twice.”

*Murder, My Sweet* Ironic/Satire First Phase Analogue: Comedy First Phase

**Comedy First Phase Characteristics.**

1. Humorous (capricious, whimsical, natural) society is undefeated or, in irony, “simply disintegrates without anything taking its place” (177).
2. The demonic is always nearby (178).
3. There is a ritual death from which the characters are barely saved by a *cognitio* (recognition) (179).

Since Helen Grayle’s whimsical society ultimately does not triumph, *Murder, My Sweet* fits the second aspect of the first characteristic of Comedy First Phase “when the humorous society simply disintegrates without anything taking its place” (178). The phase also fits the feeling of a demonic world nearby. “We notice in ironic comedy that the demonic world is never far away” (178). This demonic world, of course, is the selfish
one of Helen Grayle and all the blackmailers like Jules Amthor, Lindsay Marriott and Mrs. Jessie Florian, who seem fairly normal and decent on the outside.

Finally, Frye writes of Comedy First Phase: “We notice too how frequently a comic dramatist tries to bring his action as close to a catastrophic overthrow of the hero as he can get it, and then reverses the action as quickly as possible” (178). Helen Grayle pulls a gun on Marlowe, when she realizes that she can’t seduce him into helping her kill Amthor. She is about to shoot him, because he is the only other person besides Amthor and her husband who knows of her past. Helen gestures for Mr. Grayle to take Marlowe’s gun out of his coat. It seems like there is no one who can help Marlowe at that point. Ann doesn’t have a gun, and Mr. Grayle seems determined to support his wife. This is Marlowe’s ritual death. However, he is saved when Mr. Grayle decides that he can’t let his wife kill another man, like she has killed quite a few before, and so shoots Helen (with Marlowe’s own gun which Mr. Grayle had taken from him seconds earlier) before she can shoot Marlowe. It is difficult to imagine a quicker reversal.

![Figure 47: Irony/Satire and Comedy First Phase](image)

**Night of the Hunter** (1955) Irony/Satire First Phase

**Ironic/ Satire First Phase Characteristics.**

1. No displacement in the story of myth of the humorous (capricious, whimsical, natural) society (226).
2. One feels very close to the demonic and nightmarish (226).
3. A world full of crime and injustice is ‘taken for granted (226).’
4. To stay alive, one must observe more and say less (226).
5. The emphasis is on pragmatism (226).

*Night of the Hunter* fits all seven characteristics of Irony/Satire First Phase. It is the story of a deranged itinerant preacher and serial killer Reverend Henry Powell (Robert Mitchum) in the Ohio Valley during the Great Depression. When we first see Powell, he is driving what will later be revealed as a stolen car. A little later, while at a peep show, Powell is arrested by a police officer for the car he stole previously, and he is sentenced to thirty days in jail (although apparently stealing the car doesn’t arouse anybody’s suspicions about any of Powell’s murders).

We then cut to another scene where Ben Harper (Peter Graves) is driving wildly toward his son and daughter, John (Billy Chapin) and Pearl (Sally Jane Bruce) Harper, who are playing innocently on the family farm. Harper has been crazed by his inability to provide for his family during the Depression and so has decided to rob a bank. He has been wounded in the shoulder during the attempted robbery. Sadly, two people have been killed in the robbery, despite Harper being able to get away with some ten thousand dollars. We see him look around frantically for a place to hide the money, and he hides it in what will later be revealed to be his daughter’s doll. Harper is then taken away by the police and essentially sentenced to death by hanging.

In jail Harper and Powell share the same bunk beds. Powell, not sleeping, hears Harper talking in his sleep about the money he has stolen from the bank and how he has stashed it away. However, Powell fails in trying to wheedle Harper into revealing the money’s exact location. Harper is hanged, and Powell eventually is released and begins to set out for Harper’s old house.

In Harper’s old village, Powell ingratiates himself to some of the townspeople—specifically the couple Walt (Don Beddoe) and Icey Spoon (Evelyn Varden)—as a seemingly pious itinerant preacher. The Spoons are naively willing to believe anything and everything about Powell, although they really know nothing about him. The Spoons eventually encourage Harper’s former wife, Willa Harper (Shelley Winters) to accept his marriage suit.
However, after marrying Willa, Powell refuses to consummate the marriage on the wedding night. He has only married Willa for better access to the children, whom he tries to manipulate into telling him where their father hid the money. After Willa discovers his motives for marrying her (by overhearing his conversations with the children about the money), Powell slits her throat and puts her body in a car and pushes it into a river. He then tells the Spoons Willa has left him for another man and returns to finally force John and Pearl to reveal to him the money’s location (the doll).

However, both children escape in a skiff down river before Powell can take the doll. Pretending to the Spoons that he has taken the children on a vacation to recover from their mother’s sudden absence, Powell chases after them. He eventually finds them at the house of a certain Rachel Cooper (Lillian Gish), who runs a home for foster children. In the film’s final confrontation, Cooper shoots Powell, who is stalking her ‘children’ at her homestead, and the police arrive and carry Powell away. Powell is then hanged as a serial murderer, and the movie ends with John and Pearl beginning a new life under Rachel Cooper’s direction.

Frye writes: “The first phase corresponds to the first phase of ironic comedy in which there is no displacement of the humorous society.” (226). Frye means that the humorous [whimsical, natural] society is present throughout, that its whimsical or natural nature does not change to simply meet the mores of its contemporary audience. Displacement occurs when something about a myth is modified to fit a particular society’s conventions.

There is no displacement with Powell, who is much like the archetypal Satan figure in Paradise Lost (Jonathan Romney, for instance, notes that Powell is “Satan in the Edenic setting” (39)). In fact, much of Powell’s blatant wickedness could explain the movie’s original unpopularity with both critics and audiences. Powell blithely says in prayer to God in his opening monologue: “[T]here are things you do hate Lord: perfume-smellin' things, lacy things, things with curly hair” i.e. women. Like Satan’s opening monologue in Paradise Lost, Powell is brutally honest about what he has done, almost proud of his evil, as if it were part of his service to humanity.

Frye writes: “Once we have finished with it, deserts of futility open up on all sides, and we have, in spite of the humor, a sense of nightmare and a close proximity to something demonic” (226). Of course, watching The Night of the Hunter and observing
Powell and the way he is able to hoodwink those around him, it becomes a little more difficult to trust people generally, especially strangers. If such a shallow character can completely convince people of his piety, one wonders who in everyday 21st century American society is playing a similar game also.

Frye writes: “The satire typical of this phase may be called the satire of the low norm. It takes for granted a world which is full of anomalies, injustices, follies, and crimes, and yet is permanent and undisplaceable. Its principle is that anyone who wishes to keep his balance in such a world must learn first of all to keep his eyes open and his mouth shut” (226). While the Spoons are completely trusting, Miss Cooper tends to assume the worst about the people around her. Miss Cooper places the burden of proof on Powell, while the Spoons place the burden of proof on everybody else but Powell. Powell tells Miss Cooper about the children: “Oh, them poor little lambs. To think I never hoped to see them again in this world. No, dear Madam, if you was to know what a crown of thorns I've borne in my search for them stray chicks.” Similar messianic language (“the crown of thorns”) had metaphorically sent the Spoons into an adoring swoon, but Miss Cooper ignores it.

*Night of the Hunter* Irony/Satire First Phase Analogue: Comedy First Phase

**Comedy First Phase Characteristics.**

1. Humorous (capricious, whimsical, natural) society is undefeated or, in irony, “simply disintegrates without anything taking its place” (177).
2. The demonic is always nearby (178).
3. There is a ritual death from which the characters are barely saved by a *cognitio* (recognition) (179).

*Night of the Hunter* fits all three characteristics of Comedy First Phase. This phase takes on the “more intense irony … when the humorous society simply disintegrates without anything taking its place, as in *Heartbreak House* and frequently in Chekhov”
Throughout the movie, Powell sings one particular song: “Leaning on the Everlasting Arms.” The song, of course, is meant to be a relaxing one (another chorus line is “safe and secure from all alarms”), and Powell whistles and sings the song in a relaxing way, whimsically, as if he is about to do laundry or work in his garden. Yet he is about to murder people. Frye writes: "We notice in ironic comedy that the demonic world is never far away" (178), and people like Powell are a perfect example.

Frye writes: “We notice too how frequently a comic dramatist tries to bring his action as close to a catastrophic overthrow of the hero as he can get it, and then reverses the action as quickly as possible” (178). At numerous times throughout the movie, John and Pearl’s death seems imminent. The only thing keeping them alive is that Powell knows they are the only ones who know where the money is. When Powell discovers the money is in the doll and when he has the doll, John and Pearl will be killed. At the very end, it is Powell against an old widow and a few helpless children (seemingly not much of a match). This seems like the catastrophic overthrow of Miss Cooper and her children, but, of course, it is Powell who is shot and carried away by the police only a few seconds later.

![Figure 48: Irony/Satire and Comedy First Phase](image)

*Figure 48: Irony/Satire and Comedy First Phase*

*The Postman Always Rings Twice (1946) Irony/Satire First Phase*
Irony/Satire First Phase Characteristics.

1. No displacement in the story of myth of the humorous (capricious, whimsical, natural) society (226).
2. One feels very close to the demonic and nightmarish (226).
3. A world full of crime and injustice is 'taken for granted' (226).
4. To stay alive, one must observe more and say less (226).
5. The emphasis is on pragmatism (226).

*The Postman Always Rings Twice* fits all five characteristics of Irony/Satire First Phase. It is the story of drifter Frank Chambers (John Garfield), who is given a job as a helper at the restaurant Twin Oaks by owner Nick Smith (Cecil Kellaway). There Frank falls in love with his boss’s wife Cora Smith (Lana Turner). At Cora’s instigation, the two begin to plan (rather whimsically) her husband’s murder.

Frye writes about Irony/Satire First Phase, “The first phase corresponds to the first phase of ironic comedy in which there is no displacement of the humorous [whimsical, natural] society” (226). Although *Postman* had to be changed superficially from the book to fit the Hollywood Hayes Code, the essentials of Frank and Cora’s highly whimsical adultery and their (ill-planned) murder plots are not changed.

Such whimsy is characteristic of Irony/Satire First Phase. From the movie’s beginning, Frank identifies himself as a capricious wanderer, who finds it difficult to stay in one place. Frank tells Nick at their first meeting, that Frank’s major problem is with his feet: “They keep itching for me to go places.” Frank convinces Cora to wander away from Twin Oaks with him. But after they have been walking for a little time, Cora rebels against the idea of leaving the Twin Oaks’ economic security. This is when they begin plotting to try to kill Nick. After the first murder attempt fails (Nick is only injured), they then resolve to never try to kill him again.

But, in seesaw fashion, only a few weeks later, they decide (again, in a whimsical way) to kill Nick when he proclaims his desire to sell the Twin Oaks and move to Canada. Frye writes: “The sense of absurdity about such a comedy arises as a kind of

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24 As before, it should be pointed out that by displacement, Frye means the situation in which the original humorous society of myth is changed to fit social mores or conventions of newer, later societies. Frye’s implication is that original myths were highly humorous (whimsical) societies, which were later restrained by later society's conventions.
backfire or recall after the work has been seen or read. Once we have finished with it, deserts of futility open up on all sides, and we have, in spite of the humor, a sense of nightmare and a close proximity to something demonic” (226). Of course, probably the most depressing aspect of The Postman Always Rings Twice is the sense that this is a demonic, selfish world. Yet, at the same time, one cannot think that such murders are never planned out (at least in the imagination). After watching The Postman Always Rings Twice—with superficial people hiding their destructive natures behind kind veneers—the world is much less of a trustworthy place. As Ellen Keneshea and Carl Macek write about the movie: “[e]vil and corruption lie just below the surface of the mundane” (231-232).

Frye also writes that there is “the predominance in fictional satire of what may be called the Omphale archetype, the man bullied or dominated by women, which has been prominent in satire all through its history” (229). Cora easily dominates both her husband Nick and her paramour Frank. As mentioned before, Frank and Cora try to leave Nick and elope, but only a few minutes after she has left, Cora decides she wants to go back to the economic security of Twin Oaks. At that point, Frank should have left her, because it’s obvious that she’s not reliable. But Frank still chases after her, because she has him completely in her grip.

A little later, Frank says: “I shoulda walked out of that place, but I couldn’t make myself do it. She had me licked and she knew it, so for a week she treated me as if I was only somebody working around the place. I nearly went out of my mind.” It is just after this that Cora is able to plant in Frank’s mind the idea that they should murder Nick, by electrocuting him while he is in the bathtub, because she has incredible control over him, fitting the Omphale archetype.

Frank and Cora make a second desperate attempt to kill Nick despite knowing that the district attorney, Kyle Sackett (Leon Ames) is on to them. This time Frank and Cora get Nick drunk and then drive off with him to a road beside steep cliffs. Frank kills Nick by smashing his head with a liquor bottle. The two then push the car over the side of the cliff with Nick in it.
Their plan is to pretend they have jumped out of the car, just after Nick ran it off the road in a drunken stupor (and was then, supposedly, killed in the ensuing crash). Unfortunately, for them, the car gets stuck before it topples over the most precipitous parts of the cliff side. In trying to push the car over the edge, Frank is trapped in the car and is badly injured as the car finally falls completely down the cliff. Cora, with her purse in her hand, tries to stop a car which is passing by. It turns out to be Sackett—who has been following Nick’s car in his own car about a mile behind—who is suspicious that Frank and Cora were trying to kill Nick.

Sackett here fits perfectly one of Frye’s Irony/Satire First Phase characteristics. Frye writes: “The satire typical of this phase may be called the satire of the low norm. It takes for granted a world which is full of anomalies, injustices, follies, and crimes, and yet is permanent and undisplaceable” (226). Sackett, as a very suspicious district attorney, always seems to be suspecting the worst (perhaps because he has seen so much of the worst). As Cora says—just after leaving the hospital after Nick’s first ‘accident’ and after both have been interrogated by Sackett—“They know something’s wrong.”

The movie frequently shows Sackett following Frank and Cora or looking suspiciously at them. Despite the fact that Nick’s electrocution could have been an accident, Sackett “takes for granted” that some crime has happened. This brings us to when Sackett happens to be following slowly a mile or so behind Frank and Cora, when Frank kills Nick and tries to send Nick’s car over the cliff with Nick in it. Sackett wishes out loud when he arrives at the scene that he had been trailing them a little closer but, otherwise, he has guessed exactly right about Frank and Cora. Sackett’s actions are those of a man who has succeeded by expecting the worst in people.

Sackett, in talking with Frank in his hospital bed, doesn’t believe Frank’s story that Cora just jumped out of the car before Nick fell to his death and Frank to his serious injuries. Sackett asks how Cora would have been able to grab her purse and jump out of a twisting car hurtling down a cliff (remember that Cora had had her purse in her hands when she flagged down Sackett). Panicked, Frank agrees to sign a complaint against Cora, because he thinks Sackett has all the evidence that he needs.

However, the defense lawyer, a certain Arthur Keats (Hume Kronyn) is able to save Frank and Cora. Keats knows that Sackett has to rely on their confessions or complaints
against each other, because Sackett probably has no hard evidence that they murdered Nick. Now that Frank has accused Cora of being the only murderer (in exchange for all charges being dropped against him), Keats knows Sackett is hoping that Cora will confess that they both planned Nick’s murder, since, otherwise, Sackett doesn’t have any hard evidence against them. Keats’s most important job, therefore, is to keep Cora from confessing to the district attorney. As Frye writes, a primary principle of Irony/Satire First Phase is “that anyone who wishes to keep his balance in such a world must learn first of all to keep his eyes open and his mouth shut” (226), and this is something Keats has to teach Cora to learn to do.

Cora, as Sackett hoped, decides to confess her and Frank’s guilt (as a way of getting back at Frank for his complaint against her). She tells Keats this, and Keats brings in (supposedly) Sackett’s stenographer for Cora’s full confession, although Keats later reveals this stenographer is really his own henchman. The complete confession is typed out. But it is then stored away in Keats’s files, and Keats explains to Cora that the man was really his own stenographer and how she has just done exactly what Sackett wanted her to do, except that Keats had saved her. From now on, Keats tells her, she must learn to keep her mouth shut (especially around anybody else besides Keats and Frank). Cora sees her mistake.

So Cora remains tight-mouthed in the courtroom. It soon becomes apparent that Sackett has no hard evidence against Frank or Cora. When Keats realizes this, he has Laura plead not guilty, and then Sackett knows he can no longer bluff that he has no hard evidence. A trial would show this. So Keats is able to get an easy plea-bargain for Cora, who is assigned to probation for manslaughter.

Keats has been able to get two murderers off by simply being a clever lawyer. Keats and Sackett had made a $100 wager on the trial’s outcome as a sort of ego competition, and this is the reason Keats wanted so desperately to win the trial. Keats, ultimately, is more about his own cleverness than about doing what is right.

However, after Frank and Cora have been freed, Keats reminds them both that Sackett will give them twenty years “if either one of [them] even so much as parks a car alongside a fire hydrant.” They have to be careful to do nothing wrong to give Sackett a chance for revenge. Other problems continue to surface between Frank and Cora, and
these problems are rooted in their knowledge that they both accused each other to either Sackett or Keats. As a further complication, Cora soon learns that she is pregnant with Frank’s baby.

While the couple is driving together back from a beach, during a long kiss Frank loses control of the car, and in the car accident Cora is killed. Frank is then arrested for her supposed murder (although this is simply Sackett’s recrimination for his earlier embarrassment and inability to convict them). Indeed, as Frank states at the movie’s end, the postman “always rings twice … You always hear him ring the second time, even if you’re way out in the back yard.” The movie ends with Frank about to be executed in the gas chamber.

Frye writes about this phase: “What is recommended is conventional life at its best: a clairvoyant knowledge of human nature in oneself and others, an avoidance of all illusion and compulsive behavior, a reliance on observation and timing rather than on aggressiveness” (226). Sackett is able to eventually punish Frank, at least, although Cora dies before he can get to her, because he sees through, with ‘clairvoyant knowledge,’ Frank and Cora’s veneer of respect for Nick. Frank says to Cora, after Sackett’s first visit to the house to investigate Nick’s first ‘accident’: “They always find out. They guess it right, just on habit,” and he is right.

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**Postman Always Rings Twice Irony/Satire First Phase Analogue: Comedy First Phase**

**Comedy First Phase Characteristics.**

1. Humorous (capricious, whimsical, natural) society is undefeated or, in irony, “simply disintegrates without anything taking its place” (177).
2. The demonic is always nearby (178).
3. There is a ritual death from which the characters are barely saved by a *cognitio* (recognition) (179).
*The Postman Always Rings Twice* fits all three characteristics of Irony/Satire First Phase. Frye writes: “A more intense irony is achieved when the humorous society simply disintegrates without anything taking its place” (178). The first of the two types of Comedy First Phase is when the humorous (whimsical) society remains undefeated. Of course, this doesn’t apply to *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (since both Cora and Frank die, and their deaths are perceived as punishment for Nick’s murder), but the second type (where the humorous society “simply disintegrates without anything taking its place” (177)) does apply. Undoubtedly, Chambers and Cora’s seemingly demonic plots (see the beginning of the plot description in the previous section) and schemes disintegrate at the movie’s end when Cora is dead and Chambers is about to die.

Frye writes: “The rages of the *senex iratus* in Roman comedy are directed mainly at the tricky slave, who is threatened with the mill, with being flogged to death, with crucifixion, with having his head dipped in tar and set on fire, and the like, all penalties that could be and were exacted from slaves in life” (178). Sackett is the *senex iratus*, the angry father, who threatens Frank and Cora, the tricky slaves, with all the penalties applicable to those who break the law. Sackett tells Frank: “Come on, laddie. You and that girl murdered her husband, and the sooner you admit it, the better it will be for you.” Sackett calls Frank ‘laddie’—a term meaning a young boy, which, of course, is not very respectful for a man in his early thirties (Garfield was in his early thirties when *The Postman Always Rings Twice* was shot)\(^25\)—as if he were his disobedient son. This fits perfectly with Sackett being the angry father.

Frye writes: “Everyone will have noted in comic actions, even in very trivial movies and magazine stories, a point near the end at which the tone suddenly becomes serious, sentimental, or ominous of potential catastrophe” (179). Of course, the potential catastrophe is Cora and Frank’s signed confessions against each other, which ultimately leads to their mistrust of each other. This is Frank and Cora’s ritual death, which precedes their actual death. The lawyer Keats is able to get them out of this “potential catastrophe” by keeping Cora’s testimony to himself and by recognizing that Sackett doesn’t seem to have enough hard evidence to win the trial. The only exception, here, is that the ‘ritual death’ does not precede a happy ending but mostly a sad one.

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\(^{25}\) Although Sackett also uses the term with one of his subordinates in the film.
Irony/Satire Second Phase Characteristics.

1. A successful “rogue . . . makes conventional society look foolish without setting up any positive standard” (229).
2. The emphasis is on surviving in everyday life, as opposed to attempting to understand life philosophically (229).
3. Consequently, this phase does not set up a moral imperative (229).
4. Stereotypes and dogmas are shown to be inapplicable when set against real life (230).

*Shadow of a Doubt* is the story of Young Charlie Newton (Teresa Wright) of Santa Rosa, California, who has idolized her vagabond uncle and namesake Uncle Charlie (Joseph Cotten) all her life. Over the movie's course, Young Charlie gradually begins to realize that her uncle is the "Merry Widow" serial murderer, as he is being hunted by police detectives. In one of the movie's last scenes, Uncle Charlie tries to push Young Charlie off a moving train into the path of an oncoming one. But Young Charlie is able to sidestep him, so that her uncle falls right in front of the oncoming train heading in the opposite direction.
Earlier in the movie, Young Charlie has fallen in love with one of the detectives, Jack Graham (Macdonald Carey), and they have become engaged. The movie ends with the couple standing before the church door, as a Reverend MacCurdy (Grandon Rhodes) speaks a fulsome eulogy. The eulogy is based upon Uncle Charlie's large gift, just before he fell off the train, to the town hospital. Both Young Charlie and her fiance know that such stereotypical praise, at least in this case, is the absolute opposite of the truth. This is one of Irony/Satire Second Phase's main thrusts, that stereotypes are often inadequate and farther from the truth than they are close to it.

_Shadow of a Doubt_ opens with a ballroom dance in progress, both men in tuxedos and women in long, fluffy ballroom dresses dancing behind the credits flashing on the screen, as the Merry Widow Waltz plays in the background. This is exactly the world in which Uncle Charlie preys, an Uncle Charlie who is always smiling, perfectly dressed, seeming to be happy, kind. The movie will expose the pretentious hypocrisy of the ballroom world, of people like Uncle Charlie. Young Charlie thinks Uncle Charlie to be exciting and glamorous. She will learn that the glib stereotypes and dogmas about the world around her are wrong.

After an opening chase scene, in which Uncle Charlie loses two detectives chasing after him in urban Philadelphia, the scene shifts to Santa Rosa, where we first see Young Charlie as she is lying on her bed, staring up at the ceiling over her. Her father, having come home from work, walks into her room and asks how she is doing. Young Charlie tells her father: "I simply give up." She then begins explaining to her father the first of her many stereotypical and dogmatic statements in the movie. She tells her father: "Have you ever stopped to think that a family should be the most wonderful thing in the world and that this family's just gone to pieces?" Young Charlie later adds: "We just sort of go along and nothing happens."

Although her family is perhaps not the world's best family, she doesn't realize that, sometimes, boredom is a part of life and can't be avoided in any life. She will not know until the movie's end what it really means to go to pieces, when she discovers that her father Uncle Charlie is a serial murderer. By that point, she will certainly wish that she had her old 'boredom' and normal family situation back.\(^\text{26}\) As Kay Sloan writes:

\[^{26}\text{As Paul Gordon writes: "Charlie's family is not nearly as unhappy as she describes" (269).}\]
"Though the family may be a wellspring of anxiety, isolation or conflict, for Hitchcock it is preferable to freer moral codes of a more sophisticated outside world" (95) (i.e. preferable to Uncle Charlie's glamorous, yet actually murderous, lifestyle).

At this early point in the movie, however, Young Charlie believes that a visit from her uncle would set her and her family straight, because she believes her uncle can do nothing wrong (she seems to believe this mostly because she was named after him). She tells her mother: "I know a wonderful person who will come and shake us all up. Just the one to save us. Mother--what's Uncle Charlie's address?" Young Charlie's statements show the ineffectiveness of stereotypes which children or adolescents like Young Charlie are famous for using. Ultimately, she will not only discover that her stereotype about her uncle is wrong, that he is not a nice person, but that he is a serial murderer.

Frye writes: "Skepticism itself may be or become a dogmatic attitude, a comic humor doubting plain evidence" (230). Despite the evidence piling up in the movie that her uncle is not a very nice person, Young Charlie remains skeptical. Uncle Charlie has at one point grabbed Young Charlie violently. He demands that any pictures of himself be destroyed. He is being trailed by detectives, who believe he is serial murderer, and they seem to know an awful lot about other aspects of his life.

Yet instead of accepting the possibility her uncle is not whom he seems to be, Young Charlie tells detective Graham: "I don't believe you. Go away and leave me alone .... My uncle hasn't done anything. He knows it would kill my mother if he did. He's a younger brother just like Roger is mine."27 Young Charlie uses stereotypes (her perfectly normal younger brother, she believes, shows undoubtedly how Uncle Charlie, as her mother's younger brother, would act) based on her limited experience.

*Shadow of a Doubt* (1942) Irony/Satire First Phase Analogue: Comedy Second Phase

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27 Young Charlie later tells the detective: "It's going to be funny when you find out you're wrong."
Comedy Second Phase Characteristics.

1. The comic hero “does not transform a humorous society but simply escapes or runs away from it, leaving its structure as it was before” or the society surrounding a hero is unable to affect him (180).
2. The hero is usually a whimsical runaway.
3. In lighthearted comedies, the comic ending sweeps “over all quixotic illusions” (180).

Frye writes: "[A] society is constructed by or around a hero, but proves not sufficiently real or strong to impose itself. In this situation the hero is usually himself at least partly a comic humor or mental runaway, and we have either a hero's illusion thwarted by a superior reality or a clash of two illusions" (Frye 180). In Shadow of a Doubt, Young Charlie, at the movie's beginning, is under the illusion that her uncle is a kind, good person. She has formed this opinion, because of her deep desire to escape her boring life (as she sees it) as a Santa Rosa banker's daughter. In this sense, her beliefs about Uncle Charlie are an attempt to mentally escape as a "mental runaway" (180) from her boredom. Over the movie's course, she gradually realizes the superior reality, that Uncle Charlie is a serial murderer.

Frye writes further: "[T]he hero is an ironic parody of a Prospero figure creating another society out of the one in front of him" (180). Prospero brings his enemies, Alonso and Sebastian, to his island through a storm, much like Young Charlie thinks she has brought her Uncle Charlie to Santa Rosa through her own 'telepathy'. Just as Prospero has to manipulate Alonso and Sebastian and Ferdinand to re-establish his old life and find a young groom for his daughter, Young Charlie has to manipulate her uncle and the detectives in order to return to the peaceful, 'boring' world before Uncle Charlie. Further, like Miranda at the end of the Tempest finds herself about to be married to one of the strange visitors (Ferdinand) to her island, Young Charlie finds herself about to be married to one of the strange visitors to Santa Rosa, the detective Graham.

Conclusion

Frye writes: "[T]he central principle of ironic myth is best approached as a parody of romance" (223). Indeed, the Film Noir detective has some characteristics of the Romantic knight in that he often works alone or with his sidekick (usually, his secretary),
and he is on a quest to identify something, whether it be a murderer or a thief's identity or something else more obscure (like the meaning of 'Rosebud' in *Citizen Kane*). Further, the Film Noir detective is often asked to protect a woman, much like a knight is responsible to save any damsel in distress who asks for him.

Of course, as a parody of the Romance hero, the Film Noir detective only *appears* to be a white knight. A true knight is not mercenary, but the Film Noir detective clearly needs money and often asks for it. As Frye writes: "No one in a romance, Don Quixote protests, ever asks who pays for the hero's accommodation" (223). Further, the Film Noir detective connives and dissembles in order to ultimately triumph. Although this is often a highly realistic description of the requisites for everyday survival, a true knight, it seems, would not dissemble but be 'bold and true.'

In the classic Film Noir detective thrillers *The Maltese Falcon* and in *Murder, My Sweet* certain women perceive (or pretend to perceive) the detective as their knight. However, the Film Noir detective usually only uses women to get what he wants, whether that is money (Spade in *The Maltese Falcon*: "We didn't believe your story, Mrs. O'Shaughnessy; we believed your two-hundred dollars") or sex (the affair Spade is having with his partner Archer's wife). The virtuous knight of Romance, obviously, would not have such motivations.

Frye called such parody the "'realistic' level of experience" (366) and identified it with Irony. An important aspect of 'realistic,' everyday life for Frye is that it is difficult to understand where characters stand morally, whether good or bad. This, for Frye, parallels real life, where it is difficult to determine exactly the moral status of many human beings, whether they are kind or villainous. This is exactly as in *North by Northwest*, where everybody, at some point or another, is dissembling or lying, and it is almost impossible to determine who is on the 'good' side and who is on the 'bad,' at least until the movie's end. As Frye writes: "whenever a reader is not sure … what his own [attitude] is supposed to be, we have irony with relatively little satire" (223). Similarly, in *Citizen Kane*, we see Charles Foster Kane from so many different viewpoints that we are not sure, even at the movie's end, which is the correct one. In *Shadow of a Doubt*, we are shown how inaccurate any generalization can be, when Young Charlie, who idolizes her namesake Uncle Charlie, learns that her uncle is a serial murderer. In *The Postman*
Always Rings Twice, although we, the audience, know that Frank Chambers and Cora Smith have killed Cora's husband, Frank, their ability to hide their murder from the people around them at least for a time is unsettling, because it reminds us how easy it is to hide even the most egregious actions.

In contrast with Irony, Satire is relatively clear about how the reader should feel, and Frye states there is "an implicit moral standard" (224). So, in Taxi Driver, for instance, it is absolutely clear that the pimp Sport is manipulating Iris as a juvenile prostitute. When Travis kills Sport and frees Iris, the audience knows this is mostly a good thing, although Travis has not relied on the police like he should have. In Blade Runner, it is clear that human beings are only longer living replicants, and so both are worthy of pity, and any manipulation and abuse of them is obviously wrong. In Silence of the Lambs, we know from the beginning--when we are told that Hannibal Lector ate a woman's tongue without so much as a rise in blood pressure--that he is evil. And from the beginning of Monsieur Verdoux, we know that Verdoux is a serial murderer, although this is complicated by his claims that the environment has forced him into his actions.

Such Satire, ultimately, becomes subtle metaphor or even, sometimes, allegory. In Sunset Boulevard, for instance, the way Norma Desmond is using Joe Gillis is so obvious that he is compared throughout the movie to a monkey doing tricks for his master. Gillis even dreams of a monkey "dancing for pennies," which is exactly what Gillis is doing as a 'kept man' for Norma Desmond. Even in the title Night of the Hunter, we can see how the Reverend Henry Powell is allegorized as a completely wicked man. Where Irony is not always clear about morality (because such moral clarity is not always realistic), Satire's point seems to be that there are many like Henry Powell, and Satire combats such evil by being absolutely clear about it (where Irony is not always so clear). This is the main difference in the subject matter treatment between Irony and Satire, although the difference is only relative, because the subject matter remains everyday life on the street.
CHAPTER SIX
SUMMARY

Northrop Frye, in his seminal work, *Anatomy of Criticism*, showed how even a diverse and variegated field such as literature could be categorized systematically into different genres and phases. Since Frye categorized very few films in *Anatomy of Criticism*, this dissertation has shown how Frye would probably have, in the year 2003, categorized films. It has shown how Comedy films fit well into Frye's Comedy mythos, how Western films can be fit into Frye's Romance mythos, how War films can be fit into Frye's Tragedy mythos, and how Film Noir films can be fit into Frye's Irony/Satire mythos.

Comedy Mythos

Beginning with Comedy, I showed how the "Our Gang Follies of 1938" combined Comedy ("integration of society" (43)) with Irony/Satire (realistic, everyday experience). Alfalfa believes himself to have a gifted, operatic voice and so refuses to croon as his audience (mostly girls obsessed with romantic love) want him to. For Alfalfa, crooning is beneath him. However, after a bad dream about the cruelties of an opera career, he immediately decides to return to crooning--hence, his integration into society (Comedy) and his education in thinking realistically about himself (Irony/Satire).

In Comedy Second Phase the hero becomes a sort of runaway in various ways (Frye describes this as "comedy in which the hero does not transform a humorous society but simply escapes or runs away from it" (180)). In movies like *City Lights*, the Tramp is integrated into society (Comedy) by paying for an operation for a blind girl to restore her sight (i.e. he shows himself to be useful to society). The movie ends with the Tramp's identity being revealed to the formerly blind girl, who is incredibly grateful to her rescuer. However, the movie ends also with a realistic reminder, that there is almost no chance such a girl could fall in love with the Tramp, a poor, resourceless, everyday beggar (Irony/Satire). *The Seven Year Itch* is a 1955 example of this phase, where publishing executive Richard Sherman's wife and children have gone on vacation to
Maine, and he finds himself chasing after a beautiful neighbor. However, *The Seven Year Itch* ends with Sherman's fidelity intact, when he imagines his wife committing infidelities (which are completely fictional) and decides he needs to be with her in Maine. Sherman is reintegrated into society as a faithful husband (Comedy), after experiencing the strong temptations of everyday life (Irony/Satire).

*Some Like It Hot* is a late 1950s example of this second phase. Joe and Jerry are two musicians trying to escape the Chicago mob by taking jobs posing as female musicians in a female band. Ultimately, the two head off in a happily ever after ending, escaping the Mob once again, with Joe in love with a female singer Sugar, and Jerry trying to ward off the millionarie Osgood. However, Joe, as the main hero, has won the love of his life, Sugar (Comedy, because it is the integration of the hero), after enduring most of the troubles and anxieties of living during the Great Depression (Irony/Satire). *Annie Hall* is a more recent version of this phase, where Alvy Singer breaks up with his long-time girlfriend Annie Hall, after realizing that, realistically, relationships are absurd (Irony/Satire). In this Comedy Second phase, Alvy has become a runaway from relationships (Frye's running away from society (180)).

*It Happened One Night* is an example of Comedy Third Phase. Peter Warne is able to marry Ellie Andrews, because Ellie's father essentially bribes King Westley to forget the proposed marriage, and Warne, in the typical comic ending, becomes grafted into the Andrews family. Their marriage has not happened, however, without the everyday, realistic (Irony/Satire) misunderstandings and misconceptions that plague relationships, especially where there is little communication.

The last three phases of Frye's Comedy mythos are analogous with the last three phases of Romance (which Frye defined as an "idealized world" (Frye 367), a knightly world). In a Phase Four Comedy *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, Jefferson Smith encounters the normal problems a politician trying to battle epidemic corruption will face. He is accused of corruption himself and is only able to overcome the charges with a dramatic twenty-four hour filibuster. This is his comic integration into society, yet it also seems to have the feel of an idealized romance (one man against all that corruption?). *Revenge of the Nerds* is an early 1980s example of this phase, where Gilbert and Louis, perennial nerds at Adams College, are able to become more popular than the jocks
(Comedy) in an idealized way (by making speeches at the movie's end where they ask alumni to come down and support nerds) (Romance).

In *Gilligan's Island* an example of Comedy Fifth Phase, the *Minnow*'s boat crew is saved from a horrible storm and is washed up on what will become known as Gilligan's Island. However, their comfortable existence and clumsy comicality seem too unreal and idealized for life on a desert island (Romance). *The Lady Eve* is an earlier version of this phase where Jean Harrington--snubbed by Charles Pike because she was a professional card sharp--pretends to be Lady Eve a sister to Jean Harrington. Pike asks Lady Eve to marry him, and after she does, she tells him of her many promiscuous affairs. Hurt, he decides to return to the sister Jean, and apparently does so, without realizing initially, that Jean is Lady Eve. Charles Pike is so obtuse about Lady Eve/Jean's identity so Jean's revenge plot works out perfectly (as it would only in Romance), and yet Pike has been integrated into marriage at the end (Comedy).

Comedy Sixth Phase (*Network*) is the most pessimistic of Frye's Comedy phases and contains within it much sadness. This is the phase which "shows the collapse and disintegration of comic society" (Frye 185). Howard Beale's maniacal diatribes against corporate America are at first popular television. But when Beale is converted by his corporate boss to a gloomy corporate utilitarianism, his shows (emphasizing the average person's worthlessness) become pathetic and pessimistic. Beale has been temporarily integrated into the 'corporate business' society, but he is finally killed by the corporate network brass to stop the low ratings, "the collapse and disintegration of comic society" (185). *Dr. Strangelove, Or How I Learned To Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* is an earlier 1960s version of this phase, where a mad American officer, convinced that the Russians are destroying Americans with flouride, decides to launch a nuclear attack on the Russians. The movie ends with the world's nuclear destruction, "the collapse and disintegration of comic society" (185).

**Romance Mythos**
The first three phases of the Romance mythos (the 'idealized world') are analogous to the first three phases of Tragedy (the separation of the hero from society (Frye 37)). In *The Searchers*, Martin Pawley and Ethan Edwards's search for Debbie Edwards, who was kidnapped by Comanche Indians. It is a knightly Romance quest of the Romance First Phase. At the same time, the movie is haunted by the Tragedy of Debbie's family's massacre, so that no matter how happy Debbie's reconciliation with her community, she has still lost almost all her family.

*Shane* is an example of Romance Second Phase, where the idealistic gunfighter Shane is able to kill the town bully (dragon) Ryker and his hired henchman, Jack Wilson (Romance). The victory, however, is marred by Tragedy, as Wilson had already killed one settler Torrey, and Ryker had run many others off the land. *Pale Rider*, a remake of *Shane*, is another example of this phase, which differs in that its 'innocent' protagonist is a girl instead of a boy and that she is much less 'innocent' than Shane was (sexually).

*The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* is an example of Romance Third Phase, where lawyer Ransom Stoddard is able to defeat the outlaw (dragon) Liberty Valance (Romance) through Tom Doniphon's help. However, Valance's defeat leads to Doniphon's eclipse, because Hallie has fallen in love with Stoddard, and everybody else believes it was Stoddard who shot Valance. Doniphon dies an obscure, ignominious death (Tragedy), after Stoddard marries Hallie.

*Stagecoach* is a 1939 example of this third phase, where the Ringo Kid is able to miraculously kill the three Plummer Brothers (the dragon) in a battle by himself after having survived a deadly Apache attack. He then rides off into Mexico with his bride (Romance). However, Tragedy still haunts his life, because the Plummer brothers killed the rest of Ringo Kid's family, including his father. *High Noon* is a 1952 example of this same phase, where Kane is forced to kill the outlaw (dragon) and his three henchmen by himself (Romance) because the town won't help him. The Tragedy is that, although his wife is at his side, he has been separated from the town, and he throws away his sheriff's badge at the movie's end in disgust.

The last three phases of Romance are analogous to the last three phases of Comedy. *The Wild Bunch* fits Romance Fourth Phase. The movie is a story of the Bunch's idealized quest to be outlaw knights (Romance), old-fashioned gunslingers, in an early
twentieth century world no longer safe for outlaws (because of the technological organization of the American and Mexican governments). The movie ends with the death of almost all the Wild Bunch, which would seem like Tragedy. But in the famous climactic scene, the Wild Bunch are shown laughing in the face of death, which shows their solidarity and unity against it (Comedy).

*Once Upon a Time in the West* fits Romance Fifth Phase. It is almost always only in Romance, an ideal world, that a gunfighter (Harmonica) is able to track down an outlaw (Frank) in the vast Wild West, after years of searching, and kill him in a climactic one-on-one showdown. That is what the child in us would want and expect, and it is idealistic. As the somewhat pessimistic Comedy Fifth Phase, *Once Upon a Time in the West* does "not avoid tragedies but contain[s] them" (Frye 184). This tragedy is Harmonica's brother's death, and the movie's "ending is less a matter of the way the plot turns out than the perspective of the audience" (Frye 184). None of the characters seem particularly happy or integrated at the movie's end, but the audience knows something the characters don't necessarily know, that Jill McBain's outpost by the railroad will become more and more prosperous as the railroad expands (Comedy). All this is possible because of Harmonica's killing of Frank.

*She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* is a 1949 example of this fifth phase. In the movie, Brittles is skillfully able to avoid the massacre of Custer's troops invoked in the movie's beginning by the narrator (the movie's tragic element, which Comedy Fifth Phase doesn't avoid but contains (Frye 184)). The movie ends with both Comedy and Romance. Brittles is able to avoid massacre and retire, literally riding off into the sunset, like a knight in a Romance, and his retirement party recognizes him as a hero who has been integrated into society.

*Dances With Wolves* is an excellent example of Romance Sixth Phase and Comedy Sixth Phase (remember that Comedy Sixth Phase is the most pessimistic of the comedies, in which the only integration is a "return to the womb" (186), and the hero becomes an isolated individual with "the collapse and disintegration of the comic society" (185)). This is the last era of the West, an idealized world where a man (or woman) can live without society's encroachment. Even Major Fambraugh recognizes that Dunbar is a knight of old and refers to him as "Sir knight." The movie ends with the foreboding
conquest of the Native Americans by the U.S. army. The Native American society is the last communal, interdependent society in the West, and, as the movie hints, it will soon be no more.

*The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly* is an earlier 1960s example of this sixth phase. The Man With No Name is an impossibly calm gunslinger, able to measure a cannon's range exactly without having shot it before, and able to reload a cannon by himself in five to six seconds. The Man With No Name, like Dunbar, is also very individualistic, the wandering knight who doesn't need anybody else's help (Romance). At the same time, the movie's context is the Civil War, which was tearing America apart and is a type of "collapse and disintegration of comic society" (185), which characterizes Comedy Sixth Phase.

*The Shootist* is a 1970s example of this sixth phase. J.B. Books, a famous gunslinger, is dying of cancer. As Comedy Sixth Phase describes, he will soon run "the full course from infancy to death" (186). However, Books wants to go out like a knight (Romance), and so he arranges a final gun battle with several of his enemies at one time, where he is shot and killed.

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**Tragedy Mythos**

The first three phases of Tragedy are analogous to the first three phases of Romance. *Sergeant York* is an example of Tragedy First Phase, in which York is forced to fight in World War I, where one of his best friends, a certain Pusher, is killed. In a frenzy, York kills some twenty-five Germans and takes one-hundred and thirty-two prisoners. Nevertheless, even the most heroic action in war is usually one which has killed many people, and so is inherently more tragic than heroic, even if good is ultimately served by the victory of the 'more moral' side. *Braveheart* is a more modern example of this phase, where the hero fights for his own beliefs, and in *Braveheart*'s case dies, like a valiant knight (Romance) fighting to revenge the tragic death of his dead maiden (Wallace fighting to revenge Murron's death).
Sands of Iwo Jima is an example of Tragedy Second Phase. A young batch of new recruits in the last days of the Second World War is trained by the merciless Sergeant Stryker. Stryker, eventually, dies on Iwo Jima (Tragedy), and he is deeply missed by the recruits who once hated him for his strictness but now appreciate it in the middle of war. The movie's re-enactment of the raising of the flag on Iwo Jima and overall glorification of the victory make it something of a Romance in the context of a greater Tragedy. The Dirty Dozen--another, more recent, example of Tragedy Second Phase--shows how a group of undisciplined convicts train to become a crack unit (i.e. train to be like knights) to destroy an entire German officer's chateau. However, at the movie's end, most of them--except for the commanding officer Reisman and the group's unofficial leader Wladislaw--die. Glory is the most recent example of this phase, where young African-American soldiers in the 54th Massachusetts regiment, the first African-American regiment in the Civil War, train hard to become a crack fighting force and inspire many other African-African regiments (Romance), although over half of the Regiment is killed or wounded in a brave attack on Ft. Wagner (Tragedy).

Patton exemplifies Tragedy Third Phase in the tragedy Patton brings to his soldier's lives, through his vainglorious, egotistical attacks often simply meant to make himself look better (Tragedy). The movie's mythical themes also place it in the Romance Third Phase category. The movie's primary conflict is between Patton with his win quickly at all costs mentality and Bradley's more cautious, circumspect, save-as-many-lives-as-possible mentality. The choice between these two different methods (with their strengths and weaknesses) constantly plagues many societies. Further, the movie portrays Patton as a type of Don Quixote, a knight (Romance) more obsessed sometimes with his own vainglory than truly helping those around him.

The Longest Day is a 1962 example of this third phase, in that the Nazi German dragon is essentially killed at Normandy (Romance), although not without a large loss of life (Tragedy). Lawrence of Arabia is another example of this phase from the same year, where the hero Lawrence temporarily unites the Arabians against the Turks (the dragon) (Romance) but ultimately the Arabian alliance falls apart in bickering (Tragedy) and Lawrence is separated from them (eventually dying in a motorcycle accident).
The last three phases of Tragedy are analogous to the last three phases of Irony/Satire. *Apocalypse Now* is an example of Tragedy Fourth Phase. *Apocalypse Now* is obviously not only a Tragedy about war but a Tragedy about human nature. Kurtz--representing the ideally educated American, the best the society has to offer with degrees from West Point and Harvard--is corrupted by the brute force necessary to survive in Vietnam and the absolute power that such brute force fosters. Kurtz sets himself up as a dictator over a native society separate from all other societies (Tragedy). At the same time, the movie give us everyday life (Irony/Satire) in Vietnam, which is almost nauseating.

*Das Boot* exemplifies Tragedy Fifth Phase. There is, of course, its chronicle of the German U-boats, fighting for the Nazis, a Tragedy in and of itself, because the Nazis were a separation from civilized society. After the men work valiantly and bravely to return to occupied France, they are killed in only a few seconds in an Allied air raid at the La Rochelle submarine pens. Further, while they set off from La Rochelle as young German heroes, the movie emphasizes their gradual realization that their mere survival in everyday life (Irony/Satire) is more important to them than any ideology.

*Paths of Glory* is an earlier example of this fifth phase where the French officer Colonel Dax is forced into a suicidal attack on an impregnable German position in order to impress higher-ranking French officers (Tragedy). When many soldiers don't follow Dax in the attack, three soldiers are selected to be hanged as punishment for the entire group. This, of course, is normal, everyday life (Irony/Satire), that somebody has to be found to blame for the group's (supposed) failings, so that, like in *Das Boot*, heroism is less important and everyday life is more important.

*Platoon* fits Tragedy Sixth Phase easily in that it is a picture of hell for many people: Vietnam during the Vietnam War. As in *Apocalypse Now*, it's a world where brute, immoral force is rewarded and kindness is often a weakness which leads to death (Tragedy). At the same time, *Platoon* reveals the ways in which a ruling class manipulated American, lower class soldiers to fight in Vietnam, and class struggle is a part of the brutish everyday world (Irony/Satire).
Irony/Satire Mythos

The first three phases of Frye's Irony/Satire mythos have analogies in the first three phases of Frye's Comedy mythos. *The Maltese Falcon* exemplifies Irony/Satire First Phase in Sam Spade's everyday toughness. The police suspect his association with the dark side of life means he is guilty of at least some crime, perhaps killing his partner Archer (with whose wife Spade was sleeping). At *The Maltese Falcon*'s end, Spade turns in the criminal ring responsible for Archer's death, and thus the police no longer suspect him of that crime. Spade has been integrated back into law-abiding society (Comedy).

*Murder, My Sweet* is a slightly later example of this same first phase. The police believe Phillip Marlowe to be guilty of a crime, and he has to give testimony about his associations with a blackmail ring (Irony/Satire) before he can be exonerated (Comedy) by the blackmailed woman's daughter, with whom he has fallen in love. *Night of the Hunter* is a later movie in this phase where serial murderer Henry Powell kills the mother of two young children in search of a hidden treasure (Irony/Satire). However, the two children miraculously come under the protection of a kindly old widow (Comedy), Miss Cooper, and she shoots Powell, and he is arrested and taken off to jail. In another example, *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, Frank Chambers and Cora Smith plot to kill her husband Nick Smith (Irony/Satire), so that Frank and Cora can marry. Nick is eventually killed, and Frank and Cora avoid receiving punishment until Cora is killed in a car accident while Frank is driving. Frank is then sentenced to death (somewhat strangely) for Cora's death, but the movie portrays this as almost a blessing for him, because he will be reunited with Cora. His sentencing to death is also a way for him to be purified for Nick's murder (Comedy). As Frank says: "Cora paid for Nick's life with hers. And now I'm going to."

*Citizen Kane* exemplifies Irony/Satire Second Phase and its analogue, Comedy Second Phase (one of the more pessimistic of Comedy phases). The movie shows how Kane's fabulous wealth doesn't fulfill him but actually corrupts him and leaves him a lonely man. Kane has so much money he finds it difficult to show anybody he loves them, because even the most expensive gift is only a small fraction of Kane himself, of his net worth. *Citizen Kane* shows that even the wealthiest struggle with everyday problems of self-
acceptance and self-love (Irony/Satire). Frye writes about Comedy Second Phase that "a society is constructed by or around a hero, but proves not sufficiently real or strong to impose itself" (180). Kane's society is his money, but ultimately it doesn't fulfill.

*Shadow of a Doubt* is a slightly later example of this second phase where a Young Charlie believes her uncle's arrival in her family's town of Santa Rosa will make her life perfect (the "society constructed by or around a hero" (180)). However, her Uncle Charlie will be revealed as a serial murderer (Irony/Satire), so that Young Charlie's hopes prove to be "not sufficiently real or strong to impose itself" (180). At the movie's end, she is reintegrated into society (Comedy) after her horrible experience, when she becomes engaged to marry the man (Detective Graham) whom originally she didn't trust when he first hinted Uncle Charlie wasn't who he claimed to be.

Irony/Satire Third Phase and its analogue Comedy Third Phase are shown in *North By Northwest*. As in *The Maltese Falcon*, the government suspects the main character (Roger Thornhill) of a crime. After many dangerous problems associated with the criminal world (Irony/Satire), Thornhill only exonerates himself (Comedy) after much difficulty and after giving over the real criminals to the police.

The last three phases of Irony/Satire are analogous to the last three phases of Tragedy. *Taxi Driver* fits Irony/Satire Fourth Phase and its analogue Tragedy Fourth Phase (the last three phases of Irony/Satire are analogous to the last three phases of Tragedy). *Taxi Driver* is about Travis Bickle's everyday journey through seedy New York life (Irony/Satire). Although Travis seems to become a hero by saving a young Iris Steensma from her pimp Sport, the movie ends with Travis still isolated from the world in his taxi, which for *Taxi Driver* screenwriter Paul Schrader was a symbol for urban isolation and loneliness (Tragedy). *Monsieur Verdoux* is an earlier example of this phase. Henri Verdoux claims to have become a criminal in order to provide for his wife in the everyday famine of the Great Depression (Irony/Satire). Verdoux is killed at the movie's end after warning that much greater serial murderers were about to be unleashed in the coming World War (World War II) (Tragedy).

*Sunset Boulevard* is an example of Irony/Satire Fifth Phase and Tragedy Fifth Phase. Joe Gillis wants to become famous in Hollywood as a screenwriter. However to do so, he must practically sell himself as a gigolo to Norma Desmond. Selling oneself
romantically seems to be the everyday price for survival in Hollywood (Irony/Satire). Gillis's relationship with the crazed Desmond ultimately leads to his death, because she first separates him from the surrounding world (by cloistering him in her house) and then kills him, the ultimate separation from society (Tragedy). Blade Runner is a later example of this phase, where replicants are separated from the world around them by their four year life-span. The movie chronicles, then, Roy Batty's attempts to gain longer life, which are part of the world's everyday struggle for life (Irony/Satire). At the end, the movie blurs the differences between replicants and humans. Humans are only longer-living replicants (Tragedy).

Irony/Satire Sixth Phase, and its analogue Tragedy Sixth Phase, is exemplified in Silence of the Lambs. Hannibal Lector and Buffalo Bill are avatars of a serial murderer, exemplifying vice and crime (Irony/Satire). These phases are characterized by Frye as pictures of hell, and the picture of a young woman being starved by Buffalo Bill before she is about to be killed is just one of many hellish pictures in the movie (Tragedy).

**Conclusion**

There are further directions in which the work could go. For instance, a critic might take Frye's mythoi and phases and apply them to television series which have run for at least a year. Frye's Comedy would be applied to the sitcom, Frye's Romance could be applied to the modern urban cop thriller such as NYPD Blue, and Frye's Irony/Satire could be applied to the modern ethnicity shows. Perhaps the only mythos which does not seem to have a television analogue would be the Tragedy mythos, and there certainly could be interesting explanations of why this is the case.

This dissertation has attempted to show how the order which Frye revealed in much of Western literature can also be found in mediums like twentieth-century film. Frye's paradigm applies to twentieth-century film, because the phases and plot structures Frye described deal with the essential questions and struggles much of Western society deals with over and over again. My prediction is that this will be true for twenty-first century film and literature as well.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Mark Hamilton was the first-born to Kent and Janice Hamilton in 1974 in Great Bend, Kansas. His father and mother moved to Tallahassee, Florida in the Fall of 1979 for Kent to pursue his Ph.D. in Special Education, which he received in 1983. Mark received his high-school diploma from the Florida State University School in 1992, his B.A. in English Literature from Florida State University in 1996, his M.A. in English from F.S.U. in 1999 (after a year in the English Literature Ph.D. program at the University of Kentucky) and has received his doctorate from F.S.U. in Humanities in the Fall 2003 semester. Mark enjoys preparing to teach his Humanities and Composition classes, reading, spending time with his family (the parents, two brothers, a sister and a really cute nephew), and dreaming about a college teaching position.
CHAPTER THREE
MOVIES ILLUSTRATING FRYE'S ROMANCE PHASES
AND THEIR ANALOGUES

Romance Introduction

Medieval scholar Morris Bishop wrote in his work *The Middle Ages*:

In time the chivalric code was modified, but it has never died .... We may still see on illumined screens the knight, with a change of clothing and locale. He has gone Western, but still he is the dextrous cavalier, vaulting to his saddle, the mighty fighter for virtue, ill educated but possessed of a salty wisdom, worshipful, faithful, and tongue-tied in the presence of good women. (122)

So the modern film Western's protagonist is often a modern knight, or small group of modern knights, fighting for a person or principle he (or they) desperately admire. Also, Frye's conception of Romance emphasizes the myth, and the Western plot often emphasizes myth. By myth, Frye means: "narrative in which some characters are superhuman beings who do things that 'happen only in stories'; hence, a conventionalized or stylized narrative not fully adapted to plausibility or 'realism'" (*Anatomy of Criticism* 366).

Douglas Pye, in his short article "The Western (Genre and Movies)" notes that Frye's Romance fits the American Western well, in that Frye identified the Romance hero as somebody "superior in degree to other men and to his environment," (33) although this Romance hero is still mortal. Pye gives, as an example of this, *The Searchers* (1956), in which Ethan Edward's incredible stamina makes him superior to other mortals, although he has other weaknesses, such as egotism. John Cawelti adds that he sees the Western as the distillation "of the archetypal pattern of the hero's quest which Frye discusses under the general heading of the mythos of Romance" (57). Cawelti later references Walter Prescott Webb's belief (from Webb's book *The Great Frontier*) that the Colt six-gun "was the critical invention that made possible the American assault on the Great Plains" (86) because of the gun's rapid firepower. For Cawelti, "the Westerner's six-gun and his way
of using it in individual combat was the closest thing in the armory of modern violence to the knight's sword" (86).\(^1\)

Essentially, the Romance is an "idealized world" (Frye 367). In The Searchers, Ethan Edwards and Martin Pawley search relentlessly five years, with supernatural endurance, across the Plains for one young girl who may or may not be alive, and in High Noon (1952) Will Kane is able to kill four murderous, experienced outlaws--experienced gunslingers--by himself with some help from his wife. Many further examples could show how the average Western plot is the stuff of extraordinary, idealized accomplishments, only rarely, if ever, seen in everyday life but commonly found in Hollywood Westerns like The Searchers.

The French critic André Bazin would consider The Searchers to be an excellent example of the Western prototype, and, like Frederick Jackson Turner in his essay "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," Bazin seems to think the frontier was responsible for the unique American national identity. Bazin writes in his article: "The Western: or the American Film Par Excellence": "the continuous movement of the characters, carried almost to a pitch of frenzy, is inseparable from its geographical setting and one might just as well define the western by its set" (141). Bazin seems to mean that the desert-like geographic openness and largeness of the West in the Nineteenth Century, combined with the frequent isolation such a geography brought, is a perfect place for mythic stories (like Frye's Romance mythos). This is because the Western's characters are seldom inhibited by society, the law, or custom (compare Film Noir detectives who are often handicapped to at least some extent by the police). Perhaps part of the reason Ethan Edwards can be such an individualist in the Nineteenth Century is because the Nineteenth Century West privileged such an individualistic lifestyle.

Bazin then goes on to identify the western as facilitating the law's establishment in an epic way, reinforced again by its filming of the epic space of the Western deserts and

\(^1\) Cawelti believes this is because "the six-gun is that weapon which enables the hero to show the largest measure of objectivity and detachment while yet engaging in individual combat" (87).

\(^2\) In this essay, Turner argues that the prerequisites for survival in the American West, namely individualism and self-sufficiency, were responsible for determining the American cultural traits of democracy. Literary critic John Cawelti has summarized recent evidence in the second edition of his The Six-Gun Mystique pp. 3-4 of why most scholars believe Turner to have been completely wrong, namely because he overestimated the amount of individualism and individual freedom in Western society.
prairies. Such typical Western shots, for Bazin, make the Western "the essence of cinema," (141) because it is cinema which is best suited to convey such grandeur. Then, importantly, Bazin notes that the Western's "epic style derives its real meaning only from the morality which underlies and justifies it" (147). Much like the ancient Homeric epics *Iliad* and *Odyssey* were religious and moral texts as well as martial ones, Bazin completes the link by noting the Western's Civil War has become film's equivalent to the ancient Trojan War and that "the migration to the West is our Odyssey" (148). Through Bazin's definition of the Western, it is easy to see how Frye's Romance fits the modern Western film.

Tragedy is the genre analogous to the first three different phases of the Romance. Both Tragedy and Romance share the myth of the birth of the hero (*Anatomy of Criticism* 198; 219), and this hero is conspicuously moral in an immoral world (198; 219). At the same time, Romance tends to be optimistic and idealized and Tragedy pessimistic, because Tragedy is about a dying god (36), "the fall of a leader" (37) and the hero's separation from society. Evil in most Romances is eventually conquered, where, in Tragedy, evil always triumphs in some way, if only in its permanently harmful effects (i.e. death) following its defeat.

Comedy is the genre analogous to the last three phases of the Romance. Comedy, for Frye, is characterized by "the integration of society" (*Anatomy of Criticism* 43), where the end, at least, is characterized by a happy society. This is why Dante's *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, and *Paradiso*--although generally containing much sadness--were entitled *The Divine Commedia*, because the work ends in *Paradiso*. Comedy and Tragedy seem to be related in that Tragedy is necessary to show what a truly happy ending is. So, for instance, Frye describes Comedy Fifth Phase as containing tragedy, and "the comic ending is less a matter of the way the plot turns out than the perspective of the audience" (184).
Romance First Phase Characteristics.

1. “[T]he myth of the birth of the hero” (198).
3. The new world is preceded by “a universal deluge”, which wipes out the old, rotting world, and then there is “an ark, with the potency of all future life contained in it” (198).

*The Searchers* is the story of the search of Martin Pawley (Jeffrey Hunter) and Ethan Edwards (John Wayne) for Edwards’ niece Debbie Edwards (Natalie Wood), who has been kidnapped during a Comanche murder raid in which the rest of the Edwards family died. As Frye writes, in Romance First Phase “there is a search for the child, who has to be hidden away in a secret place” (199). Debbie is the child whom the Comanche hide away. After a long, exhausting search of five years for Debbie, Ethan and Martin finally are able to locate her. Martin saves Debbie and kills her kidnapper, the Comanche named Scar (Henry Brandon). Martin’s rescue attempts succeed despite Ethan’s attempts to kill Debbie (because she has become assimilated as a Comanche, as Scar’s wife, and Ethan considers her, therefore, irredeemably Comanche).
Frye writes that, in Romance, “[t]he First Phase is the myth of the birth of the hero, the morphology of which has been studied in some detail in folklore” (198). Frye adduces the story of Moses—specifically his birth and discovery by Pharaoh’s daughter. As Frye writes: “The infant hero is often placed in an ark or chest floating on the sea, as in the story of Perseus; from there he drifts to land, as in the exordium to *Beowulf*, or is rescued from among reeds and bulrushes on a river bank, as in the story of Moses” (198).

In order to clarify this analogy, I will summarize the Moses story from the Hebrew Bible. It begins with the Hebrew people in Egypt, where the Egyptian Pharaoh, fearing the Hebrews’ power, has commanded that all Hebrew males are to be killed when they are born. A Hebrew mother, perhaps like many other Hebrew mothers of the time, hides her son for three months, and then places him in a papyrus basket and lets him float, hoping that somebody would find him. The child, Moses, is found by the Pharaoh’s daughter, who takes pity on him, and raises him as an Egyptian prince.

However, Moses has to flee to Midian, because he has killed an Egyptian for beating a Hebrew. When Pharaoh discovers this, Moses, of course, is no longer welcome among the Egyptians, but, he is also not trusted by the Hebrews, because they believe him to be an Egyptian. As a youth, he is essentially a man without a family or a people.

Similarly, Martin Pawley is perhaps *The Searchers*’s most heroic character (although he is not necessarily the protagonist), but his family identity, like Moses’ family identity, is fairly confusing. The Edwards family is not Martin’s true family. Martin was rescued by Ethan from an Indian murder raid in which Martin’s parents were killed. So Ethan’s actions resemble that of the Pharoah’s daughter, who drew Moses out of the water when she saw him floating in a basket. Additionally, just as neither the Egyptians nor the Hebrews accepted young Moses as one of their own, Ethan does not view Martin as a full member of the Edwards family. Ethan tells Martin that Debbie is “no kin to you at all,” despite the fact that Martin and Debbie were raised together.

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3 Commonly known as being from the Hebrew verb for “to draw out.”
4 As James Clauss notes in his article "Descent into Hell: Mythic Paradigms and *The Searchers,*" John Ford, "was a voluminous reader, and so perhaps the mythic side of his work emanates in part from a wide exposure to literatures, oral and written, of various peoples and eras" (2). Clauss goes on to note that *The Searchers* parallels the Classic myth of the descent into hell as found in *The Aeneid,* for instance, or Dante's *Inferno.*
Debbie is also somebody whose family identity is ambiguous. Born into the Edwards family, she is kidnapped and assimilated into Scar’s Comanche tribe, as Scar’s wife. As Frye writes: “On dry land the infant may be rescued either from or by an animal, and many heroes are nurtured by animals in a forest during their nonage” (198). Indeed, for Ethan—and for many characters in the movie as well as the movie’s 1956 American audience—Scar is no better than an animal, who has little speech ability and acts only instinctually, without thinking. Of course, Scar, as a human being, can speak. But for the most of the movie, except for a few brief lines, Scar is a mute Indian who only seems to know how to scream the war cry.

Frye writes: “The dragon’s treasure hoard is closely linked with this mysterious infant life enclosed in a chest” (198). In this movie Scar, of course, is the Dragon, and Debbie is the infant life trapped in his chest, who had no means of resistance as a mere child when kidnapped by Scar, much like Moses had no autonomy as a small child in a basket of reeds. Frye writes that “[a] similar association of treasure hoard and infant life appears in more plausible guise in Silas Marner” (198). Indeed, in Silas Marner, the true treasure is revealed at the book’s end not to be Marner’s stash of gold but, instead, the child that he gains—like Debbie is The Searchers’ true treasure (although Ethan doesn’t realize it).

This is also true for Ethan. Frye writes that “[t]he fact that the real source of wealth is potential fertility or new life, vegetable or human, has run through romance from ancient myths to Ruskin’s King of the Golden River” (198). Ethan, at the movie’s beginning, has a full stash of recently minted Yankee dollars (although we’re not sure how he got this stash). He doesn’t need to search for any more money in the movie. The sole focus of his search is Debbie and her fertility. He needs to recapture her so that she can be fertile for white Americans. If he discovers that she has chosen only to be fertile for the Indians (i.e. to be Scar’s wife as long as she lives), he will kill her and he almost does kill her when he discovers that she wishes to stay with Scar and the Comanche.

One of The Searchers’ main conflicts is whether Ethan Edwards will rescue Debbie or kill her for being a Comanche. When he almost kills Debbie (he is only stopped by Martin), he is an example of what Frye calls, in Romance First Phase “a false father [who] appears [and] seeks the child’s death” (199). Ethan does not necessarily want the best for Debbie. He wants her to validate his masculinity by being found and allowing
herself to be taken away. Of course, Ethan—with his hatred of the Comanche and even his hatred of Debbie once she has assimilated into Comanche life—exemplifies America’s belief in “manifest destiny”—that it was the God-given fate of Americans to conquer the Indians and the West and civilize both. As Frye writes, “[i]n more realistic modes the cruel parent speaks with the voice of, or takes the form of, a narrow-minded public opinion” (199) which certainly describes America’s belief in manifest destiny.

*The Searchers* Romance First Phase Analogue: Tragedy First Phase

**Tragedy First Phase Characteristics.**

1. “[T]he central character is given the greatest possible dignity in contrast to the other characters, so that we get the perspective of a stag pulled down by wolves” (219).
2. This is about “the birth of the hero in romance” (219).
3. “[T]he central and typical figure of this phase is the calumniated woman, often a mother the legitimacy of whose child is suspected” (219).

The hero, although not the main protagonist, of *The Searchers* is Martin Pawley. He is the one who protects Debbie from Ethan, when Ethan has decided to kill Debbie, because she wants to stay with the Comanche. *The Searchers'* essential conflict is between Ethan—who is willing to kill Debbie if she has developed any Comanche sympathies—and Martin, whose concern is solely for Debbie, regardless of whether she has Comanche sympathies or not. Ethan’s viewpoint, of course, is more sinister, and he is consistently trying to convince Martin to renounce his own viewpoint, so that Martin is somewhat of a "stag pulled down by wolves" (219) like Ethan.

Frye gives as an example of a Tragedy First Phase, John Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi*, in which “the Duchess, her back to the wall, says ‘I am the Duchess of Malfi still,’ ‘still’ having its full weight of ‘always,’” (220). Frye writes that “we understand how it is that even after her death her invisible presence continues to be the most vital character in the play” (220). In *The Searchers*, for instance, there are numerous women, who, even after their deaths, affect the entire story. The memory of Martha and Lucy Edwards, who
are both raped and killed by Comanche, is perhaps the main reason Ethan continues so obsessively on his quest for revenge. Further, Debbie’s kidnapping—and Edwards’ belief that Scar and Debbie’s marriage is something like culturally sanctioned rape—is yet another important memory which drives Ethan’s search until the movie’s end.

Some might say that *The Searchers* does not end as a tragedy, and this is partly true, since Martin will now settle down with his long-time girlfriend and since Debbie is among the Texans again. However, Martha and Lucy Edwards’ deaths still linger in the movie's memory, as they are forever separated from Martin Pawley as the hero. Their deaths remain the "invisible presence" that "continues to be the most vital character in the play" (220). Debbie's rescue simply can't change their deaths.

![Figure 15: Romance and Tragedy Second Phase](image)

*Shane* (1953) Romance Second Phase

**Romance Second Phase Characteristics.**

1. The innocent youth of the hero who lives in a “pastoral and Arcadian world,” (200) still overshadowed by parents.
2. There is “often a world of magic or desirable law” (200).
3. There is less of an emphasis on adult marriage and more an emphasis on “chaste love”” (200) and a sexual barrier.
4. There is a sense of being close to a moral taboo, despite a “sexual barrier” (200).
The movie *Shane* is the story of a group of homesteaders led by a Joe Starrett (Van Heflin), who are trying to protect their land against land-hungry cow herder Rufus Ryker (Emile Meyer). Shane (Alan Ladd), a wandering gunfighter, arrives in the valley and provides morale and some protection for the homesteaders against Ryker and his men. Ultimately, Ryker hires another gunfighter, Jack Wilson (Jack Palance), to assist him. Wilson kills Torrey, one of the more bold, hotheaded homesteaders, when Torrey tries to draw on him after Wilson has insulted him.\(^5\)

In the movie’s antepenultimate scene, Starrett has decided to confront Ryker. But, of course, in a gunfight between Starrett and Wilson, Starrett, with his relatively slow gun, would be doomed to lose. Shane restrains Starrett, stating that such a mission is suicidal, which it is. The two then begin a fistfight, which Shane ultimately wins by hitting Starrett over the head with his pistol butt. In a final showdown between Shane and Wilson, Shane kills Wilson and Ryker, and the homesteaders’ land is saved.

As Frye writes, Romance Second Phase is about the “innocent youth of the hero, a phase most familiar to us from the story of Adam and Eve in Eden before the fall” (199). Shane as a character is not, in appearances, necessarily an innocent youth—although Alan Ladd was a remarkably young-looking forty years old when *Shane* was made. But Shane is certainly an innocent youth metaphorically, because, unmarried, he doesn't have the responsibilities of family, and, consequently, Shane has almost as much freedom as he wants (Shane tells Starrett, when asked where he is going: “One place or another. Some place I've never been”). Further, Shane, every time he goes from the homestead into the town (Ryker’s territory), rides without his gun, underscoring his innocence, until the movie’s climactic trip into town (when Shane finally wears his gun). Shane doesn't seem to like fighting and only uses his gun in self-defense.

There is also the setting of *Shane*. Frye writes: “In literature this phase presents a pastoral and Arcadian world, generally a pleasant wooded landscape, full of glades, shaded valleys, murmuring brooks, the moon, and other images closely linked with the

\(^5\) Ann-Janine Morey describes this scene as the movie's "only moment of truth" (32), when a hotheaded, drunk Torrey is coldly manipulated into a suicidal duel with the steeled gunfighter Wilson. The rest of the movie, for Morey, is simply a romance which "tells what a nostalgic adult would like for a child to see, what an adult would still like to believe," (32) that is, some adults acting heroically. Torrey and Wilson’s egotistical, hotheaded gunfight is, for Morey, the most realistic way adults tend to act.
female or maternal aspect of sexual imagery” (200). The movie *Shane* was shot in Jackson Hole, Wyoming—in a valley surrounded by wooded mountains with Frye’s “murmuring brooks,” and the movie has some very specific long shots of the moon, interestingly enough. Indeed, the land is very much the feminine, the maternal, which will soon give birth in later years to bustling, prosperous farms. Shane and the others are trying to protect the land from Ryker, who would rape and destroy it.

For Frye, Romance Second Phase “is often a world of magic or desirable law, and it tends to center on a youthful hero, still overshadowed by parents, surrounded by youthful companions” (200). Of course, Western movies like *Shane* often deal with the conflict between desirable, implied “natural law,” too often one without support, and those who live by force, not natural law. Ultimately, it is the natural law, which Shane and Starrett trust in, which triumphs at the movie’s end.

*Shane* is also largely about the vanishing youth of both Shane and Joe Starrett (Brandon De Wilde)—the young boy who idolizes Shane. Indeed, for Shane, both his and Ryker’s “kind of days,” i.e. the gunfighter’s days, “are over.” The difference for Shane is, as he states at the movie’s end, that he knows it, and Ryker doesn’t. Soon, civilized law will tame the Wild West, and the wild gunfighter, who lives by his quick gun, will no longer be of utmost importance. Joey, on the other hand, learns how restrained courage is more important than all-out bravura with a gun (although Shane teaches Joey how to use the gun, Joey is admonished to only use it as a last option).

Frye writes that, in Romance Second Phase, “[t]he archetype of erotic innocence is less commonly marriage than the kind of ‘chaste’ love that precedes marriage; the love of brother for sister, or of two boys for each other” (200). Importantly, *Shane* contains a muted romance between Shane and Starrett’s wife Marian (Jean Arthur), as Shane becomes a father figure for Joey, while Starrett is always working (indeed, overworking) trying to keep his homestead. However, Shane and Marian’s romance never seems to be physically realized. Shane and Marian have similar worldviews (which Starrett doesn’t share) that one’s work is not per se worth getting killed for. Both Shane and Marian give

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6 In *Shane*, like in other Westerns, a sheriff is a long way away—a three day ride, as one of the characters notes.
each other longing looks. One feels Shane and Marian would fall in love with each other if one of them wasn’t already married.

In one scene, Joey tells his mother: “I love Shane. I love him almost as much as I love Pa. That's alright isn't it?”

Marian replies: “He's a fine man.”

Joey: “He's so good. Don't you like him, Mother?”

Marian: “Yes, I like him too, Joey.” Marian then goes to the door, opens it and looks out longingly after Shane, who has left through the door. Then, immediately, she demands a hug from her husband: “Joe, hold me. Don't say anything. Just hold me, tight.” The implication is that Marian truly longs for Shane, and her husband is simply the next best thing. Gabriel Miller writes: "When Shane leaves, Marion calls Starret and asks him to embrace her--clearly troubled by her growing attraction to Shane, she needs to reassure herself in her husband's arms" ("Shane Redux" 70).

At a dance celebrating the Fourth of July, Shane is a much better dancer than Joe Starrett. Frye writes that Romance Second Phase introduces “us to a kind of prison-Paradise or unborn world from which the central characters long to escape to a lower world” (200). While Shane and Marian dance, completely enraptured, one wonders if they are wishing they could escape the “prison-Paradise or unborn world” of Jackson Hole, Wyoming. They seem to “long to escape to a lower world” (200)—a sexual world of adultery and infidelity. Of course, nothing is ever explicitly said (the movie, after all, was made in the 1950s), but the looks and the subtle statements hint at Shane and Marian’s attraction for each other.

Further, Shane seems very sensitive about his relationship with Marian, which is perhaps evidence that he is in love with her. The cattle baron boss, Ryker, points out to Shane, guessing at why Shane is working for Starrett and not for Ryker: “Pretty wife, Starrett's got.” Shane is infuriated, more so than at any other comment Ryker or anybody else makes, and says: “Why you dirty, sick old man.” Of course, anger and embarrassment are often most strong when there is at least a possibility of truth to an accusation in the mind of the accused.

At movie’s end, when Joe Starrett has stubbornly determined to ride on a suicidal trip to fight Ryker and Wilson, Shane has his opportunity to allow Starrett to die, so that
Shane can then possess Marian. He could have had Marian if he had let Joe Starrett fight Jack Wilson (leading to Starrett’s death, since Wilson is much faster with a gun than Joe). But in his heroism he is looking out for Starrett’s best interest, not his own. So Shane doesn’t allow Starrett to fight Wilson and even knocks him out with a gun butt to keep him from doing so.

Shane Romance Second Phase Analogue: Tragedy Second Phase

Tragedy Second Phase Characteristics.
1. A youthful, inexperienced hero (or heroes) faces tragedy for the first time (220).
2. There is “some adjustment to a new and more mature experience” (220).

The analogue of Romance Second Phase is Tragedy Second Phase. Frye writes:

The simplicity of Shaw’s Joan and her lack of worldly wisdom place her here also. For us however the phase is dominated by the archetypal tragedy of the green and golden world, the loss of the innocence of Adam and Eve, who, no matter how heavy a doctrinal load they have to carry, will always remain dramatically in the position of children baffled by their first contact with an adult situation” (220).

Joey, as an innocent young boy, thinks that fighting with guns is a wonderful thing, when, of course, it is not.

In the movie, Joey loves to pretend to shoot things with his index finger and cocked thumb. By the movie’s end, Joey has learned the importance of only using force sparingly, as Shane models this. Frye writes: “In many tragedies of this type the central character survives, so that the action closes with some adjustment to a new and more mature experience” (220). Shane, like Joey, apparently survives (he rides away from the town wounded but still alive), and his survival is in pointed contrast to the death of Torrey, another homesteader whose arrogant braggadocio has led to his death at Wilson’s hands.
Figure 16: Romance and Tragedy Third Phase

*Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962) Romance Third Phase

**Romance Third Phase Characteristics.**

1. Contains “the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle” and “the exaltation of the hero” (187), also known as the struggle, “the point of ritual death” (187) and “the recognition of the hero” (187).\(^7\)

2. “Cyclical imagery is likely to be present” (188).

3. A king, whose land is attacked by a dragon, is “sometimes suffering from an incurable malady or wound” (189) which represents the land’s sterility.

4. The hero arrives and kills the dragon, then marries the king’s daughter and eventually becomes king himself (188).

5. The king’s daughter, having been rescued from a very dangerous place, is strongly connected with Jocasta in *Oedipus the King* (193).

6. “If the leviathan is death,” … “the hero has to die” and is then resurrected (192).

7. After the dragon is dead, his previous victims “come out of him alive” led by the hero who has gone down “the monster’s open throat” (190).

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\(^7\) The Greek term is ‘Anagnorisis’, used by Aristotle in describing Tragedy, although Frye also uses it to refer to Romance. ‘Anagnorisis’ can refer to either the hero’s recognition of the true tragedy of his situation or to the plot’s recognition of the true hero (Liddell 101). Although "most modern critics prefer to define 'recognition' also as a gaining of self-knowledge and moral awareness by a tragic protagonist" (Maxfield 200), Frye uses the term only in the second sense.
Following the dragon’s death, the life-giving rains which have been pent up inside him herald the coming of spring (191-192).

*The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* begins with the entrance of a train into the Western town of Shinbone. Senator Ransom Stoddard (Jimmy Stewart) steps out of the train with his wife, Hallie (Vera Miles). The occasion is the funeral of a certain Tom Doniphon (John Wayne). The fact that the famous Stoddard is attending the funeral of the obscure Doniphon, however, piques the interest of Maxwell Scott (Carleton Young), editor of the local *Shinbone Star*, who demands to know why Stoddard is visiting Shinbone. Stoddard finally agrees to tell the story (in an interview) of why he is mourning the unknown Doniphon so deeply.

Stoddard was a trained lawyer headed West upon Horace Greeley’s advice. However, Stoddard’s stagecoach was robbed by Liberty Valance (Lee Marvin), who beat Stoddard when Stoddard tried to defend a woman passenger and then tore up Stoddard’s law books, asserting the power of violence over theoretical law. The movie traces Stoddard’s attempt to educate the society of Shinbone (where he is taken to convalesce) about the power of law. Over time, Shinbone's most nubile female, Hallie, begins falling in love with Stoddard and so leaves her former boyfriend, the much more masculine, rough Tom Doniphon.

In a showdown between Valance and Stoddard, Valance is shot and killed. Everybody assumes that Stoddard has shot Valance, and so the hero Stoddard is chosen to represent the homesteaders in their battle for statehood (as citizens of a state, the homesteaders would benefit much more than the cattle barons as inhabitants of a territory). Doniphon, while Stoddard is pondering whether being a representative for the homesteaders is worth all the anger and fighting, reveals that it was himself, Doniphon, not Stoddard, who has shot Liberty Valance. The movie replays the shootout scene and shows Doniphon in the shadows shooting Valance, before Valance could kill Stoddard (which Valance certainly would have done, being much better with a gun than Stoddard).

Doniphon shoots Valance despite the fact that saving Stoddard means Doniphon will not be able to marry Hallie, because Hallie has grown to love Stoddard more than Doniphon. As Gaylyn Studlar writes: “Tom Doniphon acts (violently) on the wishes of the woman he loves and, in doing so, destroys his own future” (63). Mark Roche and
Vittorio Hösle add: "[t]he film is clear in telling us that Tom could have beaten Liberty Valance in a draw of guns. That he kills him in a cold-blooded way is in a paradoxical sense even more admirable, for it robs him of a chance for public heroism and thus exhibits a certain renouncement" (143). Doniphon dies an obscure death, selflessly sacrificing his love for Hallie to save Stoddard’s life. The movie ends with Ransom and Hallie leaving Shinbone and a train conductor (Willis Bouchey), upon being thanked for his services by Stoddard, ironically stating: “Nothing’s too good for the man who shot Liberty Valance.”

Frye writes that the Third Phase of the Romance is relative to the Agnorisis, which is the “discovery, the recognition of the hero” (187). Most clearly, Valance is about recognizing the true hero(es)—that Stoddard is not the only hero. Doniphon is a hero also. *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* is not about whether the villain will die (we already know from the movie’s title that the villain, Valance, will be shot). The suspense in the film is about the hero’s identity. Even though Stoddard didn't really kill Valance, he had the courage to force the confrontation in which Doniphon eventually kills Valance. Stoddard and Doniphon are both the heroes, in a sense. It is only that Doniphon hadn’t received his due fame while Stoddard had.

Frye writes: "The central form of quest-romance is the dragon-killing theme exemplified in the stories of St. George and Perseus .... A land ruled by a helpless old king is laid to waste by a seamonster, to whom one young person after another is offered to be devoured" (189). This is exactly Shinbone's situation. The Marshall, Link Appleyard (Andy Devine), doesn't want to face up to Liberty Valance (much like the helpless, old king who can’t protect his dominion). "At that point, the hero arrives, kills the dragon, marries the daughter, and succeeds to the kingdom" (189). This hero is Ran Stoddard, who confronts Valance, supposedly kills him and then marries Hallie. Frye also writes that we (the citizens of Shinbone and other Americans) are “inside the dragon, and the hero comes to help us, the image is suggested of the hero going down the monster’s open throat” (190). Stoddard cannot triumph over Valance until he faces the much-quicker gunfighter in a duel.

“The ritual analogies of the myth suggest that the monster is the sterility of the land itself and the sterility of the land is present in the age and impotence of the king” (189).
Essentially, Valance represents the dryness and the wild violence of the Nineteenth Century American west and the Marshall is the impotent king who can’t stop him. With Valance’s death, we learn at the movie’s end that Stoddard was able to represent the new state in Washington D.C. and bring about the irrigation bill which led to the beautification and quality of life improvement for Stoddard’s constituency. Stoddard is the Fisher King.

*The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* Romance Third Phase Analogue: Tragedy

Third Phase

Tragedy Third Phase Characteristics.

1. The hero’s success is portrayed as being complete (220).
2. The hero’s victory, however, is in the context of a greater tragedy (220).
3. This phase “is often a sequel to a previous tragic or heroic action, and comes at the end of a heroic life” (221) after which there is not much individual success.

Romance Third Phase is analogous to Tragedy Third Phase. It is true in *Valance* that “a strong emphasis is thrown on the success or completeness of the hero’s achievement” (220), but the twentieth century film has often translated the Nineteenth Century, singular hero into the plural, whether in the success of the heroic pair (as in *Lethal Weapon*) or group (as in *Star Wars*). In *Valance*, the hero is actually two people: Stoddard and Doniphon. In that sense their achievement is complete or successful (although one of them dies in anonymity), because they have killed Valance.

In *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* there is also definitely, as Frye writes, the "paradox of victory within tragedy [which] may be expressed by a double perspective in the action" (220). Yes, Stoddard and Doniphon are victorious, but only one of them can get the girl (Hallie), even if they are both heroes. This dooms Doniphon to being a nobody, never mentioned in the town paper. One feels that Doniphon led a very sad, lonely life without Hallie. This is an inescapable tragedy, since there is only one Hallie in the movie, and one each of Stoddard and Doniphon. Although Doniphon is the one
who truly killed Liberty Valance, he doesn’t tell anybody except for Stoddard, in a selfless sacrifice for Stoddard.

Roche and Hösle use two of Giambattista Vico's three ages of historicism to exemplify the difference between Doniphon and Stoddard. Vico's first age, the 'age of gods' is that of theocracy, and its American manifestation (perhaps exemplified in the Puritan theocracy) pre-dates the Nineteenth Century American West of *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*. Eventually, the 'age of gods' becomes an 'age of heroes', where "force and violence reign" (131), and this is, according to Roche and Hösle, is the world of Doniphon, in which Doniphon reigns supreme by killing Liberty Valance. However, Stoddard's arrival in Shinbone. Vico's final age is the 'age of men,' where the "principal equality of all human beings is recognized" (132), and this is Stoddard's world. Roche and Hösle note that, although there are positive aspects of the 'age of men,' for Vico, it also exemplifies an "empty reasoning that has lost any contact to substantial contents, a strategic attitude toward fellow human beings, a lack of roots and traditions and therefore of emotional richness" (133). For Roche and Hösle, this is why Doniphon is ignored in the 'age of men,' and this is part of the "paradox of victory within tragedy" (Frye 220).

![Figure 17: Romance and Comedy Fourth Phase](image)

*The Wild Bunch* (1969) Romance Fourth Phase

**Romance Fourth Phase Characteristics.**

1. A “happier society is more or less visible throughout the action” (200).
2. The emphasis is on “maintaining of the integrity of the innocent world against the assault of experience” (201). By innocence is meant “the temperate mind [which] contains its good within itself, continence being its prerequisite” (201). By experience, Frye means intemperance, which “seeks its good in the external object of the world of experience” (201).

3. An important image is “the beleaguered castle,” (201) apparently representing innocence, assaulted by experience.

*The Wild Bunch*, directed by Sam Peckinpah, is the lighthearted story of a group of outlaws in 1913 Texas and Mexico, whose individual gun fighting skills as outlaws are gradually becoming outdated, as American and Mexican society becomes more organized and technologically efficient. Frye writes that, in Romance Fourth Phase, “the happier society is more or less visible throughout the action instead of emerging in only the last few moments” (200-201). Slapstick, whimsical humor is common in *The Wild Bunch*, mixed with lighthearted music, and, at the same time, people die everywhere, including innocent bystanders. Characters in the Wild Bunch often act on their emotions, in numerous spats, unsafe visits to brothels (where they have been almost captured by the police before), angry assassination attempts. The opening scene is a microcosm for the movie and the Wild Bunch. Children stand by and watch a bank robbery, and after intense gunfights where some of the combatants and many innocent people die, the children begin to engage in pretend gunfights, as if the previous violence and deaths around them were only play. This lightheartedness, even with so much death, including ultimately—the deaths of almost all the Wild Bunch—is typical of the entire movie.

Frye writes that the Fourth Phase is either the “maintaining of the integrity of the innocent world against the assault of experience” (201) or “where the only conflict is to preserve the mood of holiday and festivity against bickering” (201). There is plenty of bickering and internal division among the Wild Bunch. *The Wild Bunch’s* main conflict is whether their leader Pike Bishop (William Holden) will be able to keep them together through their bickering. As they are recovering from the first bank robbery, two longtime members of the Bunch, the Gorch brothers, declare they deserve a larger share of the bank robbery than a certain Angel (Jaime Sanchez), who had only recently joined the Bunch. However, Pike Bishop states: “I don't know a damn thing, except I either lead
this Bunch or end it right now.” When the Bunch discovers that the bank bags they stole are full of worthless metal washers, with absolutely no coin, the tension seems to almost reach a breaking point. The Bunch seems only a few seconds away from killing each other.

But then the hilarity of the older Sykes (Edmond O’Brian) unexpectedly relaxes the tension a little even in the face of so much recent death. The older Sykes has stayed behind to guard fresh horses. Sykes almost seems to scream as he laughs: “Caught you didn't they eh? Tied a tin can to your tail. Let you in and waltz you out again .... Here you are, with a handful of holes, a thumb up your ass, and a big grin to pass the time of day with.”

Of course, this does not seem very conciliatory, and some of the Bunch do take offense at Sykes’ laughter. But on a deeper level, Sykes is attempting to trivialize the Bunch’s hurt pride by laughing about it, so that they don’t become so upset over their failure and end their relationship (by killing each other). Sykes’ attempt to laugh the problem away is an important characteristic of the movie and is, as Frye says, an attempt to “preserve the mood of holiday and festivity against bickering” (201). The Bunch became angry at Sykes, but, by expressing their anger at him, they are distracted from their differences (except with him) and become more of the same Bunch again.

Frye writes that “[i]n romance the central theme of this phase is that of the maintaining of the integrity of the innocent world against the assault of experience” (201). The relatively innocent world of the idealized West is the Bunch’s background. For an outlaw the Nineteenth Century was more or less an innocent world, where they could be successful outlaws, because society was not yet organized enough to stop them efficiently.

But the twentieth century has led to a much more organized, much more clever, society which makes the world an incredibly dangerous place for outlaws. Pike admits himself: “We’ve got to start thinking beyond our guns. Those days are closing fast.” Stephen Prince writes that:

*The Wild Bunch* is located at a transitional time, in 1913, on the eve of World War

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8 To make light of such a serious defeat is an important but incredibly difficult thing for Sykes to do, since, in the botched bank robbery, his grandson Crazy Lee (Bo Hopkins) has been killed.
The machine gun that wreaks such havoc in the film’s climax embodies the modern technologies of violence, Peckinpah believed, which had so deformed contemporary life and were partly responsible for systematic savageries like the Vietnam War. (21)

Indeed, the movie contains mutual flashbacks by friends Pike Bishop and Deke Thornton (Robert Ryan) about their visit to a whore house. In the past, such a visit was safe. In the flashback, Bishop cockily assures Thornton that there will be no problems with the law. However, a police raid immediately follows Bishop’s words and Thornton is captured while Bishop barely escapes. All this is perhaps a result of better organization on the part of the police. Indeed, the whole incident has led Thornton to become a bounty-hunter pursuing Bishop, whose capture or death will keep Thornton out of jail.

This phase deals “with the more difficult theme of consolidating heroic innocence in this world after the first great quest has been completed” (201). The first great quest is the Bunch’s past life in the Nineteenth Century, where quick, accurate guns were all they needed to survive. But now, Pike Bishop realizes that the old days are over. He says, after the opening, failed bank robbery attempt, “this was gonna’ be my last. Ain’t getting around any better. I’d like to make one good score and back off.”

Frye writes that “[t]he temperate mind contains its good within itself, continence being its prerequisite, hence it belongs to what we have called the innocent world. The intemperate mind seeks its good in the external object of the world of experience” (201). The Bunch, for all their lives as outlaws, have focused on the intemperate, success in the external world—how much money they can steal from others. However, as their external success abates (the failed bank robbery in the movie’s opening scene), they actually begin to focus on a different kind of success—a spiritual unity—which is temperate and “contains its good within itself, continence being its prerequisite” (Frye 201). Leonard Engel notes that deeper into the movie those in the Bunch "not only work together more effectively on a professional level … they also show a new vitality and spirit they clearly did not have before" (91).

For example, the Bunch’s newest member, Angel, learns that his girlfriend Teresa (Sonia Amelio) has become the mistress of the Mexican revolutionary Mapache (Emilio Fernandez). Angel’s anger leads him to shoot Teresa as she is being fondled by
Mapache. Mapache takes Angel captive, releases him (per the Wild Bunch’s request), and then takes him captive again after learning that Angel has smuggled some American guns (originally stolen for Mapache) to his family’s village.

The Wild Bunch has a problem. Do they leave Angel behind in Mapache’s hands and continue their career as outlaws, or do they attempt to rescue Angel, even though that rescue attempt might mean their death? The first option would emphasize external success, intemperance (in Frye’s terminology), by ignoring Angel’s imprisonment and choosing to live with the money from their stolen guns. The second option would be more temperate, an internal success in which the Bunch remains together, even if that means they have to die together, and even for somebody who only recently joined their group.

The Wild Bunch chooses to die together, and so they take the long walk to Mapache’s headquarters at the movie’s end. At Mapache’s headquarters, they demand Angel. A drunken Mapache unties Angel’s bonds but then slits Angel’s throat as he falls toward the Wild Bunch. The Wild Bunch immediately shoots Mapache and, then, there is a deadly moment of silence, as the Wild Bunch looks awkwardly at the dozens of Mapache’s armed soldiers staring at them hatefully.

Then, strangely, Bishop and another Bunch sidekick, Dutch Engstrom (Ernest Borgnine), begin to laugh hilariously. There are, of course, various interpretations of this laughter’s meaning, especially since it seems so out of place, because the Bunch knows they are almost certainly about to die. I believe the laughter signifies the Bunch’s realization that they are about to die, but at least they are about to die together, with one purpose, to save Angel or die, and that is the partly joyful thing they are laughing about. This is another example of “the attempt to preserve the mood of holiday and festivity against bickering” (Frye 201). The Wild Bunch chooses a cheerful solidarity in the face of death, taking some pleasure in it, because at least they have stayed together until the end. As Stephen Prince writes “this is a stylistic statement about the unity of purpose with which the Bunch is fighting at the end. By contrast, at the beginning of the film, they are a more fractious group” (16). They are all killed, except for Sykes (who was once more guarding the horses).
The movie ends with Deke Thornton sitting dejectedly outside the gate of Mapache’s village, mourning Pike’s death. As Thornton stares off into space, Sykes rides up to him. The two exchange looks, Thornton tells Sykes of his plans, and then Sykes says: “Me and the boys here [referring to Mexican revolutionaries he has just found in the town], we got some work to do. You wanna’ come along? It ain’t like it used to be, but ... it’ll do.” Sykes begins to laugh, like he had laughed earlier in the movie. Sykes’ laughter is an attempt to resolve the differences between himself (as an emeritus member of the Bunch) and Thornton (a bounty hunter chasing after the Bunch). The movie ends as Deke and Thornton ride away, and, as Timothy Dirks (p. 3 par. 33) notes, we then see a montage of shots of different individuals in the Wild Bunch at points in the movie where they are, most importantly, laughing. The movie’s emphasis, from almost the beginning to the end, is on the use of laughter as a way to deal with life’s suffering and pain. Indeed, in *The Wild Bunch* “the happier society is more or less visible throughout the action” (Frye 200).9

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**The Wild Bunch Romance Fourth Phase Analogue: Comedy Fourth Phase**

**Comedy Fourth Phase Characteristics.**

1. Two social planes, one of which is portrayed as better than the other (182).
2. “A comedy originates in a “normal world,” enters into a “green world,” changes there, and then “returns to the normal world” (182).
3. The green world contains within it “the victory of summer over winter” (183).
4. The rebirth usually results from the feminine (183).
5. The dream world “collides with the stumbling and blinded follies of the world of experience” (183).

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9 John Cawelti notes that movies like *The Wild Bunch* "actually went so far as to reverse the usual pattern of the formula Western and to present the unregenerate, lawless outlaw as a sympathetic figure by expressing a definite sense of regret at his elimination by the agents of law and order" (106).
The Romance Fourth Phase Analogue, Comedy Fourth Phase, sometimes gives us “its action on two social planes, of which one is preferred and consequently in some measure idealized” (182). In *The Wild Bunch*, the two social planes are the two alternatives to the Wild Bunch. They can either fall apart and become individuals crawling over each other after booty, or they can function as one entity, each man willing to die for the other even if it means the death of the entire group. Of course, they all choose the latter at the movie's end, being willing to die in their attempt to rescue Angel. This is the idealized plane. Jeffery Alan Triggs notes that it is at the end "they finally act selflessly" (68), and they are ultimately redeemed characters, despite their outlaw behavior for most of their lives, because of their determination to die together for Angel.

In describing Comedy Fourth Phase, Frye also mentions Aristophanes’ *The Acharnians*, a comedy in which a hero with the significant name of Dicaeopolis (righteous city or citizen) makes a private peace with Sparta, celebrates the peaceful festival of Dionysos with his family, and sets up the pattern of a temperate social order on the stage, where it remains throughout the play, cranks, bigots, sharpers, and scoundrels all being beaten away from it. (182)

As mentioned before, the Bunch is not temperate (with alcohol or women) in the classical dictionary sense of temperance. But they are temperate as Frye defines temperance in Romance Fourth Phase—by the movie's end they have an internal temperance which emphasizes their spiritual bond, as opposed to a focus on external plunder, for instance. This internal temperance entails their attempt to rescue Angel from the evil villain Mapache.

Further, Frye writes:

The green world has analogies ... to the dream world that we create out of our own desires. This dream world collides with the stumbling and blinded follies of the world of experience, of Theseus’ Athens with its idiotic marriage law, of Duke Frederick and his melancholy tyranny, of Leontes and his mad jealousy ... and yet proves strong enough to impose the form of desire on it. (183-184)

The world of experience for the Bunch is a backstabbing, double-crossing world, where they know, for instance, that Mapache would just as gladly kill them (if it means a
higher profit) as do business with them. Their idealism in that they are willing to sacrifice themselves for each other—whereas most other outlaws and bandits would not sacrifice themselves for anything—is the movie’s most touching aspect.

Figure 18: Romance and Comedy Fifth Phase

Once Upon a Time in The West (1968) Romance Fifth Phase

Romance Fifth Phase Characteristics.
1. Emphasis on the natural cycle being viewed from above (202).
2. “[T]he mood is a contemplative withdrawal from or sequel to action rather than a youthful preparation for it” (202).
3. Erotic experience is “comprehended and not … a mystery” (202).
4. The true lovers are at the top of the scale, and the scale moves down towards greater and greater lust and perversion (202).

Once Upon a Time in the West is the story of a mysterious stranger named Harmonica (Charles Bronson) who arrives in a Western desert region with two groups of outlaws in it. Harmonica holds an unidentified grudge against the leader of one of the outlaw groups (who goes simply by Frank (Henry Fonda)). Frank’s gang kills an entire family (the McBains)\(^{10}\) whose farm lies in the way of the railroad being laid down by railroad tycoon

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\(^{10}\) This slaughter of the McBains was, according to Christopher Frayling, first suggested to Leone by the massacre of the Edwards family in The Searchers (254).
Morton (Gabriele Ferzetti), who wants to run the McBains off the land, so that he can buy it fairly cheaply for his railroad.11

The new wife of the family, Jill McBain (Claudia Cardinale) arrives from New Orleans just after the McBains’ deaths (the previous mother had died six years before), and Frank terrorizes her to give up her land. She finally offers the land at a public auction, but Harmonica buys it with the help of the leader of the other group of outlaws named Cheyenne (Jason Robards), for whom the reward of $5,000 is easily enough to take the auction. Later, of course, Cheyenne is freed from jail (apparently, by Harmonica). The movie ends with Harmonica killing Frank in a shootout (Harmonica’s grudge with Frank is that Frank, long ago, had killed Harmonica’s brother), and then Cheyenne dies and Harmonica leaves town, leaving Jill McBain with the farm and soon-to-be railroad outpost and town.

Frye writes that the Fifth Phase “is a reflective, idyllic view of experience from above in which the movement of the natural cycle has usually a prominent place” (202). This is exactly Sergio Leone’s directorial style. The movie’s plot does not cover much action (only a railroad station fight, murder of a family, selling of the family’s land, good guy buys land back for widow of family, bad guy finally kills good guy), but still the movie lasts 165 minutes at a very slow, reflective pace. There is very little dialogue in the movie and many of the characters seem to be simply thinking and pondering. The characters seem to think that there is nothing they can do in their work which will change the “natural cycle” and that they might as well rest until what will happen to them happens. For instance, the camera focuses an entire three or four minutes in the opening sequence on a man trying to sleep as a fly buzzes around him as he waits for the arrival of a train passenger he is supposed to murder. The fly seems almost as much a focus as the attempted murder.

As Luciano Vincenzoni, a Leone assistant editor, said, “Leone is capable of going beyond the shooting schedule for twenty weeks ... and of shooting half a million metres

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11 As Christopher Frayling writes about the movie’s gestation: “the project’s central theme was to be the arrival of ‘civilization’ and ‘progress’ on the rural frontier, in the form of the transcontinental railroad” (251). This theme of the conflict between Western primitive heroism and modern technology, of course, is shared by many Westerns, including four other movies which are the focus of this chapter: *Dances With Wolves*, *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, *Pale Rider*, and *The Wild Bunch*. Indeed, one of Frayling’s theses is that Leone was a ‘postmodernist’ in that he recombined many old ‘cliches’ in new ways.
even if on the screen you'll only see four and a half thousand of them .... But then he finds he’s got all these beautiful things he’s filmed, and of course he doesn't want to throw anything away” (qtd. in Frayling 289). The seemingly inane shots of a fly buzzing around are not for humor, per se, but because that is the movie’s style. Most of the scenes contain quite a bit of thought and observation on the characters’ part with very little dialogue.

*Once Upon a Time In the West* is reflective in another way in that it is an allegory about the passing of the old West with the railroad’s advance. Leone admitted that he took fairly stereotypical, American Western characters “to present a homage to the Western” (qtd. in Frayling 254). Interestingly, however, Leone spoke of these characters in the movie as if they knew themselves to be stereotypical characters, so that the movie is partly their reflection on the deaths of the stereotypical Western roles. Leone said: “Before [the characters] even come on to the scene these stereotypical characters know themselves to be dying in every sense, physically and morally—victims of the new era which was advancing” (qtd. in Frayling 254).

Frye writes: “[T]he mood is a contemplative withdrawal from or sequel to the action rather than a youthful preparation for it” (202). There are no young, wide-eyed Joey Starretts (as in *Shane*) scurrying around, trying desperately to understand as much as possible about the world around them. *Once Upon a Time in the West’s* characters are older and less ambitious than the characters in *Shane*—and more reflective about their contact with the world, as opposed to being wide-eyed about it. All the questions have been answered, and everybody has decided how they will approach life, and they approach it in a very slow, methodical way.

Frye writes that this “is an … erotic world” where “we notice a tendency to the moral stratification of characters .... The true lovers are on top of a hierarchy of what might be called erotic imitations, going down through the various grades of lust and passion to perversion” (202). In *Once Upon a Time in the West*, Jill McBain—a former prostitute from New Orleans—has three love interests (not including her husband, who dies early). Frank is at the bottom of the scale. His relationship with Jill is solely sexual, and because of this she doesn’t really like him. In fact, just before they begin making love, he tells her: “I think ... yeah. I’m beginning to think I might be a little sorry killing you. You
like being alive? You also like to feel the hands of a man all over you. Even if they’re
the hands of a man who killed your husband.” Obviously, it is difficult to love a man
who talks like that in bed, and so Frank is last in Jill’s affections.

Cheyenne is second from the top. He would like his relationship with Jill to be sexual,
but she doesn't allow it. His contentment with that allows him second place in her
appreciation. First place belongs to Harmonica, whose relationship with her is purely
Platonic. His bond with her is the fact that she too is one of Frank's victims (since Frank
killed her new family), like himself (his brother having been killed by Frank). Because
of this, the movie ends with her hint that she would prefer Harmonica over any of the
other two, as she longingly watches him leave.

Once Upon a Time in the West Romance Fifth Phase Analogue: Comedy Fifth Phase

Comedy Fifth Phase Characteristics.
1. A sad tinge. “[T]he comic ending is less a matter of the way the plot turns out than
   the perspective of the audience” (184).
2. Contains tragedy (184).
3. The audience views “the action … from the point of view of a higher and better
   ordered world” (184).
4. “[T]he usual symbol for the lower or chaotic world is the sea, from which the cast, or
   an important part of it, is saved” (184).

The analogue for Romance Fifth Phase is Comedy Fifth Phase. As Frye mentions, the
Comedy Fifth Phase, like Once Upon A Time in the West, does “not avoid tragedies but
contain[s] them” (184). Once Upon A Time is more about the revenge of characters like
Harmonica for past tragedies than anything else. Further, “as the forest in Shakespeare is
the usual symbol for the dream world in conflict with and imposing its form on
experience, so the usual symbol for the lower or chaotic world is the sea, from which the
cast, or an important part of it, is saved” (184). There is not a literal sea here, but the
symbolic sea is the desert. Jill McBain is first threatened with and then saved by the
railroad, which gives her a living when Harmonica is able to buy the land with Cheyenne as the ransom price.

Frye writes that the *cognitio*, the moment of realization, in Comedy Fifth Phase seems “both far-fetched and inevitably right, outraging reality and at the same time introducing us to a world of childlike innocence which has always made more sense than reality” (184). Harmonica has searched for Frank for many years. When Harmonica was a young adolescent, Frank had killed Harmonica’s brother (played by Claudio Mancini).¹²

Harmonica’s brother’s death was particularly disturbing. Frank tied both Harmonica’s hands and the hands of his older brother. Then, he hung a noose from an arch. Frank then hung Harmonica’s brother from the noose, not quite killing him. Quickly, Frank placed Harmonica’s brother’s legs upon Harmonica’s shoulders (Frank had also placed a harmonica in young Harmonica’s mouth, hence the name). Harmonica, with his hands tied, could do nothing and, eventually, weakened and fell to the ground, hanging his own brother in the noose. Most people would shudder. Not only has Frank killed Harmonica’s brother, Harmonica’s brother lived only as long as Harmonica had the strength to stand. This is the murder, understandably, Harmonica so desperately desires to avenge.

However, Harmonica’s killing of Frank at the movie’s end, although not an impossible occurrence, does seem somewhat unlikely. First, locating a wandering outlaw who doesn't want to be found late in the Nineteenth Century in the vast West would have been a difficult thing. Additionally, Harmonica’s final gunfight with Frank, where the two face each other alone, although again not impossible, seems even more unlikely added to the first. But the poignancy of Harmonica’s brother’s death—Frank’s forcing a young boy to unwillingly be (technically) responsible for his brother’s death—is so despicable that Frank’s death, although unrealistic, feels “inevitably right” (Frye 184). Although the movie’s ending seems far-fetched, one is grateful that the “world of childlike innocence ... has always made more sense than reality” (184), because, otherwise, Frank’s hateful deed would never have been punished. It is childishly

¹² The reason, in the movie, is not given.
innocent to believe *all* such sadistic murders were avenged in the Nineteenth Century West, but it is what the child in all of us would want and expect.

*Figure 19: Romance and Comedy Sixth Phase*

**Dances With Wolves (1990) Romance Sixth Phase**

**Romance Sixth Phase Characteristics.**

1. There is a movement from “active to contemplative adventure” (202).

2. “A characteristic feature of this phase is the tale in quotation marks, where we have an opening setting with a small group of congenial people, and then the real story is told by one of its members” (202).

3. “The history is conceived not only as a progression but as a cycle of which the audience is the end, and, as the last page indicates, the beginning as well” (203).

4. There is a “cosmic disaster destroying the whole fictional society except a small group, which begins life anew in some sheltered spot” (203).

*Dances With Wolves* is the story of a certain Union Lieutenant Dunbar (Kevin Costner) who fights in the Civil War. Dunbar has become increasingly jaded by the war and its horrors. One day, in intense pain from a leg wound that has been left untreated by the doctor, he decides to commit suicide by riding in front of the Confederate battle line. However, all the Confederate soldiers shooting at him miss him, and the Union soldiers charge to save him and actually overrun the Confederate lines. Although intending
suicide, Dunbar becomes a hero (an ironic commentary, perhaps, on what is necessary for success and heroism in war), because a certain General Tide (Donald Hotton) has watched the action and thinks Dunbar has charged the Confederate lines heroically. As Dunbar comments: “The strangeness of this life cannot be measured: in trying to produce my own death, I was elevated to the status of a living hero.” Tide gives Dunbar the freedom to choose his next assignment, and Dunbar chooses an assignment in the far West, hoping to discover the West, as he says, “before it’s gone.”

Dunbar begins to rehabilitate a deserted Western outpost and soon develops a friendship with Lakota Sioux. Although the Lakota distrust Dunbar at first, when Dunbar spots a buffalo herd running near his outpost and tells the Sioux of the herd (the Lakota wouldn’t have seen the herd otherwise), he becomes a Lakota hero. Eventually, Dunbar falls in love with and marries a Lakota widow, Stands With Fist (who, as a young white American girl, was captured in an Indian murder raid—as in *The Searchers*). Just as the Lakota are leaving for their winter grounds because of the gradual encroachment of American troops, Dunbar temporarily returns to his fort where he is captured by the army soldiers. Dunbar, however, is soon rescued by the Lakota, and the movie ends with the Lakota continually on the move, but their relationship with Dunbar has been sealed, so that he is essentially a Lakota by movie’s end.

Frye writes that “[a] central image of this phase, a favorite of Yeats, is that of the old man in the tower, the lonely hermit absorbed in occult or magical studies” (202). Although Dunbar is not literally in a tower, he is in a tower metaphorically. He is at his outpost fort so that he can better understand himself. In the West, he is very much a lonely hermit at the movie’s beginning, yet the loneliness ultimately spurs on his successful integration with the Lakota. His loneliness makes him much bolder in visiting the Lakota Sioux nearby when, if he hadn’t been so lonely for instance, he would not have made such visits and would not have become one of the Lakota.

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13 Amanda Smith and Thomas Loe describe this as his mythical descent--not into hell but into a world with a higher level of knowledge (199). Smith and Loe argue convincingly that there are gatekeepers for each level of descent, such as Major Fambraugh (Maury Chaykin) and Timmons (Robert Pastorelli), Dunbar's mule driver. In both these cases, at least, the gatekeepers die (Fambraugh by suicide; Timmons is killed by the Pawnee) so that "the route back to the East and original self is effectively closed" (200).
Frye writes that “[t]he history is conceived not only as a progression but as a cycle of which the audience is the end, and, as the last page indicates, the beginning as well” (203). *Dances with Wolves*’s ending is entirely optimistic, because although the Wild West is a dangerous world for the Lakota (of whom John Dunbar is now a member), at least they are together as they face the hordes of soldiers and settlers from the East. The movie ends with Wind In His Hair (Rodney A. Grant), once Dunbar’s sworn enemy, shouting: “Dances With Wolves! I am Wind In His Hair! Do you see that I am your friend? Can you see that you will always be my friend?” Dunbar’s worst Lakota enemy has become his best friend. Dunbar has truly been accepted by the Lakota.

Frye gives Henry James’s *The Turn of the Screw* as an example of Romance Sixth Phase: “a large party ... telling ghost stories in a country house; then some people leave, and a much smaller and more intimate circle gathers around the crucial tale” (202). Of course, the tale in *Dances With Wolves* is history. Who will tell it? Should it be told by the vast white American nation, who will argue that the Lakota should have surrendered to manifest destiny? Or should it be told by a more ‘intimate’ circle, around a Lakota council fire, by the Lakota themselves and those who joined the Lakota (like John Dunbar or Stands With Fist)? Indeed, Dunbar narrates *Dances With Wolves* from the Lakota viewpoint, almost as if he were telling the story at a Lakota council fire.

Frye writes that this phase “usually takes the form of some cosmic disaster destroying the whole fictional society except a small group, which begins life anew in some sheltered spot” (203). The cosmic disaster in *Dances With Wolves* is the Civil War. Dunbar, as one of the rare soldiers who is given permission to completely escape the Civil War, “begins life anew in some sheltered spot” on the Midwestern prairie. The next disaster will be the gradual conquest of the West by the soldiers and settlers, from which it will be harder for the Lakota to find any shelter.

*Dances With Wolves* Romance Sixth Phase Analogue: Comedy Sixth Phase
Comedy Sixth Phase Characteristics.

1. Social units disintegrate into one isolated individual (185).
2. There is the “sense of individual detachment from routine existence,” “secret and sheltered places, forests in moonlight, secluded valleys” (185).
3. Sometimes it is closely connected “psychologically with a return to the womb” (186).

From the beginning of *Dances with Wolves*, Dunbar is a loner. At the fort he is alone. He charges a whole company of the Confederate army by himself. Even among the Lakota—with whom he has developed close friendships—he desires to sleep alone, at least at first. As Frye says, “In this phase the social units become small and esoteric, or even confined to a single individual” (185). At first, Dunbar’s social unit is the Union army, although he is a loner within that. By the movie's end, his social unit has become smaller (a group of Lakota Sioux). Further, the Sioux, although a communal people, are portrayed as much more individualistic and heterogeneous, because the movie gives us more of their individual lives than the homogenized American soldiers.

Dunbar is a man who has been driven wild by the demands of civilization, particularly the Civil War. He wants, as Frye describes it, “the sense of individual detachment from routine existence” (185). He is able to receive orders for duty out West on the frontier where he hopes to escape to individuality. This is much like “the kind of imaginative withdrawal portrayed in Huysman's *A Rebours*” (186). The movie is full of “secret and sheltered places” (185), especially at the end when the Lakota withdraw to a secret mountain range which will protect them from the soldiers for some time. Frye writes that “myths closely connected psychologically with a return to the womb are appropriate” (186), and, at movie’s end, the Lakota are escaping to the matriarchal earth away from, temporarily, the soldiers and settlers.

Then there is “the love of the occult and the marvelous” (185) (I take occult here to mean something like “accessible to a select few”). Lieutenant Dunbar is attracted to the Lakota partly because he knows very little about them (like he knows very little about the frontier, especially at the movie’s beginning). Most of the movie is simply a description of how Lieutenant Dunbar joins a group he wasn’t previously a member of. That process is largely an individual one, where an individual faces many unique battles, where the “social units become small and esoteric” (185).
Other Movies Examined and Categorized According to Frye’s Phases

Romance Sixth Phase Characteristics.

1. There is a movement from “active to contemplative adventure” (202).
2. “A characteristic feature of this phase is the tale in quotation marks, where we have an opening setting with a small group of congenial people, and then the real story is told by one of its members” (202).
3. “The history is conceived not only as a progression but as a cycle of which the audience is the end, and, as the last page indicates, the beginning as well” (203).
4. There is a “cosmic disaster destroying the whole fictional society except a small group, which begins life anew in some sheltered spot” (203).

Three outlaws have all discovered that a certain Bill Carson has hidden thousands of dollars in an unmarked grave just before he died. Although all three know the cemetery’s name, only one of them knows the specific gravesite, as we will see. This one outlaw is Blondie (The Good) (Clint Eastwood), who uses this knowledge to bribe the other outlaws (often about to kill him) to keep him alive throughout the movie. Tuco (The
Ugly) (Eli Wallach) is the outlaw who sometimes double-crosses Blondie, and sometimes saves him, depending on how much money he thinks he will get for each action, while Angel Eyes (The Bad) is a ruthless killer.

In the movie’s beginning, Blondie has saved Tuco (an infamous outlaw) from death by hanging, and Blondie concocts a scheme where he continually turns Tuco in for the reward money and then shoots away the rope as Tuco’s litany of crimes is read just before he is hanged, allowing Tuco to escape. Tuco, of course, resents this job and his frequent near-death experiences and, when he has a chance to escape, does so. He captures Blondie and then forces Blondie to march across the desert without water, while Tuco follows him under an umbrella on a horse well-supplied with water. In the desert, they see a driverless carriage with dead and dying soldiers inside, including the aforementioned Bill Carson, a dying soldier begging for water who claims to have recently buried some hidden treasure. Carson tells Tuco the name of the cemetery but then begs for water. Tuco goes for water, saying: “Don't die, I'll get you water. Stay there. Don't move, I'll get you water. Don't die until later.”

However, by the time Tuco returns with water, Carson has died, having whispered the gravesite’s name to Blondie. Both men now have information the other doesn’t have, which keeps them from killing each other at various points throughout the movie. Angel Eyes, who has learned about the treasure from another source, strikes up a partnership with Blondie, not because of any mutual liking, but only because Tuco (under torture) has told Angel Eyes the cemetery name, and because Angel Eyes knows Blondie won’t break under torture. Allegiance for the outlaws is only to the people who, at that moment, can help one or save one, so there is no true allegiance. The movie ends with a three-way shootout—Angel Eyes shot to death by Blondie, Tuco has an empty gun (from which Blondie has previously emptied the bullets). Tuco is precariously perched on a tombstone with a noose around his neck, alone in the desert without a horse with half the money (which Blondie has chivalrously given him before leaving him alone in the desert). Blondie is riding away with the other half of the money and lastly he shoots the rope in two so that Tuco's life is spared.

Frye writes that “[a] central image of this phase, a favorite of Yeats, is that of the old man in the tower, the lonely hermit absorbed in occult or magical studies” (202).
essence, therefore, of Romance Sixth Phase is isolation, and isolation is the motif of *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly*. Despite all the movie’s supposed alliances, brittle comradery, and lighthearted joking between the three outlaws, they are isolated from each other, because not one of them truly trusts either of the others.

Frye writes that this phase “usually takes the form of some cosmic disaster destroying the whole fictional society except a small group, which begins life anew in some sheltered spot” (203). The cosmic disaster in this movie, as in *Dances With Wolves*, is the Civil War. The Civil War actually allows the outlaws freedom to do what they want, because the governments are more focused on winning the Civil War than on keeping order and peace in their respective societies. So Blondie and Tuco, for instance, are able to survive the Civil War exactly because they don’t have the integrity to fight in it. They are only living for themselves and their survival, not for any cause.

Frye writes that Sixth Phase Romance “marks the end of a movement from active to contemplative adventure” (202). Of course, “contemplative” perfectly fits Blondie. Typically, Blondie’s reaction to a dangerous situation is to simply light his small cigar calmly and reflectively, often staring at the source of the supposed problem. At one point, when Tuco is about to face off in a gunfight with Angel Eyes and his gang, as Tuco is slinking and slouching worriedly towards Angel Eyes’ house, he looks to his left and sees Blondie staring at him unconcernedly, smoking a cigar. Blondie says: “Well, you gonna’ die alone?” nonchalantly, as if he were asking a question about a menu item or a dinner special.

Later, at a deserted, bombed out house with a seemingly random, abandoned cannon outside of it, Tuco steals Blondie’s horse to ride away towards the cemetery. Blondie watches him unconcernedly, and then slowly, unhurriedly, uses his cigar to light the cannon fuse. The shot, perfectly measured (although Blondie has not moved or adjusted the cannon at all and has assumed it is properly loaded without examining it) knocks Tuco off the horse. The camera focuses for a few seconds on Tuco scurrying around in fear. We then see another shot of Blondie standing watchfully with a cannon-bore in his hand. In the few seconds we were watching Tuco, Blondie has apparently reloaded the cannon and now seems to be almost relaxing before he fires the cannon again. This second cannon blast sends Tuco scurrying away for cover and away from the horse,
which Blondie later recovers. As throughout the movie, Tuco is in a frenzy, while the movie’s hero Blondie is always composed and calm--Frye's "contemplative adventure" (202).14

_The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly_ Romance Sixth Phase Analogue: Comedy Sixth Phase

Comedy Sixth Phase Characteristics.
1. Social units disintegrate into one isolated individual (185).
2. There is the “sense of individual detachment from routine existence,” “secret and sheltered places, forests in moonlight, secluded valleys” (185).
3. Sometimes it is closely connected “psychologically with a return to the womb” (186).

As Frye says, “In this phase the social units become small and esoteric, or even confined to a single individual” (185). This, again, is the isolation of the outlaws from each other, because nobody can trust anybody else. Despite all the talk about teams, the movie ends with all three of the bandits alone, and that is their preferred method of working. Again, other people are only a means for each outlaw to get what he wants. There is also “the sense of individual detachment from routine existence” (185). Routine existence in the early 1860’s in America was the death and dying in the Civil War, and the three outlaws are able to protect themselves from that.

Frye writes that, in this phase, there are “[s]ecret and sheltered places, forests in moonlight, secluded valleys, and happy islands” and “the _penseroso_ mood of romance ... the sense of individual detachment from routine existence” (185). The most prominent aspect of _The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly_ is the desert, which, although it isn’t sheltered, certainly is a very ‘secluded’ and ‘secret’ place, because very few people are brave.

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14 As Edward Buscombe writes: “Sergio Leone ... set out to construct works that deliberately play with the conventions of the American Western, rather than slavishly imitate them. Sometimes the spaghettis parody by isolating a characteristic and exaggerating it. The taciturnity of Blondie is a _reductio ad absurdum_ of the ‘yep’ and ‘nope’ vocabulary of the Gary Cooper manner” (Stagecoach 75).
enough to cross it (which is exactly why both Tuco and Blondie often go to the desert for safety from the law).

![Diagram of Romance and Tragedy Third Phase]

Figure 21: Romance and Tragedy Third Phase

*High Noon (1952)* Romance Third Phase

**Romance Third Phase Characteristics.**

1. Contains “the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle” and “the exaltation of the hero” (187), also known as the struggle, “the point of ritual death” (187) and “the recognition of the hero” (187).

2. “Cyclical imagery is likely to be present” (188).

3. A king, whose land is attacked by a dragon, is “sometimes suffering from an incurable malady or wound” (189) which represents the land’s sterility.

4. The hero arrives and kills the dragon, then marries the king’s daughter and eventually becomes king himself (188).

5. The king’s daughter, having been rescued from a very dangerous place, is strongly connected with Jocasta in *Oedipus the King* (193).

6. “If the leviathan is death,” … “the hero has to die” and is then resurrected (192).
7. After the dragon is dead, his previous victims “come out of him alive” led by the hero who has gone down “the monster’s open throat” (190).

8. Following the dragon’s death, the life-giving rains which have been pent up inside him herald the coming of spring (191-192).

*High Noon* fits all eight phases of Frye's Romance Third Phase. *High Noon* is the story of a recently married Hadleyville Town Marshall Will Kane (Gary Cooper) who, after his marriage, has decided to retire and begin his own country store with his wife, Amy Kane (Grace Kelly). However, just as he is about to leave town, Kane learns that outlaw Frank Miller, whom Kane had captured and helped convict five years before, has been released from jail and is returning to Hadleyville. At first, Kane is convinced by Amy to leave town quickly. But—feeling that leaving town is simply a cowardly delay of an inevitable duel—he decides to return to town to raise a posse to finally kill Miller.

However, Kane is unable to find anybody from Hadleyville competent to join his posse, since everybody is scared of Frank Miller. Meanwhile, continual closeups of the clock moving inexorably towards noon (Frye's "cyclical imagery" (188) heighten the tension. Despite his wife’s protestations, Kane decides to fight Frank Miller and his three outlaws alone. The movie ends with Kane, with his wife’s courageous assistance (because she fears her husband is about to die—she even kills one of the four men, Pierce (Sheb Wooley)), triumphing. All four outlaws are killed, and so the town is saved. After Kane and his wife have disposed of Miller's gang, Kane throws his sheriff’s badge into the dust.

As Frye writes: “The complete form of the romance is clearly the successful quest, and such a completed form has three main stages: the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die; and the exaltation of the hero” (Frye 187). Some might be skeptical about *High Noon* containing a quest, since a quest is associated with a journey and since Will Kane remains, for most of the movie, in Hadleyville. Indeed, Kane turns back from his initial quest—to leave Hadleyville and begin a new life with his wife--away from the danger of being a town marshall. But Will Kane’s quest is actually in his heart and mind and soul. Does he have the courage to face
a renowned killer, even all alone? So Kane’s quest is his attempt to find and maintain his courage, even in the face of daunting odds (as he faces four outlaws all by himself).

In *High Noon*, Kane’s preliminary minor adventures are his attempts to win over the townspeople to fight with him. He tries two places which are polar opposites to each other, the bar and the church. As Ann-Janine Morey writes "[t]he church and the saloon show themselves to be the same kind of resource—neither gathering will act on Kane's behalf, and the public owner of the saloon is a prominent church member" (33). Indeed, as Will Wright notes, “it is clear that the town is the hero’s real enemy, not Miller and his men” (75-76).

“Thus the romance expresses more clearly the passage from struggle through a point of ritual death to a recognition scene that we discovered in comedy” (Frye 187). Essentially, most of the townspeople believe Kane will certainly die. The townspeople think Kane's actual death will only be a ritual. For them, Kane is certainly a walking dead man, since he is intending to face four villainous, expert gunslingers, alone. This makes his survival, when it actually happens, seem even more miraculous than it actually is. As Frye writes: “[l]astly, if the leviathan is death, and the hero has to enter the body of death, the hero has to die, and if his quest is completed the final stage of it is, cyclically, rebirth, and, dialectically, resurrection” (192). Facing such certain death, *High Noon*’s ending, where Kane is not killed, is almost a resurrection for Kane.

Further, Frye writes: “A land ruled by a helpless old king is laid waste by a seamonster, to whom one person after another is offered to be devoured, until the lot falls on the king’s daughter: at that point the hero arrives, kills the dragon, marries the daughter, and succeeds to the kingdom” (189). The seamonster, of course, is Frank Miller, who had been responsible for prostitution and corruption while he ‘ruled’ in Hadleyville. The daughter, in this case, is Kane’s wife, who wants Kane to settle down in a country store and not fight Miller. But Kane feels he must face Miller at high noon. Otherwise, as he states, “[w]e’d never be able to keep that store, Amy. They’d come after us and we’d have to run again, as long as we live.” Ultimately, of course, Kane will kill the dragon and his marriage to Amy will at last be safe.

“The ritual analogies of the myth suggest that the monster is the sterility of the land itself, and that the sterility of the land is present in the age and impotence of the king”
The Justice of the Peace in *High Noon* is Percy Mettrick (Otto Kruger), who first convicted Frank Miller of murder some five years earlier. Having heard of Miller’s return, Mettrick is about to leave town, despite Kane’s protestations that he stay. Mettrick is an older judge who has faced a similar situation before when a criminal he had convicted returned for revenge. The only thing to save him then, he says, was “a very handsome ring which once belonged to my mother. Unfortunately,” Mettrick says, “I have no more rings.”

Mettrick, as he himself notes, is less focused on keeping justice in the town and more focused on living. He values his own life over any sense of justice. So he will live to be an old, still impotent judge. As Mettrick explains: “I've been a judge many times in many towns. I hope to live to be a judge again.” Mettrick does not want to sacrifice himself for anything but especially not Hadleyville. He points out to Kane that it is a wasteland: “This is just a dirty little village in the middle of nowhere. Nothing that happens here is really important. Now get out.” Mettrick is the impotent king of a sterile land, which will always be impotent as long as people like himself value their lives over justice.

Frye writes: “In the folk tale versions of dragon-killing stories we notice how frequently the previous victims of the dragon came out of him alive after he is killed. Again, if we are inside the dragon, and the hero comes to help us, the image is suggested of the hero going down the monster’s open throat ... and returning with his redeemed behind him” (190). One of Frank Miller’s and Kane’s ex-lovers is Helen Ramirez, who owns a town store. She is an example of somebody who is swallowed up by Miller even before he returns. Apparently, she was once Miller's mistress and left him for Kane. She now fears Miller’s revenge, and so, in the hour before Miller’s return, she sells her store for two thousand dollars, far less than it is actually worth. Of course, when Kane kills Miller, she will be able to return again to town and will be the “redeemed” returning with Kane once Miller is dead.

The second person Kane redeems is his wife Amy, who finally decides to help Kane kill Frank Miller’s gang, despite her pacifistic beliefs. Previously, Amy had said “I don’t care who’s right or wrong. There’s got to be some better way for people to live” than violence. As Joana Rapf writes about this statement, Amy’s beliefs are “[n]oble
sentiments, but these mythic absolutes give way to pragmatic ideology by the end of this film when she is forced, not through reason but through emotion, to kill for ‘her man,’ and in a sense, ‘to defend her property,’ for within the social system a husband is property” (78).

Frye writes: “This bride-figure is ambiguous: her psychological connection with the mother in an Oedipus fantasy is more insistent than in comedy” (193). Amy Fowler is something of a Jocasta figure. In Sophocles’ Oedipus the King, Jocasta soon guesses that Oedipus is her son. But, when she knows Oedipus is about to discover definitive evidence that Jocasta, already his wife, is his mother too, she encourages him to stop the investigation into Thebes’ miasma permanently (even though that would mean the plague continuing to afflict Thebes indefinitely, according to the oracle, because its source has not been discovered and punished). Essentially, Jocasta would rather keep Oedipus and herself from danger than save the city and all the people in it. Oedipus, however, is determined to uncover all the definitive evidence about Laius’s murder, even if that murderer is himself, as he begins to suspect near the play’s end (in the same way Kane is determined to face the Miller gang even if it means his own death).

In High Noon, Amy Kane is more concerned with her husband’s life than that he protect the people of Hadleyville from the evil, corrupt Frank Miller (like Jocasta prefers to keep her secrets hidden). However, Stephen Prince points out that: “Kane’s decision to return [to town to fight] is not just a matter of personal honor …. It also entails a social commitment and broader political stance that goes beyond his own individuality …. He chooses fraternity over isolation, and it is the narrative irony … that the community will not honor the choice he has made” (66). Almost all the townspeople from Kane’s former deputy, Harvey Pell (Lloyd Bridges) to Kane's mentor, Martin Howe (Lon Chaney Jr.) refuse to help Kane fight. Those who agree either eventually decide to protect their family instead or are too young.

Frye writes how the woman in this phase “is often to be found in a perilous, forbidden, or tabooed place, like Brunnhilde’s wall of fire or the sleeping beauty’s wall of thorns, and she is, of course, often rescued from the unwelcome embraces of another and generally older male, or from giants or bandits or other usurpers” (193). Will Kane’s duel with Frank Miller and his three sidekicks actually saves Amy a wandering,
miserable life of trying to escape Frank Miller. Indeed, while the three outlaws wait for Frank Miller to arrive on the noon train, Amy buys her own ticket for the noon train (at this point, she is determined to leave Kane), and one of the three outlaws looks at her lasciviously. She is told by the Station Master (Ted Stanhope) to wait in the town hotel (near her husband).

**High Noon Romance Third Phase Analogue: Tragedy Third Phase**

**Tragedy Third Phase Characteristics.**

1. The hero’s success is portrayed as being complete (220).
2. The hero’s victory, however, is in the context of a greater tragedy (220).
3. This phase “is often a sequel to a previous tragic or heroic action, and comes at the end of a heroic life” (221) after which there is not much individual success.

“The Third Phase, corresponding to the central quest-theme of romance, is tragedy in which a strong emphasis is thrown on the success or completeness of the hero’s achievement” (220). This, indeed, is part of the thrill, and success, of *High Noon*. Will Kane’s courage is what makes the movie successful, his ability to stand up against difficult odds even when everybody around him tells him he is essentially committing suicide. The movie’s ending is much more powerful when he succeeds by himself than if he had been successful raising a large posse of many men to kill Ben Miller. Having killed Ben Miller, Kane can now, as Frye writes, enjoy “a full rich serenity that goes far beyond a mere resignation to Fate” (221).

“The paradox of victory within tragedy may be expressed by a double perspective in the action” (220). The movie’s tragedy is the cowardliness of an entire town (except for Kane) in not standing up to a serious threat. Nobody competent answers Kane’s call for a posse. Kane doesn’t, ultimately, find a single supporter even in the church, supposedly full of people who are willing to sacrifice themselves for the right cause. This phase “is often a sequel to a previous tragic or heroic action, and comes at the end of a heroic life” (221). After Miller had been captured five years earlier, all the heroism has gradually
seeped out of the town. Most tragic of all, according to Will Wright, is that “the film, incidentally, makes it very clear that this is not a particularly corrupt town, that it is typical of all society” (77).

**Figure 22: Romance and Tragedy Second Phase**

**Pale Rider** (1985) Romance Second Phase

**Romance Second Phase Characteristics.**

1. The innocent youth of the hero who lives in a “pastoral and Arcadian world,” (200) still overshadowed by parents.
2. There is “often a world of magic or desirable law” (200).
3. There is less of an emphasis on adult marriage and more an emphasis on “chaste love” (200) and a sexual barrier.
4. There is a sense of being close to a moral taboo, despite a “sexual barrier” (200).

*Pale Rider* is Clint Eastwood’s adaptation of George Stevens’s *Shane* (1953). Like *Shane*, it chronicles the sudden appearance of a skilled gunfighter in a Western town where business interests (employed by miner Coy LaHood (Richard Dysart)) are attempting to expunge settlers (led by Hull Barret (Michael Moriarty)) whose land is in the way of their mineral rights. The Preacher (Clint Eastwood) appears riding towards the settlement just as Megan Wheeler (Sydney Penny) prays for somebody to save the settlement from LaHood and his men (who have just killed her dog). The Preacher—who beats up several of LaHood’s men (basically by himself)—including the seven foot two
Club (Richard Kiel)\textsuperscript{15} is able to unite the settlement against LaHood. LaHood then hires a mercenary gunfighter, Stockburn (John Russell) and his gang of supposed ‘marshals’ to kill the Preacher, but the Preacher kills all the marshals and so saves the settlement.

Frye writes that Romance Second Phase “presents a pastoral and Arcadian world, generally a pleasant wooded landscape, full of glades, shaded valleys, murmuring brooks, the moon, and other images closely linked with the female or maternal aspect of sexual imagery” (200). \textit{Pale Rider} was shot at Sawtooth National Recreation Area in Ketchum, Idaho, a park full of snow-covered mountains (at least fifty over ten-thousand feet high) and valleys (“GORP: Sawtooth National Recreation Area”) and in Columbia, California (the same filming location for \textit{High Noon}) ("Filming Locations for \textit{High Noon}"). A “murmuring brook,” where the settlers pan for gold, is a central battleground in the movie (since LaHood and his men dam the brook’s source as a way of intimidating the gold rushers).

As Frye writes, the images in Romance Second Phase are “closely linked with the female or maternal aspect of sexual imagery” (200). The central problem of \textit{Pale Rider} is that the LaHoods are hydraulic mining (where they flush out a ravine with water from high-powered hoses sending the dirt into large sluices which filter out the gold). Coy LaHood, meanwhile, is being criticized by California politicians who rightly argue that such mining destroys the environment. These politicians want to, eventually, outlaw hydraulic mining, and LaHood is realizing that he must get at the settler’s land before hydraulic mining is outlawed. Ann Ronald writes: “As cinematography makes clear, sluicing is the forerunner of ecological disaster, and Lahood’s operation ... rapes the land” (8). As Ronald also notes, Hull Barret’s settlers in Carbon Canyon, who are panning for gold, are much less rapacious and destructive of the land than the LaHoods.

Megan Wheeler is \textit{Pale Rider}’s equivalent of Joey Starrett (Sydney Penny was thirteen at the time of \textit{Pale Rider}’s release in the United States). As Frye writes, in Romance Second Phase “[t]he archetype of erotic innocence is less commonly marriage than the kind of ‘chaste’ love that precedes marriage; the love of brother for sister, or of two boys for each other” (200). Megan is wide-eyed and in love with the much older

\textsuperscript{15} Kiel played the character Jaws in two James Bond films.
Preacher (Eastwood was fifty-five in *Pale Rider*). She tells the Preacher: “I think I love you.”

The Preacher, apparently flattered, tells Megan there is nothing wrong with this. She then states, a little unsure of herself: “There can’t be anything wrong with making love either.” As Frye writes, in Romance Second Phase, “the sense of being close to a moral taboo is very frequent” (200). There are, of course, quite a few societal taboos against sexual intercourse between a thirteen year old and fifty-five year old. The Preacher tells her that he is not the right man for her, and Megan explodes, running away from him, with fairly self-centered naivete. At the movie’s end, she shouts after the Preacher, after he has left the town: “Preacher. We all love you, Preacher. I love you. Goodbye.” Ultimately, Megan’s love for the Preacher remains chaste, because he won’t allow it to become physical.

As Frye writes “[t]he Second Phase brings us to the innocent youth of the hero, a phase most familiar to us from the story of Adam and Eve in Eden before the Fall” (199-200). Late in the movie, Megan—with her usual incredible naivete, almost inexplicably—visits the LaHood hydraulic mining camp alone, although she knows firsthand the LaHoods’ violent tendencies (earlier in the movie they had killed Megan’s dog), because she is curious about the mining. There Josh LaHood (Christopher Penn), LaHood’s son, almost rapes her, before she is saved by the Preacher, who happens to be riding by.

The Preacher, of course, is innocent in a different way than Megan. He refuses to take advantage of her sexually, although she wants to have sex with him. The Preacher, like Shane, does not begin using his gun until near the movie’s end (indeed, he has it locked up in a remote bank in a safety deposit box, which he has to ride to for quite a few hours to retrieve). He uses his pure, physical ability to defeat LaHood’s men and only begins using his gun when he has no other choice.

*Pale Rider* Romance Second Phase Analogue: Tragedy Second Phase
**Tragedy Second Phase Characteristics.**

1. A youthful, inexperienced hero (or heroes) faces tragedy for the first time (220).
2. There is “some adjustment to a new and more mature experience” (220).

Frye writes that this phase is a “tragedy of innocence in the sense of inexperience” (220). This important, central character is Megan Wheeler, who is impulsive and promiscuous with her emotions and her body. Among other things, her impulsiveness leads her to visit Lahood’s hydraulic mines, which leads to her being physically assaulted. As Frye writes about Tragedy Second Phase, “the action closes with some adjustment to a new and more mature experience” (220). By the time the Preacher has left, Megan has learned to be less bold and impulsive in numerous ways, much like Joey at the end of *Shane*.

![Figure 23: Romance and Comedy Third Phase](image)

*Figure 23: Romance and Comedy Third Phase*

**She Wore a Yellow Ribbon (1949) Romance Fifth Phase**

**Romance Fifth Phase Characteristics.**

1. Emphasis on the natural cycle being viewed from above (202).
2. “[T]he mood is a contemplative withdrawal from or sequel to action rather than a youthful preparation for it” (202).
3. Erotic experience is “comprehended and not … a mystery” (202). The true lovers are at the top of the scale, and the scale moves down towards greater and greater lust and perversion (202).

*She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* is the story of Nathan Cutting Brittiles (John Wayne), a United States Captain in the famous Seventh Cavalry, who is about to retire. The movie chronicles his last patrol and skirmishes with Cheyenne Dog Indians. Two women are riding in Brittiles’ patrol: Olivia Dandridge (Joanne Dru) and Abby Allshard (Mildred Natwick). In order to avoid fighting\(^{16}\) an Arapahoe Indian group, Brittiles chooses a longer than normal route to the stagecoach rendezvous (for the women to ride East). Brittiles’ late arrival discovers the stagecoach outpost having just been attacked by Indians. Leaving his second-in-command Lieutenant Flint Cohill (John Agar) behind with a group of soldiers, Brittiles returns to his base fort and then back to Cohill’s men, where, on his supposedly last day as a soldier, Brittiles defeats the Cheyenne with the Seventh Cavalry.

The movie’s title refers to Olivia Dandridge’s yellow ribbon (a yellow ribbon, in cavalry tradition, is worn by a girl for her cavalry sweetheart). The problem is that many soldiers think they are Dandridge’s sweetheart, and she hardly disabuses any of them of that notion. However, it seems Captain Brittiles is the soldier she most admires. We know this through her longing looks at him, and her statement that she “wants to stand up and cheer for him” at his retirement. She more consistently respects him than any other soldier, even her soon-to-be fiance. Contrapuntally, she is consistently chiding the other Seventh Cavalry soldiers for their immaturity, especially when they are fighting over her or with her about her constant flirtations with everybody else.

Frye writes that in Romance Fifth Phase “the mood is a contemplative withdrawal from or sequel to action rather than a youthful preparation for it” (202). Although this isn’t so much true for the majority of young soldiers in the movie, it is true for the movie’s protagonist Brittiles, who is about to retire from the army. Even fighting with Cheyenne is no cause for alarm for the experienced, calm Nathan Brittiles. Brittiles has the air of somebody who has already done everything important and the rest of life is

\(^{16}\) To protect the women, who, as John Cawelti notes, represent civilization (75) and therefore must be protected above all else.
only a bothersome “mop-up operation.” He even rides into the Cheyenne camp just before the battle (with only one other soldier) to urge a certain Chief Big Tree (played by Chief Big Tree) to keep the Cheyenne from attacking. His calmness and composure show that he is a seasoned officer who is exactly aware of his task. Indeed, Brittles’ self-assurance reminds one of American soldiers like Douglas MacArthur or George Patton. In fact, MacArthur, according to John Ford, “watched [She Wore a Yellow Ribbon] at least once a month and never got tired of seeing it” (Libby 48).

Frye writes that Romance Fifth Phase is an “erotic world, but it presents experience as comprehended and not as a mystery” (202). Although Cohill and Second Lieutenant Ross Pennell (Harry Carey Jr.) don’t understand this (they almost begin a fistfight over Olivia Dandridge before Brittles breaks it up), Brittles does. Two officers’ erotic desire for Olivia is not a good reason to break up and endanger his patrol. Brittles complains to Cohill, who will take command of the Seventh Cavalry patrol upon Brittles’ retirement: “God help this troop when I am gone.” Brittles is worried about Cohill’s overly romantic (in both senses of the word) nature.

However, ultimately, Brittles gives his imprimatur to his soldiers, a bit like a grouchy grandfather. Ken Nolley notes that this movie, like all Ford films, ”exonerates and praises generous acceptance of others, of their needs and failings. That pattern leads to a personal code … that calls for submission to the needs of the group, for the submission of personal goals to the goals of society” (83). Ultimately, Brittles convinces Cohill and Pennell to prioritize the group’s needs over their individual ones, and so he can go into retirement sure they will perform adequately without him.

Frye writes further that, in Romance Fifth Phase: “we notice a tendency to the moral stratification of characters. The true lovers are on top of a hierarchy of what might be called erotic imitations, going down through the various grades of lust and passion to perversion. Such an arrangement of characters is consistent with the detached and contemplative view of society taken in this phase” (202). Cohill and Pennell are criticized by Brittles for their overly passionate struggle over Olivia (Brittles is the “detached and contemplative view of society taken in this phase”).

However, Cohill, apparently, matures. Near the movie’s end, Brittles for the first time acknowledges Cohill’s maturity and fitness to lead in Brittles’ absence. Brittles selects
Cohill to lead the troops he leaves behind, although Pennell—‘that babe in the wood’ as Brittles calls him—volunteers. Not coincidentally, only a moment or two later Olivia chooses Cohill as her husband and not Pennell, because that is who Brittles has chosen. Since Brittles is wise and objective (‘detached and contemplative’ (202)), Olivia trusts his choice over any other factor.

_She Wore a Yellow Ribbon_ Romance Fifth Phase Analogue: Comedy Fifth Phase

Comedy Fifth Phase Characteristics.

1. A very sad tinge. “[T]he comic ending is less a matter of the way the plot turns out than the perspective of the audience” (184).
2. Contains tragedy (184).
3. The audience views “the action … from the point of view of a higher and better ordered world” (184).
4. “[T]he usual symbol for the lower or chaotic world is the sea, from which the cast, or an important part of it, is saved” (184).

Frye writes that in Comedy Fifth Phase, “we move into a world that is still more romantic, less Utopian and more Arcadian, less festive and more pensive, where the comic ending is less a matter of the way the plot turns out than of the perspective of the audience” (184). _She Wore a Yellow Ribbon_ begins with the Narrator (Irving Pichel) reminding the audience that only a few days before the movie's story begins, Custer and his men had been killed at Little Bighorn. This defeat overshadows the entire movie, in that Brittles is constantly worrying that a fate similar to Custer’s will overwhelm him, too. Even at the movie’s end, with Brittles’ patrol troop surviving, there is still the threat of further Indian attacks, as Americans move further west. Frye writes further: “[t]he action seems to be not only a movement from a ‘winter’s tale’ to spring, but from a lower world of confusion to an upper world of order” (184). This, of course, is Nathan Brittles’ job, to turn the disorderly Western invasion of American soldiers—with all the confusion
that accompanies war—into an orderly police action, where the Indians know their ‘place.’

\[Figure 24: Romance and Comedy Sixth Phase\]

**The Shootist** (1976) Romance Sixth Phase

**Romance Sixth Phase Characteristics.**

1. There is a movement from “active to contemplative adventure” (202).
2. “A characteristic feature of this phase is the tale in quotation marks, where we have an opening setting with a small group of congenial people, and then the real story is told by one of its members” (202).
3. “The history is conceived not only as a progression but as a cycle of which the audience is the end, and, as the last page indicates, the beginning as well” (203).
4. There is a “cosmic disaster destroying the whole fictional society except a small group, which begins life anew in some sheltered spot” (203).

*The Shootist* is the story of John Bernard Books (John Wayne), an ailing, infamous gunfighter of incredible skill. Books travels to Carson City, Nevada to be examined by a doctor he trusts, E.W. Hostetler (Jimmy Stewart). Hostetler tells Books that Books has terminal cancer. Books decides to die in Carson City, and so he rents a room from the widow Bond Rogers (Lauren Bacall) to die there. Since Books is famous, word spreads not only that he is in Carson City but also that his death is imminent. Town Marshall
Walter Thibido (Harry Morgan) asks Books to leave the town, knowing Books will attract a lot of individual outlaws each itching to claim he was the one who killed J.B. Books. Gabriel Miller writes that Books’ "cancer reduces him to human scale: despite his legendary stature, he is like one of us in that we know he will die" ("Shane Redux" 75).

Doctor Hostetler has told Books about a cancer patient’s pain near death: “If you’re lucky, you’ll lose consciousness and until then you’ll scream.” Then Hostetler tells Books: “I would not die a death like I just described, not if I had your courage.” So Books invites three gunfighters (two of whom have old grudges; one who apparently wants simply the glory of killing the famous J.B. Books) to meet Books at a town saloon, where a shootout will decide the best gunfighter of them all. In the shootout, Books kills all three gunfighters—but he is shot and killed unawares by the bartender.

The movie ends with Gillom Rogers (Ron Howard) taking Books’ gun and killing the bartender. This is particularly apropos, because Books has just recently taught Gillom how to shoot. As Frye writes, this “history is conceived not only as a progression but as a cycle of which the audience is the end, and, as the last page indicates, the beginning as well” (203). Miller writes: "[I]n using Books' gun to kill a man, Gillom for a moment becomes Books--his shooting is accurate; all three shots hit their mark” ("Shane Redux" 76). Now that Books has died, the movie seems to imply that Gillom will take Books' place, as a premier ‘shootist.’

As Frye writes, Comedy Sixth Phase shows “the comic society breaking up into small units or individuals .... A central image of this phase, a favorite of Yeats, is that of the old man in the tower, the lonely hermit absorbed in occult or magical studies” (202). This, of course, is Books, who tells Bond Rogers that he is going to die “right here in this room” that she lets to him. As Books mentions later in the movie, he is “full of alone.” Much of the movie shows how people, as he puts it, “paw over his death.” A reporter, who wants to write a book about his exploits, is literally kicked out of the widow’s house by Books with his foot. The reporter then sets up Books’ old girlfriend, Serepta, to ask Books to marry her, thereby gaining any rights to a book which can be written about him in his name. Books, of course, sends Serepta away also, only a little more politely than he had sent away the reporter.
Frye writes that a “characteristic feature of this phase is the tale in quotation marks, where we have an opening setting with a small group of congenial people, and then the real story told by one of the members” (202). The movie presents many stories about J.B. Books. Bond Rogers believes him to be a murderer, Marshall Thibido believes him to be a troublemaker, and these are perhaps two of the most optimistic viewpoints about Books. Only Gillom Rogers knows ‘the real story’ that the “roughly thirty men” Books killed were killed justly. Gillom believes Books when Books says: “I never killed a man who didn't deserve it.” That is the story Gillom, as the avenger of Books’s murder, will tell, although it is a story that certainly must have quotation marks around it, because so many people have so many different viewpoints.

Miller, interestingly, compares *The Shootist* to *Shane*, since he believes *The Shootist* is a remake of *Shane*, specifically the story of an old gunfighter mentoring a young boy. Miller believes there to be one major difference between the two. While *Shane* emphasizes the open Wild West, by *The Shootist*'s early twentieth century setting, the West is becoming more urbanized and, therefore, more restricted. Miller notes that, in *Shane*, Joey first sees Shane with the open range and mountains behind him. However: "Gillom Rogers' first view of Books is from the seat of a milk wagon, so that Books appears to him framed by the wagon's windowless windshield. Gillom thus see the Westerner … as one framed by a vehicle of the modern world" (Miller "Shane Redux" 68). The *Shootist* is not completely devoid of wide open, isolated spaces (there is, for instance, Books' famous opening ride into Carson City with the backdrop of a long valley and then mountains behind him), but most of the movie, as Miller notes, is in "restricted space" (66). Miller writes further: "[t]he occasional outdoor scenes are brief and are usually designed only to move the protagonist to other indoor settings, the Metropole (a bar and casino), the barber shop, or the livery stable" (*Shane Redux* 73).

*The Shootist* Romance Sixth Phase Analogue: Comedy Sixth Phase

Comedy Sixth Phase Characteristics.
1. Social units disintegrate into one isolated individual (185).
2. There is the “sense of individual detachment from routine existence,” “secret and sheltered places, forests in moonlight, secluded valleys” (185).
3. Sometimes it is closely connected "psychologically with a return to the womb" (186).

Frye writes how “[i]n this phase the social units of comedy become small and esoteric, or even confined to a single individual” (185) as in Romance. Of course, death is something which individuals must face by themselves, and this is largely what *The Shootist* is about: Books facing death alone. Frye further writes that Comedy Sixth Phase contains "the sense of individual detachment from routine existence" (185). All the daily humdrum of the world, and the comparably trivial pursuits of most people, are unimportant to a man who is dying from cancer. Finally, Frye writes that, in Comedy Sixth Phase, the “society has run the full course from infancy to death” (186), and this, of course, is the case for J.B. Books, literally.

![Figure 25: Romance and Tragedy Third Phase](image)

*Stagecoach (1939)* Romance Third Phase

**Romance Third Phase Characteristics.**

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17 There are also, as mentioned before, the "secluded valleys," (185), although they are not everywhere in the movie.
1. Contains “the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle” and “the exaltation of the hero” (187), also known as the struggle, “the point of ritual death” (187) and “the recognition of the hero” (187).

2. “Cyclical imagery is likely to be present” (188).

3. A king, whose land is attacked by a dragon, is “sometimes suffering from an incurable malady or wound” (189) which represents the land’s sterility.

4. The hero arrives and kills the dragon, then marries the king’s daughter and eventually becomes king himself (188).

5. The king’s daughter, having been rescued from a very dangerous place, is strongly connected with Jocasta in *Oedipus the King* (193).

6. “If the leviathan is death,” … “the hero has to die” and is then resurrected (192).

7. After the dragon is dead, his previous victims “come out of him alive” led by the hero who has gone down “the monster’s open throat” (190).

8. Following the dragon’s death, the life-giving rains which have been pent up inside him herald the coming of spring (191-192).

*Stagecoach* is the story of the journey of nine passengers as they travel from the town of Tonto to the town of Lordsburg. The threat of Geronimo—and his Apache raiders—consistently overshadows their journey. Lucy Mallory’s (Louise Platt) birth to a baby complicates the journey further. There is also a budding romance between the captured outlaw Ringo Kid (John Wayne)—who was framed for murder by a group of brothers called the Plummers, who await him in Lordsburg—and a prostitute, Dallas (Claire Trevor). After all of the passengers except one survive an Apache attack (from which they are saved by U.S. Cavalry), the Ringo Kid meets the Plummers in the street and kills all three of them. The movie ends with the Ringo Kid and Dallas escaping to Mexico, where American law can no longer bother them.

“The complete form of the romance is clearly the successful quest, and such a completed form has three main stages: the stage of the perilous journey and the

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18 The Greek term is ‘Anagnorisis’, used by Aristotle in describing Tragedy, although Frye also uses it to refer to Romance. ‘Anagnorisis’ can refer to either the hero’s recognition of the true tragedy of his situation or to the plot’s recognition of the true hero (Liddell 101). Although "most modern critics prefer to define 'recognition' also as a gaining of self-knowledge and moral awareness by a tragic protagonist" (Maxfield 200), Frye uses the term only in the second sense.
preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die; and the exaltation of the hero” (187). The perilous journey in *Stagecoach* is consistently overshadowed by Geronimo and the threat of his attack. Indeed, Geronimo attacks in the coach’s final stage to Lordsburg.

Frye writes: “Thus the romance expresses more clearly the passage from struggle through a point of ritual death to a recognition scene that we discovered in comedy” (187). When Ringo Kid asks Dallas to wait for him on his land while he avenges himself on the Plumpers, she replies: “Wait for a dead man. Haven’t got a chance. With three against one when the Plumpers swore that you killed their foreman, they got you setup. It'll be three against one in Lordsburg.” Ringo’s death, for Dallas, is a definite fact, as sure as something that has already happened. Another *Stagecoach* character, Doc Boone, helps the Ringo Kid have a level playing field when he tells Luke Plummer (Tom Tyler) just before Luke is about to step into the street to face Ringo Kid: “I'll have you indicted for murder if you step outside with that shotgun.” As Frye writes, “the hero has to enter the body of death, the hero has to die, and if his quest is completed the final stage of it is, cyclically, rebirth, and, dialectically, resurrection” (192). The surprise, that Ringo actually kills all three of the Plumpers, is effectively a resurrection.

Frye describes: “A land ruled by a helpless old king [which] is laid waste by a seamonster, to whom one young person after another is offered to be devoured” (189). Criminal disorder, of course, is the fairly typical “seamonster” in Western movies. This criminal disorder is reflected in the Apache and in the Plumpers (in that they are able to frame the Ringo Kid fairly easily, showing the ineffectiveness of Western law). “The ritual analogies of the myth suggest that the monster is the sterility of the land itself, and that the sterility of the land is present in the age and impotence of the king” (189). The king is Western law, which is impotent.

In *Stagecoach*, “[t]he bride-figure is ambiguous” (193). Dallas is a prostitute, albeit a kind one, so that we’re not quite sure how to feel about her until the movie’s end (when she runs away with Ringo Kid to marry him). As Frye writes: “[s]he is often to be found in a perilous, forbidden, or tabooed place, like Brunnhilde’s wall of fire or the sleeping beauty’s wall of thorns” (193). Dallas is going to Lordsburg to find work as a prostitute, which, perhaps, explains partly why she is so in love with the Ringo Kid, because he can
bring her out of that life. Dallas, at the movie’s end, hides her destination from the Kid. When asked about her home, she says: “No, don't come any further. It's all been a crazy dream. Went out of my mind just hoping. Say goodbye here Kid.”

However, the Kid is still insistent and wants to marry her. Frye would describe this as: “the victory of fertility over the waste land. Fertility means food and drink, bread and wine, body and blood, the union of male and female” (193). They will ride off into the sunset, despite their problems with the (weak) law. Indeed, many of the least respectable characters in *Stagecoach* become heroes by movie’s end, while the most respectable passengers--like the banker Henry Gatewood, or erstwhile high society Confederate officer Hatfield--are arrested for embezzlement and killed by the Apache. As Edward Buscombe writes: “The class consciousness which the snobs have tried to force upon the conduct of relations will become progressively eroded, reduced to irrelevance by the forces of nature as manifested in the Apache” (*Stagecoach* 51).

*Stagecoach* Romance Third Phase Analogue: Tragedy Third Phase

**Tragedy Third Phase Characteristics.**
1. The hero’s success is portrayed as being complete (220).
2. The hero’s victory, however, is in the context of a greater tragedy (220).
3. This phase “is often a sequel to a previous tragic or heroic action, and comes at the end of a heroic life” (221) after which there is not much individual success.

Tragedy Third Phase is “tragedy in which a strong emphasis is thrown on the success or completeness of the hero’s achievement” (220). The Ringo Kid has been instrumental in saving the stagecoach from the Apache attack. Further, the Ringo Kid’s killing of the three Plummer brothers by himself is a victory of legendary proportions. After solely killing three gunmen facing him in the street, there seems nothing the Ringo Kid can’t do.

But the Ringo Kid’s victory is within the context of a great deal of sadness. “The paradox of victory within tragedy may be expressed by a double perspective in the action” (220-221). The Ringo Kid’s family has been completely wiped out by the
Plummers, so that the Ringo Kid’s success in killing the Plummer brothers is bittersweet. His family is still dead, and he is still isolated from them.

**Conclusion**

Frye writes that "[t]he perennially childlike quality of romance is marked by its extraordinarily persistent nostalgia, its search for some kind of imaginative golden age in time and space" (186). The Western finds that "golden age" in the Nineteenth Century American West, where, supposedly, freedom and isolation encouraged an epic struggle for the rule of law over corruption and tyranny. Westerns like *Stagecoach* are ultimately about how to uphold the law against misapplication (as the Plummer brothers misapply it). In many ways, the Nineteenth Century West in the Western developed the same good vs. evil connotations that World War II has developed in War films.

This contributes to the Western cowboy hero's agelessness, because, as Frye writes about the Romance hero, he "goes through one adventure after another until the author himself collapses" (186). Shane in George Stevens' movie *Shane* rides onto Joe Starrett's homestead and then, at movie's end, rides off again into the mountains, as if there were another young boy, or, perhaps, another group of homesteaders he must save. Shane, when young Joey Starrett asks him where he is going, replies: "One place or another. Some place I've never been," as if it were a struggle to find places where Shane had not been to assist the cause of good vs. evil.\(^{19}\)

In Clint Eastwood's *Pale Rider*--of course, a remake of *Shane*--the young girl Megan has specifically prayed for help from God after her puppy has been killed by the Lahoods and, as she prays, we see the Preacher, like an angel sent by God, riding towards her community settlement. In *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon*, Nathan Brittles almost seems to ride all across the West, solving one emergency after another, until, just in time, his Indian antagonists\(^{20}\) are soundly defeated only two minutes after his retirement has been set to begin. Of course, he will be called back out of retirement only a little later, because the ageless Western hero does not ever really stop. The frontier West has too many unresolved problems for somebody like that to retire.

\(^{19}\) As Robert Warshow writes about the Westerner: "he can ride a horse faultlessly, keep his countenance in the face of death, and draw his gun a little faster and shoot it a little straighter than anyone he is likely to meet. These are sharply defined acquirements, giving to the figure of the Westerner an apparent moral clarity which corresponds to the clarity of his physical image against his bare landscape" (404).
Even if the heroic cowboy does die in a Western at the movie's end, the movie emphasizes this cowboy's spirit living on, sometimes in others but just as often in a spiritual, metaphysical sense. In *The Shootist*, J.B. Books has died, but young Gillom Rogers has received Books' mantle, symbolized by Rogers killing the bartender who killed Books. In *The Wild Bunch*, almost all of the Bunch is killed at the movie's end. But, significantly, as their impending deaths near, two of the Bunch, Pike and Dutch, begin to laugh hilariously. The movie ends with a montage of all the Wild Bunch laughing, so that although almost all the Bunch have died (along with the outlaw Western times the Bunch represents), they live on in our memory pointedly through their laughter.

Frye writes: "The enemy may be an ordinary human being, but the nearer the romance is to myth, the more attributes of divinity will cling to the hero and the more the enemy will take on demonic mythical qualities" (187). In *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, Liberty Valance's cackle is almost humorous in its overly obvious evilness. The Western, of course--with the good guys (like the Lone Ranger) usually dressed in white and the bad guys dressed in black (like Frank in *Once Upon a Time in the West*)--is famous for this. One can tell even from the title of *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* that the movie demonizes the antagonist Angel Eyes (who often wears dark, if not black, colors in the movie) and sanctifies the hero, Blondie (whose goodness is signified by the light color of his name, as even Angel Eyes admits he is a "golden-haired angel").

Frye adds: "The reason for the greater profundity of canonical myth is not solely tradition, but the result of the greater degree of metaphorical identification that is possible in myth" (188). In *High Noon*, Will Kane struggles to fight against the outlaw Frank Miller. After much debate, all those in the town who might possibly join Kane against Miller have refused, and Kane faces Miller essentially alone (although his wife later comes to his aid). Such mythical moments are perhaps more easily isolated in the classic Western, where communities are small enough to thoroughly understand the circumstances surrounding such black and white issues.

In another example, the conflict between Ethan Edwards and Martin Pawley in *The Searchers* over whether or not to kill Debbie Edwards, because she has become the wife of a Comanche Indian who killed her mother, is, at heart, a conflict about how 'family' is

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20 A diverse group including Apache, Araphahoe, Comanche, Cheyenne and Kiowa.
defined, a question all cultures must answer. In *Dances With Wolves*, John Dunbar joins a group of Lakota Sioux, at least partly because he feels more like an important member of their group than in the impersonal, institutionalized world of the United States. There are limited places besides the 19th century American West where Dunbar could make such a drastic 'black to white' switch.

Frye writes further: "The ritual analogies of the myth suggest that the monster *is* the sterility of the land itself" (189). In *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*, Tom Doniphon saves Ran Stoddard's life by shooting Liberty Valance (although the public believes Stoddard shot Valance). This allows Stoddard to embark on a political career in Washington, and in Washington he sponsors an irrigation bill for his state, which ultimately will make the land more fertile and less sterile. As Frye writes: "And as the leviathan, in his aspect as the fallen world, contains all forms of life imprisoned within himself, so as the sea he contains the imprisoned life-giving rain waters whose coming marks the spring" (192). Stoddard, like the white knight, has brought peace and fertility to the desert at last. In doing so, he is simply fulfilling his role as the Western hero.
CHAPTER FOUR
MOVIES ILLUSTRATING FRYE'S TRAGEDY PHASES
AND THEIR ANALOGUES

Tragedy Introduction

Frye defines tragedy as the separation of the hero from his society (37). This, of course, is easily translated into the War film, where heroes (the original source of the word in the Greek, heros, often meant simply 'warrior' ("Heros")) are separated from some or all of their society (Frye 37) almost always by somebody's death. So War films were selected to emphasize Tragedy in this dissertation, because even war's most heroic stories are surrounded by much more tragedy than heroism, where the heroes, even in the relatively bloodless movies, find themselves permanently separated from their companions by death.

Such a basic definition for the War film (permanent separation from companions by death in combat) is purposefully so, especially because only that basic definition fits Frye's definition of Tragedy. Also, two of film studies' most distinguished modern film theorists, Steve Neale and Jeanine Basinger, both point out in separate works that genres can only be defined in very basic terms, because, as Neale notes, "[m]ore elaborate definitions always seem to throw up exceptions" (57) because there are so many hybrid Hollywood films. Basinger adds that "War' is a vague category, and is too broad to contain a basic set of characters and events" (9) and, further, the definitions are constantly changing because of "the changing times" (15). She posits that a "group of films with very similar characteristics emerge, blend, and become one film in memory" (17), so that it seems "all the films of a given genre [are] 'the same thing'" (16), but they are really not.

Basinger's definition of a combat film is even more basic than my previous definition in that she states it contains "a hero, a group of mixed types, and a military objective of some sort" (22). However, Basinger admits that even this definition cannot be used as "a
mindless factual formula" (37). She notes that there are combat films "with lots of noncombat action" and noncombat films "with lots of combat" (37). For her the combat film's definition is a subjective one: "It has to do with purpose, representational meanings, and attitudes" (37). She writes further: "One can only view the film, analyze, and decide. One is watching something grow, and what is the moment when the berry is ripe?" (37).

The first three phases of Romance are analogous to the first three phases of Tragedy, and in these phases the idealization of life is emphasized (hence, movies like Sergeant York and Patton), and the realism is not as stark. The last three phases of Tragedy are analogous to Irony/Satire, where the emphasis is on everyday, (as much as possible) realistic, gritty experience (hence, movies like Apocalypse Now and Platoon).

Figure 26: Tragedy and Romance First Phase

Sergeant York (1941) Tragedy First Phase

Tragedy First Phase Characteristics.
1. “[T]he central character is given the greatest possible dignity in contrast to the other characters, so that we get the perspective of a stag pulled down by wolves” (219).
2. This is about “the birth of the hero in romance” (219).

Neale agrees, stating that "Genres do not consist only of films: they consist also, and equally, of specific systems of expectation and hypothesis which spectators bring with them to the cinema, and which interact with films themselves during the course, of the viewing process" (46).
3. “[T]he central and typical figure of this phase is the calumniated woman, often a mother the legitimacy of whose child is suspected” (219).

*Sergeant York* fits the first two of three primary characteristics of Tragedy First Phase literally and fits the third aspect in a metaphorical way. *Sergeant York*\(^\text{22}\) is the story of a certain Alvin C. York (Gary Cooper) who is a woodsman and farmer in Tennessee. A gifted shooter and a hard worker, York also has a wild—even alcoholic—streak. York agrees with his pastor Rosier Pile (Walter Brennan) (a fatherly, likable character) that it would take a bolt of lightning to make him change his drunkenness. After seeing and becoming infatuated with a certain Gracie Williams (Joan Leslie), York begins to become more mature. When Gracie first rejects his marriage suit, York believes she has rejected him because he doesn’t own a piece of prime, flat “bottom land” (York’s family owns rocky, sloping high land). He becomes obsessed with owning a piece of “bottom land” in the Tennessee Valley and works incredibly hard to pay off, in time, a loan with which he hopes to buy it.

But he fails, is unable to pay the loan in time, and eventually loses the bottom land (despite a last ditch effort to win prize money at a shooting contest and thus pay off the loan; York wins the money, but his lender Nate Tomkins (Erville Anderson) has already sold the land). Depressed, and wanting to find comfort in alcohol, York goes to his favorite bar, and after a few drinks there apparently decides to murder Nate Tomkins.

\(^{22}\)Some would perhaps not consider *Sergeant York* to be a Tragedy as a consequence of its finally happy ending where the war is won and York is a hero, settling down with his wife on an excellent piece of land. However, it should be pointed out that this was war, which is always tragic, even for the “winner.” The movie is even more immediately tragic in that York’s best friend (and perhaps the funniest character in the movie), Pusher, is killed by a grenade thrown by a German prisoner of war. Admittedly, the Tragedy is redeemable in that York has killed and captured many Germans, who, otherwise, would have probably killed more American soldiers like Pusher before the war’s end, but it is still a Tragedy nonetheless, in that people die and are separated from the world around them needlessly.

Further, Leon Golden has argued in his "Aristotle, Frye, and the Theory of Tragedy" that there are tragedies where pity and fear "are transcended by an impressive manifestation of divine love for man" (54). Golden gives *Oedipus at Colonus* as an example in which Oedipus "has undergone the purifying fire of suffering and, though not purged of his human passions, has attained a deeper understanding of the human condition" (54). This seems exactly York's situation, in that, at the movie's end, he has a better understanding of the necessity of war.
While York is riding drunk on his mission, a bolt of lightning splits the very rifle in his hand as he is riding with it.23

Immediately after this, York hears singing at Rosier Pyle’s church. York goes into the church, begins singing and decides to convert. York’s relationship with Gracie Williams is strengthened after this, because she wanted his conversion to Christianity in order to accept his suit. The two begin planning marriage.

Soon, though, America becomes involved in World War I. York registers as a conscientious objector (based on pastor Pile’s interpretation of the Second Commandment as “Thou Shalt Not Kill” instead of “Thou Shalt Not Murder”),24 but his objections are overruled, and he is forced to fight anyway. In the Argonne in France, York single-handedly takes out a machine gun nest, and then kills many Germans in a trench behind the nest. York shoots in succession twenty-five Germans and takes another one hundred and thirty-two prisoners. York’s incredible day leads to numerous awards and citations both in Europe and the United States.

But it also wins him the temptation of the rich life, lucrative endorsements which might take him away from the humble, rural homeland of Tennessee. Eventually rejecting the endorsements, he returns to Tennessee, where he believes he has belonged all along. Gracie has a surprise for him: a new home the state of Tennessee had built for him near his birthplace because of his achievements.

Frye writes that the Tragedy First Phase hero has “the greatest possible dignity in contrast to other characters” (219). Obviously, in Sergeant York, York seems to be the focus of the movie (although I will argue a little later that the greatest influence in the movie is that of York’s biological mother, Mother York, and spiritual one, Gracie Williams). He is a much greater person—both in terms of spirituality and military ability—than his fellow American soldiers (York is promoted to corporal after a brilliant

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23 This is the only part of the movie the historical Sergeant Alvin York did not like, because it was a blatant fictional exaggeration of York’s conversion experience. York’s statement about that conversion experience was simply that he had found religion “‘in the middle of the road’” (Lee 219).

24 As many scholars have noted, Exodus 20:13’s statement in the RSV: “Thou shalt not kill,” is perhaps best translated as “Thou shalt not murder.” As Walter C. Kaiser Jr. notes: the Hebrew verb used in this verse does not even refer “to killing persons in a war” (148). Kaiser writes further: “If any one of the seven words for killing in the Old Testament signifies what we refer to as ‘murder,’ this is the verb. It implies premeditation and intentionality. Without exception, especially in the later Old Testament periods, it refers to intentional, violent murder” (148).
shooting exhibition in training, where he hits five straight bull’s eyes, becoming something of a legend). York is respected and admired by both his commanding officers and his fellow enlisted men. York, indeed, reminds one of the stoically heroic Captain John Miller (Tom Hanks) in *Saving Private Ryan*—another movie that can be described as Tragedy First Phase.

Frye writes: “The sources of dignity are courage and innocence, and in this phase the hero or heroine usually is innocent” (219). As David Lee writes, York was portrayed as the “frontiersman reincarnated in the machine age to slay not only the enemies of the republic but also to reaffirm the validity of traditional American values in a time of upheaval” (208). Daniel Varat further notes that York's "hillbilly" background is actually the cause of all the public attention which cascaded on him:

[York] won glory not because he single-handedly captured hundreds of Germans. Historians over the years uncovered many similar feats that remained unrecognized for decades. He grew into an American legend because he actually defeated the stereotype of his own region, that of the isolated, feuding bumpkin with no attachment to his nation or American culture. (347)

Alvin York is undoubtedly courageous in that he is willing to be a conscientious objector even in the face of the hawkish, warlike attitude (“Millions Register for the Draft” one movie newspaper headline reads) in America in 1917. York is also innocent. Unlike some men, he is not a conscientious objector simply to save his own life. He is a conscientious objector because he truly believes it is wrong to kill another human being, as his pastor has taught him.

Frye writes: “This phase corresponds to the myth of the birth of the hero in Romance” (219). Indeed, much of Sergeant York is about the spiritual birth of a hero from somebody who was corrupt and dissolute (cf. *Schindler’s List*). By the end of *Sergeant York* a very immature human being has become mature. Much of the movie’s beginning chronicles York’s change from a rather unsavory person who drinks and carouses frequently to somebody who has deep moral and religious beliefs. This is, of course, not York’s literal birth but his spiritual one. York is a spiritual baby when he converts.

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25 At the time of *Sergeant York*’s 1941 release, however, York was publicly a strong interventionist, arguing that America should assist the British with military supplies (Lee 216).
Frye claims that the “central and typical figure of this phase is the calumniated woman [slandered woman], the legitimacy of whose child is suspect” (219). York, spiritually, is an illegitimate child. Mother York’s husband has died, and she cannot always trust her son Alvin to be a good provider for her, at least in the movie’s beginning before he joins the church. Alvin ignores his responsibilities to her—as the eldest son of his widowed mother—while he is out carousing. He is, spiritually, a bastard to her.

York’s love interest, Gracie Williams, is obviously attracted to York and wants to marry him but is constantly frustrated by his wild antics and drinking and refusal to join the church. Gracie, of course, eventually brings York around and becomes his legitimate spiritual mother. Although York is the movie’s central protagonist, it is the spiritual influence of both Mother York and Gracie Williams which most influences his actions. So the movie ends with York becoming a legitimate child. Although Mother York and Gracie do not take up more screen time than York, their influence (as spiritual mothers especially) is the entire movie’s most important influence.

_Sergeant York_ fits all three of Frye’s primary characteristics of Romance First Phase, and also fits many of Frye’s specific examples. Frye adduces the biblical story of Moses (Frye mentions both Moses’ childhood adoption by the Pharaoh’s daughter and Moses’ crossing of the Red Sea in his Romance First Phase description) as one of the most important examples of Romance First Phase. Moses was born in Egypt at a time when
Pharaoh, fearing the growth of Hebrew power, had commanded each Hebrew son to be killed at birth. Moses’ mother, however, hides him for three months after his birth. Then, daring to hide Moses no longer, she places him in a basket “daubed with bitumen and pitch” (Exodus 2: 3b) hoping that an Egyptian woman would find him. Moses is found by the daughter of Pharaoh, who essentially adopts him.

Frye writes that, in Romance First Phase: “[t]he infant hero is often placed in an ark or chest floating on the sea, as in the story of Perseus; from there he drifts to land, as in the exordium to Beowulf, or is rescued from among reeds and bulrushes on a river bank, as in the story of Moses” (198). Frye then explains: “[a] landscape of water, boat and reeds appears at the beginning of Dante’s journey up the mount of Purgatory, where there are many suggestions that the soul is in that stage a newborn infant” (198).

How does Sergeant York begin? The opening credits of the movie run while a camera, apparently on a boat, makes its way through a marshy swamp with trees and bluffs on the side—Frye’s “landscape of water, boat and reeds” (198). The biblical parallels with Moses are provocative. Of course, this is the movie’s beginning when York is still a spiritual bastard. Frye writes that “[p]sychologically, this image is related to the embryo in the womb, the world of the unborn often being thought of as liquid” (198). York does not have a true spiritual mother yet, like Moses wandering in the boat. Immediately, after the swamp scene, we see York carousing, shooting up a tree outside Rosier Pile’s church, while a church meeting is beginning.

Yet, as Frye writes, there are “seeds of new life buried in a dead world of snow or swamp” (198). York will change from a spiritual bastard to a spiritual hero (much like Oskar Schindler, who is once asked by the villainous German Untersturmführer Amon Goeth: “Who are you, Moses?”). Of course, York, as the spiritually lost baby let loose by Mother York, is saved by Gracie Williams. This is much like Moses was placed in a basket by his mother and then found and saved by the daughter of Pharaoh. Frye writes: “The double of the true mother appears in the daughter of Pharaoh who adopts Moses” (Frye 199).

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26 Exodus 2: 1-10.
As an adult, also, Alvin York is a Moses figure. *Sergeant York* begins with York estranged from his people, his family and his church (as he shoots up a tree outside his church). Moses, similarly, was estranged as an Egyptian from his Hebrew family (although later, of course, he leads the Hebrews out of Egypt). Also, York, like Moses, goes through a wilderness time. Both men have a “burning bush” experience. The lightning splitting York’s rifle is his burning bush experience and after this he immediately joins the church (that very night) and becomes a leader in it, much like Moses became a leader for the Hebrews after the burning bush.

In another respect, both Moses and York have a temper which leads them to do and/or say rash things. York falls prey to this, especially when he is drunk earlier in the movie (he fights numerous characters, notably Zeb Andrews (Robert Porterfield)—Gracie’s other possible love interest). Moses kills an Egyptian in a fit of rage. When commanded by God to only speak to a rock to pour out water for the thirsty Israelites—in a fit of anger Moses strikes the rock. Because of this, he is not allowed to enter the Promised Land. In both cases the two men’s temper shows they are unredeemed in some way.

However, York’s temper becomes much better after his conversion experience and he declines fights where, before, he would have fought gladly. York has learned to control and channel his anger. He becomes a conscientious objector to war (like *Braveheart*’s William Wallace who, before his wife’s death, said “If I can live in peace, I will”; of course, Wallace’s wife’s death changes this). In perhaps the only major difference between Sergeant York and Moses, York is allowed to see the Promised Land (i.e. the excellent piece of land in Tennessee which the state buys for him), perhaps because he has learned composure. Moses, however, is forbidden to reach the Promised Land because he can’t control his anger when he angrily struck the rock God had only told him to speak to (i.e. Moses had usurped the role of God).27

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27 *Numbers 20: 7-12 RSV.* “and the Lord said to Moses, “Take the rod, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water; so you shall bring water out of the rock for them; so you shall give drink to the congregation and their cattle.” And Moses took the rod from before the Lord, as he commanded him.

And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, “Hear now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?” And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his rod twice; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their cattle. And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not believe in me, to sanctify me in the eyes of people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.”

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Many characters in *Sergeant York*—particularly those in the American army—can’t understand York’s conscientious objections to the war. York’s officers label him as a potential problem. Like York, Moses was misunderstood by the society for which he would later become a hero (cf. *Braveheart*, where William Wallace has difficulty making his fellow Scots “stand together” and not give into Edward the Longshanks). According to *Genesis*, Moses killed an Egyptian for beating a Hebrew (*Exodus* 2: 11-12). Despite this, the Hebrews, whom Moses had tried to protect, were suspicious of him. When Moses tries to intervene in an argument between two Hebrews, one of them asks: “Who made you a prince and judge over us? Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian?” (*Exodus* 2: 14). The Israelites’ experience in the wilderness is peppered with mistrust of Moses, perhaps like York’s army officers, at first, mistrust him.

While York is debating whether, according to the Bible, he is free to fight in the Great War, York’s Bible blows open to Jesus’ well-known saying “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (*Matthew* 22:21). At this point, York becomes something of a Moses for the American people. His capture of over one-hundred Germans and killing of twenty-five more gives him a hero’s legendary status, much like Moses after the drowning of Pharaoh’s army in the Red Sea (although, of course, the two events are on a different scale). Both men came to represent their nation’s victory in their struggle. Further, both credit God for their triumph.

Frye writes that the Romance First Phase myth is “often associated with a flood, the regular symbol of the beginning and the end of a cycle” (198). In many ways, of course, World War I could be seen, like the flood, as a cataclysmic event affecting humankind. York could be seen as the Noah who is able to save some of his family28 (i.e. American soldiers) from death in the Great War, which was certainly a Flood of death.

Frye writes: “The true father is sometimes represented by a wise old man or teacher: this is the relation of Prospero to Ferdinand, as well as of Chiron the centaur to Achilles” (199). There are two true fathers for Sergeant York. One is his elderly, likeable, old pastor Rosier Pile. Pile tells York that religion will come to him “in a flash like a bolt of lightning,” which literally happens. Pile shepherds York spiritually, and even buys a pelt from York at a price far above its actual value to assist him financially. The other father

28 *Genesis* 6-9.
is a certain Major Buxton (Stanley Ridges), who convinces York that it is sometimes appropriate to kill in war for a just cause, opening the door for York’s heroism.

Finally, Frye writes: “Images of returning spring soon follow: the rainbow in the Noah story, the bringing of water out of a rock by Moses, the baptism of Christ, all show the turning of the cycle from the wintry water of death to the reviving waters of life. The providential birds, the raven and dove in the Noah story, the ravens feeding Elijah in the wilderness, the dove hovering over Jesus, belong to the same complex” (199). As York walks across a bridge towards his new home built by the state of Tennessee on an idyllic peace of “bottom land” as the birds are chirping happily, we are very much seeing “images of returning spring” after the wasteland of trench warfare in the Great War.

![Figure 27: Tragedy and Romance Second Phase](image)

**Tragedy Second Phase Characteristics.**

3. A youthful, inexperienced hero (or heroes) faces tragedy for the first time (220).
4. There is “some adjustment to a new and more mature experience” (220).

The movie *Sands of Iwo Jima*, which fits both primary characteristics of Tragedy Second Phase, chronicles a certain Sergeant John M. Stryker's (played by John Wayne) attempt to make a group of young men combat-ready for action in the Pacific against the Japanese in World War II. The movie fits “the tragedy of innocence in the sense of inexperience, usually involving young people” (220). The highly experienced military
training Sergeant Stryker (whose characteristically favorite phrase is “saddle up”) tells his young troops: “I’m going to ride ya’ until you can’t stand up. And when you do stand up, you’ll be Marines.” Stryker is so difficult that one young Marine says about him: “Sometimes I don’t know who I hate worse. Him or the Nips.”

One of Stryker’s young trainees is Peter Conway (John Agar) whose father has just been killed in Guadalcanal. Conway has always felt inferior to his father, Sam Conway, who consistently criticized him for being, supposedly, a “sissie,” because Conway was more of a college intellectual. Conway tells a fellow soldier: “I embarrassed my father. I wasn’t tough enough for him. Too soft. ‘No guts’ was the phrase he used. Now Stryker, he’s the type of man my father wanted me to be.” As it happens, Conway’s father and Stryker were close friends, and Stryker and Sam Conway had similar philosophies of military training and discipline. Indeed, Stryker proudly tells Conway that he was with Conway’s father “ten months ago in the Canal. He was my CO before he got killed. One of the best officers and finest men I ever served under.”

Conway in his stubborn resistance and constant complaints about difficult training (that is actually making him a better soldier) has a lot of “simplicity” and a “lack of worldly wisdom” (220). Conway is like Adam and Eve. His innocence becomes naivete amidst his immature whining and complaining and, for most of the movie until the end, he remains “in the position [of a child] baffled by [his] first contact with an adult situation” (220).

Conway resents harsh military types generally and Stryker specifically. So Conway, along with his, somewhat immature, fellow recruits, reacts against Stryker’s brutal training regimens and cherishes opportunities to resist Stryker as much as possible. Although Stryker has advised against romantic love during wartime, Conway decides to fall in love with Alison Bromley (Adele Mara) while on leave in New Zealand. Conway marries Alison. Stryker, for his part, doesn’t even go to Conway’s wedding. Conway’s resistance in other ways, especially his constant complaining, seems to irreparably damage his relationship with Stryker.

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29 Perhaps another reason Stryker advises against Conway’s marriage is that Stryker has a longstanding separation from his wife and his child by her, the pain which has led, basically, to Stryker’s alcoholism.
Stryker has told his troops: “Before I’m through with ya’ you’re going to move like one man and think like one man. If you don’t you’ll be dead.” Stryker aims to teach each soldier to prioritize the whole army’s good as opposed to the good of each individual, themselves or anybody else, a necessary attitude to be a good soldier. The mature servicemen simply realize that Stryker is making everybody around him a better soldier, although becoming a better soldier involves self-sacrifice for the good of the army and country it protects.

After the bloody attack on Tarawa, in which thousands of Marines are killed, Conway and his fellow soldiers understand why Stryker trained them so hard. As the Narrator (Arthur Franz) states: “We were a sound fighting unit, blooded and trained. Tarawa had blooded us all. Stryker had seen to the training.” Stryker’s characteristic calmness, as he and his soldiers are pinned down at a Tarawa beachhead, begins to spread throughout the group. For instance, in a typical moment, Stryker lights a cigarette just after his platoon is pinned down by Japanese fire at a beachhead, when everybody else almost seems to be paralyzed in a cataleptic fit.

In one scene on Tarawa, Stryker and Conway have been ordered to man a position and to not reveal their presence. As they wait they unmistakably hear one of their own wounded soldiers from the day’s fighting cry out for help. Conway desperately wants to save his fellow soldier, but Stryker threatens to kill Conway if he goes out to the wounded Marine’s assistance, because that would give away the platoon’s position. In a watershed moment, Conway acquiesces. He has learned to be less individualistic and to value the army’s good over the good of the individual, whereas at training camp’s beginning he had valued the latter over the former.

On Iwo Jima, Conway saves Stryker’s life once and then, finally, Stryker is killed by a Japanese sniper. Then comes the famous scene of the flag being raised on Iwo Jima and the movie’s imitation of the famous photograph. Conway, after this, looks at the dead Stryker and then mutters Stryker’s characteristic phrase to the soldiers he now commands: “Saddle up. Let’s get back in the war.” In repeating Stryker’s mantra, Conway shows that he has at least begun to see life (and war) the way Stryker saw it.

Interestingly, “in many tragedies of this type the central character survives, so that the action closes with some adjustment to a new and more mature experience” (Frye 220).
Stryker, the central character, doesn't survive, but Peter Conway, the main young adult lead, does. He survives in such a way that he can only be more mature after witnessing so much death. Conway can truly say, like Adam, “‘Henceforth, I learn that to obey is best’” (220). Conway finally realizes the reason for Stryker and his father’s tough discipline, which helps keep Conway alive, at least through Tarawa and Iwo Jima. Before Stryker dies, Conway even confides to Stryker that Conway has decided to name his son Sam Conway (Conway’s father’s name), symbolizing his new, much more favorable, understanding of his father after his first combat.

*Sands of Iwo Jima* Tragedy Second Phase Analogue: Romance Second Phase

Romance Second Phase Characteristics.

1. The innocent youth of the hero who lives in a “pastoral and Arcadian world,” (200) still overshadowed by parents. There is “often a world of magic or desirable law” (200).
2. There is less of an emphasis on adult marriage and more an emphasis on “‘chaste love’” (200) and a sexual barrier.
3. There is a sense of being close to a moral taboo, despite a “sexual barrier” (200).

*Sands of Iwo Jima* fits all three of these characteristics of Romance Second Phase. “The Second Phase brings us to the innocent youth of the hero, a phase most familiar to us from the story of Adam and Eve in Eden before the Fall” (199-200). Conway is innocent in the sense that he is unaware of the harsh consequences of a bad attitude in war, much like Adam and Eve seem unaware of the dire consequences of the forbidden fruit. Conway is naively innocent of the problems war creates and the discipline it requires.

“In literature this phase presents a pastoral and Arcadian world, generally a pleasant wooded landscape, full of glades, shaded valleys, murmuring brooks, the moon and other images closely linked with the female or maternal aspect of sexual imagery” (200). This is a perfect description of the training camp, Camp Pendleton, in California, where most
of the movie was shot ("Filming Locations for *Sands of Iwo Jima*")—hilly, almost mountainous terrain. Indeed, the contrast between the beauty of Ft. Pendleton and the ugliness of the battlefield reveals how much war has raped the (feminine) land (Frye’s “female or maternal aspect of sexual imagery” (200)). Tarawa and Iwo Jima’s topography is destroyed with constant bombardment and explosives, at the same time wives like Alison are losing their husbands and older mothers are losing their sons.

“The theme of the sexual barrier in this phase takes many forms” (Frye 200). Frye gives quite a few examples of a river or some body of water, as in “Kubla Khan,” where “a ‘sacred river’ is closely followed by the distant vision of a singing damsel” (200). Of course, literally, Conway and his wife Alison (like many other World War II couples) are separated by the Pacific Ocean, the barrier between the two meeting sexually.

Frye writes that this phase “is often a world of magic or desirable law, and it tends to center on a youthful hero, still overshadowed by parents, surrounded by youthful companions” (200). Conway’s father, Sam Conway, received the Navy Cross. As has already been shown, Sam Conway’s past bravery, although he is now dead, posthumously influences his son. This is the kind of “‘chaste’ love” of which Frye writes “that precedes marriage; the love of brother for sister, or of two boys for each other” (200). While at the beginning, Conway could be said to not love his father, by the movie’s end, he certainly loves and respects him.

Finally, “[t]he sense of being close to a moral taboo” (200) is found in the premarital relationship between Conway and Alison Bromley. In one particular scene before they are married, he is lying with his head in her lap, as she strokes his hair. Their quick marriage perhaps hints at their deep desire for a sexual relationship. The sexual barrier, of course, would be sexual mores against ‘fornication.’
Tragedy Third Phase Characteristics.

1. The hero’s success is portrayed as being complete (220).
2. The hero’s victory, however, is in the context of a greater tragedy (220).
3. This phase “is often a sequel to a previous tragic or heroic action, and comes at the end of a heroic life” (221) after which there is not much individual success.

*Patton*, in a sense, completely fulfills the first characteristic of Tragedy Third Phase and, in another sense, does not fulfill it. However, the movie fits the last two characteristics of Tragedy Third Phase perfectly. *Patton* is the story of George S. Patton (George C. Scott), commanding officer of the Second Corps and Third Army during the Second World War. Perhaps Patton’s most characteristic, revealing statement (in a movie full of them) is in the movie’s opening speech: “I don’t want to get any messages saying that we are holding our position .... We are advancing constantly and we’re not interested in holding onto anything.” Patton’s bold, thrusting offensives—more bold and risky than those of any other Allied commander—helped lead to the German defeat.

Patton’s string of successes begins with his assumption of the Second Corps command. This is after the horrible American defeat at Kasserine Pass against Rommel’s Afrika Corps. Patton turns disorganized troops with low morale into a crack fighting
force, which ultimately pushes the Afrika Corps out of Africa. Patton then recaptures Sicily, with the help of General Montgomery.

However, Patton’s slapping of a battle-fatigued American soldier in the hospital, whom he calls (in the movie) “a young bastard sitting here crying before these brave men who have been wounded in battle” leads to a public outcry at home. Patton eventually (apparently for that reason) is not selected to command any American invasion group of German occupied Europe. Instead, Patton’s name is leaked to the Germans as the commander of a non-existent invasion force at the Pas de Calais—the closest landing point to the British coast. Patton, one of the Allied Forces’ most successful generals in the Second World War, is relegated to a dummy’s role in distracting the Germans.

Some time after D-Day, Patton is finally given command of the Third Army once the Allies have a foothold in France and, under Patton, the Third Army slices quickly through France. Then, in an instrumental counter-attack responding to the German Ardennes offensive (The Battle of the Bulge), Patton force marches his army to relieve American troops besieged at Bastogne. After the Ardennes, Germany’s fate is sealed.

Frye writes that Tragedy Third Phase is “tragedy in which a strong emphasis is thrown on the success or completeness of the hero’s achievement” (220). There is no doubt of Patton’s complete success on the battlefield. One film documentary narrator states in the movie that, under Patton in France, “Third Army moved farther and faster and engaged more divisions in less time than any other army in the history of the United States.”

Even Patton’s many character flaws, his insensitivity and arrogance—which one would expect to mitigate his success—actually lead to his battlefield achievement. For instance, Patton arrogantly insults the Russians (whom he considers as much, or even more, of an enemy as the Germans) numerous times. Patton tells a Russian general who wants to make a toast with him “I won’t drink with him or any other Russian son of a bitch.” However, on the battlefield, Patton’s insensitivity and belligerence are often a strength, not a weakness. Both these things, with Patton’s arrogance, actually lead to an
unstoppable battlefield fearlessness, when other more sensitive, cautious generals became mired in politics, public opinion and a paralyzing fear of risk and loss of life.\(^\text{30}\)

The Germans are as confused as anybody else in trying to understand Patton. The German intelligence officer responsible for investigating Patton’s life is Captain Oskar Steiger (Siegfried Rauch). In trying to communicate Patton’s personality to his commanding officer, Steiger describes an incident in which Patton saw three men forcing a woman into a truck. Patton immediately drew his gun to save the woman. Soon, he discovered the woman was the fiance of one of the three men. She, actually, was only being assisted into the truck. Steiger remarks: “Don Quixote encounters six merchants of Toledo and saves Dulcinea’s virtue.” Steiger is correct, that Patton is more a Don Quixote than anything else. As Steiger says, he is more of a sixteenth century soldier than a twentieth century one.

Indeed, the movie ends with a long shot of Patton walking away from the war, toward and then away from a large group of windmills, after he has been relieved of his Bavarian military governorship. Essentially, Patton, despite his unquestioned success, has spent much of the movie fighting windmills. He is more keen to prove how great a hero he is than anything else (even saving his soldiers lives). Patton and his romanticism were dangerous and harmful in a world where real people die.

Patton’s romanticism explains his aversion to impending nuclear war, which will simply be about killing, not about individual bravery, heroism, or military ability. Patton, as a type of aggressive, warmongering hero, is useful in aggressively attacking and defeating Hitler’s Nazi Germany, because that was what was needed then, but he is somebody less useful in the time of nuclear armaments. Patton states near the movie’s end, when asked about the V-1 and V-2 rockets the Germans were developing, as well as other weapons: “Wonder weapons. By God, I don’t see the wonder in ‘em. Killing without heroics. Nothing is glorified. Nothing is reaffirmed. No heroes, no cowards, no troops, no generals. Only those who are left alive and those who are left dead. I’m glad I won’t live to see it.”

\(^{30}\) Indeed, the portrayal of Patton as successful militarily because of his aggressiveness, had far-reaching military effects in Vietnam soon after the movie was released in February, 1970. Frank Tomasulo writes: “President Richard Nixon, watched the film twice at Camp David. Nixon publicly stated, after watching
Frye writes that the achievements of the Tragedy Third Phase hero come “at the end of a heroic life” (221). Not only is this literally true in Patton's case (he died almost two weeks after injuries suffered in a car accident in Germany late in 1945), but it is also true for Patton’s heroic, overly aggressive type. If Patton’s type had been the dominant viewpoint during the Cold War, it would have only brought Americans suffering and, ultimately, nuclear annihilation.\footnote{Of course, the American and the world’s approach to the Cold War, thankfully, was diplomatic and cautious. As Omar Bradley says: “I have a feeling that from now on just being a good soldier won’t mean a thing. I’m afraid we’re going to have to be diplomats, administrators, you name it.” Patton’s response: “God help us.”}

Of course, the American and the world’s approach to the Cold War, thankfully, was diplomatic and cautious. As Omar Bradley says: “I have a feeling that from now on just being a good soldier won’t mean a thing. I’m afraid we’re going to have to be diplomats, administrators, you name it.” Patton’s response: “God help us.”

Frye writes: “The paradox of victory within tragedy may be expressed by a double perspective in the action” (220). This paradox of victory within tragedy is Patton’s egotistical desire to arrive at Messina before Montgomery, which costs some of his men their lives—more than would have been otherwise necessary. Patton was famous for sacrificing his men’s lives to achieve personal success. Of course, Patton’s hard-driving, relentless attacking style ultimately leads to his European victories, where such recklessness (as opposed to caution to save lives) was necessary to break through the German defenses.

Frye writes that Samson, an example of the Tragic Third Phase hero, is a “buffoon of a Philistine carnival and simultaneously a tragic hero to the Israelites, but the tragedy ends in triumph and the carnival in catastrophe” (220-221). Patton’s slapping of the battle-fatigued soldier leads to his portrayal as a buffoon in the American paper cartoons—a churl kicking a defenseless soldier with a boot marked with a swastika. The implication, of course, is that Patton’s act is also characteristic of a murderous Nazi.

However, many Third Army (and American) soldiers are portrayed in the movie as admiring Patton as a hero for slapping the soldier. Indeed, one of Patton’s subordinates tells him that the Third Army received many letters supportive of Patton about the incident (almost nine out of every ten), and that most of the positive letters were from

\footnote{As in another film, \textit{Dr. Strangelove} with George C. Scott playing another warmonger general, Buck Turgidson.}
servicemen and their relatives. The other negative letters were mostly anonymous. In
short, even though Patton’s action hurt his personal career advancement and was often
criticized at home, it actually improved his soldiers’ morale—that somebody was
standing up for their courage and punishing cowardice. Bradley tells Patton at the
movie’s end: “You’ve done a magnificent job here in Europe .... I think that soldier you
slapped back there in Sicily did more to win the war than any other private in the Army.”
Like Samson, even in his personal, tragic suffering, the movie portrays Patton as
bettering his nation’s cause.

*Patton* Tragedy Third Phase Analogue: Romance Third Phase

**Romance Third Phase Characteristics.**

1. Contains “the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the
crucial struggle” and “the exaltation of the hero” (187), also known as the struggle,
“the point of ritual death” (187) and “the recognition of the hero” (187).
2. A king, whose land is attacked by a dragon, is “sometimes suffering from an
incurable malady or wound” (189) which represents the land’s sterility.
3. The hero arrives and kills the dragon, then marries the king’s daughter and eventually
becomes king himself (188).
4. The king’s daughter, having been rescued from a very dangerous place, is strongly
connected with Jocasta in *Oedipus the King* (193).
5. After the dragon is dead, his previous victims “come out of him alive” led by the hero
who has gone down “the monster’s open throat” (190).
6. Following the dragon’s death, the life-giving rains which have been pent up inside
him herald the coming of spring (191-192).

*Patton* fits all six characteristics of Romance Third Phase fairly well. Frye writes:
“Thus the romance expresses more clearly the passage from struggle through a point of
ritual death to a recognition scene that we discovered in comedy” (187). Indeed, *Patton’s*
ritual death is not his actual death (which is not shown or even mentioned in the movie).
Patton’s ritual death is his spiraling career after he slaps the shell-shocked soldier in the hospital—a problem from which he only recovers because the exigencies of the Normandy invasion demand his brutal skills—and, finally, his removal from his military governance in 1945.

The king who ruled over a sterile land (Frye 189) in World War II was the French government before the German invasion in 1940 and the Vichy France government after this. Patton is one of the most prominent heroes who arrives and kills the German ‘Hun’ (as he would have called it). The king’s daughter is Vichy France (“found in a perilous … place” (Frye 193)) compromised like Jocasta in Oedipus the King (Frye 193), who is concerned more for her survival than for truth and rightness (when Jocasta tries to keep Oedipus from discovering the truth that he has married his mother and killed his father, even though Oedipus’s ‘recognition’ of this truth leads to the plague’s end). In the same way, Vichy France was more concerned with survival than fighting for truth and rightness. After the Allies have gone “down the monster’s open throat” (190) in the Normandy invasion, the French Resistance and the French people return with them or, as Frye puts it, “the previous victims of the dragon come out of him alive after he is killed” (190). After World War II, of course, spring begins again (Frye 191-192).

Frye writes: “The perennially childlike quality of romance is marked by its extraordinarily persistent nostalgia, its search for some kind of imaginative golden age in time or space” (186). Indeed, Patton believed that war was a romance, that he was a valiant knight, that war was a chance for him to show how much better and quicker and stronger he was than other generals. Of course, Patton’s tools of war are his soldier’s lives, and he sometimes wastes them so that he can have greater glory. As Frye writes: “The essential element of plot in romance is adventure” (186), and Patton too easily looks at war in that way, instead of as a colossal tragedy in which men and women die.

Frye writes that “[m]ost cultures regard certain stories with more reverence than others, either because they are thought of as historically true or because they have come to bear a heavier weight of conceptual meaning” (188). Patton is at heart a movie about the best way for a knight to behave in a romance. Which is the better way to conduct one’s self in life, in all walks of life: Patton’s egotism and “win big at all costs” mentality or Bradley’s more humble approach to move carefully to win but also to save
the most lives possible? This mythical element and its universal issues perhaps explain
the movie’s public popularity (it grossed $89.8 million in American box office receipts
and video tape rentals,\textsuperscript{32} won the 1970 Academy Award for Best Picture, and Franklin
Schaffner won the 1970 Academy Award for Best Director). As Frye writes: “The
reason for the greater profundity of canonical myth is not solely tradition, but the result of
the greater degree of metaphorical identification that is possible in myth” (188).\textsuperscript{33}

\textbf{Figure 29: Tragedy and Irony/Satire Fourth Phase}

\emph{Apocalypse Now} (1979) Tragedy Fourth Phase

\textbf{Tragedy Fourth Phase Characteristics.}

1. The hero falls “through hybris and hamartia” (221) and crosses the line of innocence
   into experience.

\emph{Apocalypse Now}, like many war movies, perfectly exemplifies Tragedy Fourth Phase,
“the typical fall of the hero through hybris and hamartia” (221). \emph{Apocalypse Now} is
based upon Joseph Conrad’s novella “Heart of Darkness,” in which the sailor Marlow
tells of his voyage into the Congo to bring back one of the Continental Trading Society’s

http://us.imdb.com/Business\%0066206

\textsuperscript{33} Tom Ryall notes this tendency of myth critics in his essay "Genre and Hollywood" when he writes:
"those using notions of myth and ritual posit a more participatory situation in which the audience plays a
role in the constitution of the cinema's value systems through box-office acclaim and other interactive
mechanisms" (330).
best managers, Kurtz, who has apparently gone mad and is abusing the natives. Kurtz
dies on the return trip, whispering “the horror, the horror,” which is, apparently, his
dearthbed ‘recognition’ of the evil things he has done. Perhaps the novella’s dominant
theme is that, left by itself (as Kurtz is isolated in the middle of the Congo), with absolute
power, humanity becomes corrupt. Kurtz, an erstwhile idealist, a prime example of one
of humankind’s best men, becomes evil. As Frye writes, “[w]e cross the boundary line
from innocence to experience, which is also the direction in which the hero falls” (Frye
221).

*Apocalypse Now* is the story of Captain Benjamin L. Willard (Martin Sheen), a Marine
assassin, given a mission to eliminate Colonel Walter E. Kurtz (Marlon Brando), who has
gone mad in the jungles of Cambodia. Willard’s journey down the river into the interior
is full of danger as his patrol boat crew is gradually killed off. Willard finally finds Kurtz
and kills him—but only after realizing how much he himself could be potentially, and is,
like Kurtz, since Kurtz represents the corruptible nature of humankind.

Frye writes: “[W]e cross the boundary line from innocence to experience, which is also
the direction in which the hero falls” (221). Many heroes fall in *Apocalypse Now*. Many
of the movie’s characters are soured by the Vietnam War experience, in which so many
madmen have free reign to murder and kill whomever they want. This, I think, is what
upsets Willard most of all. He realizes he is a wicked man (he says of Kurtz, at the
movie’s beginning “if his story is a confession, then so is mine”) going to assassinate a
wicked man. As Willard says, charging people with murder in the Vietnam War “is like
handing out speeding tickets at the Indy 500.”

One of the movie’s most interesting characters is Lieutenant William Kilgore (Robert
Duvall). Kilgore loves war and its adrenaline. He says: “I love the smell of napalm in

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34 Interestingly, Martin Shichtman has argued that Willard is the white knight in the Grail myth, Cambodia
is the Wasteland, and Kurtz is the dragon Willard must kill. Shichtman notes: "The captain's vitality is
seemingly reflected in the rain which begins falling from the moment of his arrival in Kurtz's compound"
(39). Although Cambodia is undoubtedly the Wasteland, and Kurtz would be an excellent dragon, Willard
is not a white knight in an unambiguously good sense, because he admits about Kurtz: "if his story is a
confession then so is mine," that Willard, essentially, is Kurtz with only a few minor differences. In the
Grail myth, the white knight is completely different in substance than the dragon.

Shichtman admits that Willard does have a malevolence and evil side that white knights would normally
not have, but he ascribes this to the Vietnam war setting, where even the best white knight would be cynical
the morning.” In many ways, Kilgore is just as mad as Kurtz, as he attacks a Viet Cong village simply because there is good surfing nearby. However, Kilgore is not officially considered mad by the Army, because he hasn’t yet done anything to harm American interests, at least not that the top brass know about. The movie shows us that human nature—left to its own devices, will eventually go completely insane. In some people, the insanity is official (as in Kurtz's case). In other people (like Kilgore) it is just as obvious, but the powerful ignore it, because their own goals have not yet been compromised.

Alone in the jungle without the civilizing influences of other people more powerful than him, Kurtz has the power to question the moral system he has learned as a highly educated American, educated at West Point and Harvard. As Willard says, he takes orders from the jungle. In the jungle, the law can easily become “might makes right.” We see this at the last American outpost (the Do Lung bridge) before Kurtz’s compound. Willard is trying to find the commanding officer, apparently for updates to his mission. Amid the shouts a little distance off of a Viet Cong soldier in the jungle shouting for reinforcements to attack the American trench, Willard finally finds a man named Roach (Herb Rice) who shoots a mortar, apparently killing the Viet Cong soldier. When asked if he knows who is in command, Roach simply replies “Yeah,” implying that he, Roach, the one who knows how to handle the mortar, is in command. That is, violence is all powerful in Vietnam.

This usefulness of “might makes right” in Vietnam is what has seduced Kurtz into insanity. Kurtz tells the story of how, after inoculating a whole village’s children against polio, Kurtz’s company is called back by an old man and, returning, they find the children's arms lopped off. Instead of being repelled, Kurtz is attracted to the finality and swift action of the Viet Cong. For him, it is a beautiful action that requires no thought.

and somewhat evil (37). Still, I think *Apocalypse Now*'s entire point is that all of us could become like Kurtz, and, therefore, if Kurtz is a dragon, we are all dragons, and none of us are white knights.

35 Frank Tomasulo writes: “The scene is synchronized to a triumphant musical score, Richard Wagner’s ‘Ride of the Valkyries,’ which monumentalizes the passage of dead heroes into Valhalla. Further, point-of-view camera angles inscribe the viewer in the helicopter looking down on the Vietnamese villagers, making them faceless and tiny in the frame as they are gunned down, but the camera moves in to isolate the agony of one wounded American soldier. The audience is thus cinematically implicated in the exhilarating superiority of the American attack” (Tomasulo 149).
And I remember ... I cried ... I wept like some grandmother .... And then I realized .... Like I was shot with a diamond ... a diamond bullet right through my forehead ... And I thought: My God ... the genius of that .... And then I realized they were stronger than we. Because they could stand that these were not monsters .... These were men ... trained cadres ... these men who fought with their hearts, who had families, who had children, who were filled with love ... but they had the strength ... the strength ... to do that ... without passion ... without judgement ... without judgement. Because it’s judgement that defeats us.

The Viet Cong wanted to do something and they did it. Kurtz begins to practice such extreme, swift measures in his own command.

For Kurtz “thought” is the enemy. His goal is to return to his basic inclinations of the jungle. These inclinations are the ones most successful in war. Therefore, hubris is not a concern for Kurtz, because the most successful warriors in the jungle are often those who are most self-serving and violent. “It’s judgement” Kurtz says—considered, rational thought which might stop hubris—“that defeats us,” implying that judgement pulverizes human beings into inaction. We have to shake free the moral systems which keep us from acting decisively and with the finality that war (or the jungle) requires.

Never get out of the boat .... Kurtz got off the boat. He split from the whole fucking program .... What did he see here that first tour? Thirty-eight fucking years old .... If he joined the Green Berets, there was no way you'd ever get above Colonel .... He had to apply three times and he had to put up with a ton of shit, but when he threatened to resign, they gave it to him.

Kurtz getting off the boat of civilization and isolating himself in the jungle has led to his implacable hubris, because there are no longer others around him to question his actions. Holger Bachmann notes Kurtz has become a demigod for the natives. "Kurtz forbids his picture to be taken just as Yahweh commanded the Jews not to have images of their god" (328).

The boat, in Apocalypse Now, represents civilizing influences of society, a hierarchy and system which can pull you back from moral error, the hubris that develops when one does not have people around to check one. The Engineman (Frederic Forest) named Chef
(because he likes to cook), after a brush with a jungle tiger just after he has left the boat to relieve himself, shouts advice to his companions: “Never get outta’ the boat.”

Willard expands Chef’s practical statement to Kurtz metaphorically.

**Apocalypse Now** Tragedy Fourth Phase Analogue: Irony/Satire Fourth Phase

**Irony/Satire Fourth Phase Characteristics.**

1. “The fall of the tragic hero … is so delicately balanced emotionally that we almost exaggerate any one element in it merely by calling attention to it” (236).
2. The emphasis is on the everyday aspects of a human being, not their heroism (237).
3. Much of the suffering portrayed is seen as avoidable (237).

*Apocalypse Now* does not completely fulfill the third characteristic of Irony/Satire Fourth Phase, although it fulfills the other two perfectly. Frye writes that this phase is found in a good deal of Conrad (237), and *Apocalypse Now* is based, as mentioned before, on Conrad’s “Heart of Darkness.” Frye writes: “The fall of the tragic hero, especially in Shakespeare, is so delicately balanced emotionally that we almost exaggerate any one element in it merely by calling attention to it. One of these elements is the elegiac aspect in which irony is at a minimum, the sense of gentle and dignified pathos” (236). Irony is identified with the “‘realistic’ aspect of experience” (Frye 366), and although Kurtz is realistically a horrible, evil serial killer, he is somebody for whom we feel empathy. The movie presents him as a pathetic figure for whom we should feel sorry.

Because Kurtz represents evil in society, he also represents anybody who has within them the ability to do evil, which, of course, is anybody. As the Stoic philosopher Epictetus claimed: “The essence of good and evil is a disposition of the will,” *(On Courage Chapter XXIX ("Bartlett's Quotations"))* meaning that all of us—like we have

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36 Interestingly, John Hellmann writes that “The river journey in *Apocalypse Now* is full of allusions to southern California, the usual setting of the hard-boiled genre, with the major episodes of this trip through Vietnam centering around the surfing, rock music, go-go dancing and drug taking associated with the west coast culture of the time” (70).
the potential to be saints—also have the potential to be evil, even to Kurtz’s level. Kurtz, who represents a possibility in all our natures, is more pathetic than he is a cold-blooded killer, because he is potentially us. As Willard says: “if his story is really a confession, then so is mine.”

_Apocalypse Now_ “stresses the humanity of its heroes” (237), the humanity of Willard and Kurtz, who are not really that different. Indeed, Willard is told that another assassin had gone on an ‘identical’ mission, Captain Richard Colby (Scott Glenn) but that Colby had defected to Kurtz’s army. The implication is that every man, cast into the environment of Cambodia and Vietnam, becomes more like Kurtz. Therefore, the movie is not about one or two individuals’ failings. It is about all humanity’s failings. As Kurtz tells Willard and, by extension, humanity, “you have no right to judge me.”

Further, Frye writes “there is no attempt to make fun of the character, but only to bring out clearly the ‘all too human,’ as distinct from the heroic, aspects of the tragedy” (237). Kurtz, as Willard points out, is an exceptionally well-educated person, with degrees from West Point and Harvard, with “about a thousand decorations etc., etc.” Kurtz has a background which nobody can look down upon, and, based on his background, nobody would have expected him to go mad.

Yet something goes wrong with Kurtz. After his “tour of advisory command in Vietnam ... the report to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Lyndon Johnson was restricted. Seems they didn’t dig what he had to tell them.” Kurtz, of course, has been corrupted by Vietnam, where ruthless violence is the most successful method for survival. General R. Corman (G.D. Spradling)—at American Vietnam headquarters in Nha Trang, far away from any action, calls Kurt’s method “unsound.”

Of course, this is easy for him to say removed from the actual danger and anxiety of the battlefield. Actually, the movie’s portrayal of Vietnam’s horrors makes Kurtz’s ruthless violence look tempting, since ruthless violence is perhaps the best way to guarantee one’s safety in a country in which it is difficult to distinguish friend from enemy—a famous problem in Vietnam. This, as Frye writes, “brings out clearly the ‘all too human’” (237). In that sense, one of this phase’s central themes “is Stein’s answer to the problem of the ‘romantic’ Lord Jim in Conrad: ‘in the destructive element immerse’” (Frye 237).
Indeed, as Frye writes, Kurtz has immersed himself in the destructive element, because that is the most certain way for him to stay alive in Vietnam, at least in the short-run. Kurtz was once romantic, truly trying to help his country and others, but in Vietnam one can't survive with such a romantic attitude. One has to use brute force, the 'destructive element' to survive. Frye writes: “This remark, without ridiculing Jim, still brings out the quixotic and romantic element in his nature and criticizes it from the point of view of experience” (237). Like Kurtz (with his romantic desire to be a Green Beret front-line soldier in Vietnam, where he can be absolutely violent and, like Quixote, fight everybody), Lord Jim knew his romanticism would lead to his destruction, but he continued in it anyway. Kurtz tells Willard in the movie: “You’re an errand boy, sent by grocery clerks, to collect a bill.” Willard states, just before he kills Kurtz: “He knew more about what I was going to do than I did.” Finally, Willard says, about his assassination of Kurtz: “Everybody wanted me to do it, him most of all .... He just wanted to go out like a soldier, standing up, not like some poor, wasted, rag-assed renegade.”

So *Apocalypse Now* “supplies social and psychological explanations for catastrophe, and makes as much as possible of human misery seem, in Thoreau’s phase, ‘superfluous and evitable’” (237). *Apocalypse Now* does not portray Kurtz as being able to avoid his fate. But perhaps the movie’s point—as an anti-war movie—is that America should have avoided involvement in Vietnam. Once it committed itself to Vietnam and its moral ambiguities, disasters like Kurtz—who responds to the moral ambiguities with a focus on his victory whatever the cost, even ruthless violence—were destined to occur. All this could only have been avoided, the movie seems to hint, by something not really difficult: America staying out of Vietnam.
Tragedy Fifth Phase Characteristics.

1. The heroic decreases, and there is an emphasis on simple, everyday experience, and the characters often look like very small human beings part of large, machine-like populations (221).

2. The characters are “in a state of lower freedom than the audience” (221).

3. There is the “tragedy of lost direction and lack of knowledge” (222).

Das Boot (1981) Tragedy Fifth Phase

Das Boot fits all three main characteristics of Tragedy Fifth Phase. The movie is the story of a group of soldiers on U-96, a German World War II U-boat which begins a tour of duty in the autumn of 1941, as the movie states at the beginning, when “Germany’s vaunted U-boat fleet, with which Hitler hoped to blockade and starve out Britain, is beginning to suffer its first major setbacks.” The movie does show some of U-96’s rare successes but also, more frequently, the times U-96 is almost destroyed. Attempting to pass through the Straits of Gibraltar, U-96, strafed by an Allied plane, sinks to the ocean bottom (some two-hundred and seventy meters down). After a long repair operation, the crew is miraculously able to return to the surface only, upon returning to La Rochelle, to be sunk (with much of the crew, including the Captain (Jürgen Prochnow), killed) in an Allied air raid.
The U-96 crew seems very interested in heroism at first. When the crew sets out on their first voyage from La Rochelle there is much pomp and circumstance with the band playing as the crew members wave spastically. Such a band’s function, of course, is to romanticize the soldiers and their duty, and the soldiers seem to feel ‘romantic.’ However, gradually, over the movie’s course, the crew just wants to stay alive—regardless of whether that means they become heroes or not.

At movie’s end, when the men return to La Rochelle, a band is playing (like when U-96 first set off). But returning into the harbor, the crewmen don’t wave at the small crowd gathered there to welcome them but stand glumly by watching the audience watch them, as a band plays. As further evidence of the banality of military pomp and circumstance (romanticism), the band and the submarine’s return are interrupted by the Allied air raid, which destroys the submarine.

Frye also writes that “the ironic perspective in tragedy is attained by putting the characters in a state of lower freedom than the audience” (221). This is not always the case in war films, like Braveheart or Glory or Sergeant York—the type of movies which sometimes make you wish you had been at the battle—but it is literally the case in Das Boot. A crewmember on U-96 is a horribly unhappy, scared, miserable person under the sea. No matter how miserable an audience member’s life, as he/she is watching the film, it almost certainly is not as horrible as the life U-boat crewmembers experienced. Despite the movie’s terror, and how this terror draws one in, one feels almost happy to be watching the movie in the comfort of a home or a movie theatre, because at least one isn’t under the sea in a U-boat. One’s surroundings become much more comfortable after watching the movie.

Frye writes further: “For a Christian audience an Old Testament or pagan setting is ironic in this sense, as it shows its characters moving according to the conditions of a law, whether Jewish or natural, from which the audience has been, at least theoretically, redeemed” (221). An analogy can be drawn between Hitler’s dictatorial regime and the redemption of Germany after de-Nazification. Das Boot, originally shown in a television mini-series in Germany in 1981, was shown to a German audience, which by the sheer passage of time, was mostly a younger German generation, far removed from the Second World War, in a sense partially redeemed from it.
Although the U-boat crew is young, like the young soldiers in *Sands of Iwo Jima* (Tragedy Second Phase), *Das Boot* is even less idealistic than *Sands of Iwo Jima*, because *Das Boot*’s characters eventually realize they do not have a heroic cause to fight for. They are, after all, fighting for Hitler and the Nazis. In *Sands of Iwo Jima*, the Allied cause is portrayed much more compassionately than the German cause in *Das Boot*. This makes *Das Boot* more of “a world of adult experience” (Frye 222), because, in an adult world, life is seldom as clear and black and white as portrayed in movies like *Sands of Iwo Jima*, or by some of the Allies.

Correspondent Lieutenant Werner (Herbert Gronemeyer) is on a journalistic assignment on U-96, as the Captain says “writing a story on our war heroes.” At first, full of idealism and excitement, Werner takes many pictures. But the Captain tells Lieutenant Werner: “Better to take photos on our return from the mission, not when we go out …. They’ll have grown beards by then …. Sailing with them makes you feel so old. It’s like a children’s crusade.” Werner still persists until, while taking pictures of the torpedo crew, a rag full of oil is thrown in his face. This incident tempers Werner’s glamorization of the U-boat life. He realizes that the U-boat is a very messy, scary place that should not be glamorized. After this incident, Werner is much more discreet with his picture taking.

As Frye writes: “The heroic decreases” (221). Even some of the boat’s most experienced sailors—like Johann, one of the engineers, who has been on many tours of duty—fall apart under pressure. Johann suddenly snaps after a particularly violent burst of depth charges and wanders towards the Captain, speechless, ignoring orders to return to his battle station. The conditions of the boat are such that even the best sailors can’t be heroes. The movie seems to hint that being a hero is really a matter of circumstances.

The U-96 does survive a perilous trip through the Straits of Gibraltar. Perhaps the Chief Engineer (Klaus Wennemann) is the movie’s best example of a hero, but he is only a hero in a non-martial sense, in that he works ceaselessly under exhausting conditions of high water pressure and a lack of oxygen two-hundred and seventy meters under the sea to repair the U-boat. The movie’s only heroism is for those who save lives, not for those who take them.
In one scene, U-96 sneaks up close to a burning Allied ship which has already been torpedoes. U-96 torpedoes the ship once more to finally sink it, but as the U-boat crewmembers watch the boat explode, they notice there are burning men running off the boat. These men begin to cry out for help and swim towards U-96, but, of course, U-96 cannot help them and backs away. The German sailors’ expressions are unforgettably tragic, as they watch these men probably about to die, because of U-96’s torpedoes. These U-boat victims are no longer just numbers but actual, live people. Clearly, in the movie, there is no glory or heroism in causing such death.

Frye writes that in the Fifth Phase, the “ironic element increases, the heroic decreases and the characters look farther away and in a smaller perspective” (221). The highly experienced U-96 Captain Hans Jürgen Hellriegel is also cynical about the Nazi leadership of Germany and anybody, for that matter, who is a victim of ideology (i.e. anybody obsessed with sacrificial heroism for anything or who “follows orders without question”). The heroic, with Hellriegel’s experience of war, has decreased. As Lieutenant Werner says late in the movie, when it looks like the crew of U-96 will die at the ocean bottom: “They made us all dream for this day. To be fearless and proud and alone. They told us it would be the test of our manhood, to need no-one, just sacrifice all for the Fatherland—just empty words.”

Frye writes: “The tragic action of the Fifth Phase presents for the most part the tragedy of lost direction and lack of knowledge, not unlike the Second Phase except that the context is the world of adult experience” (222). This is true of U-96 both literally and metaphorically. Of course, U-96 is often unsure of its location, both vis-à-vis destroyers and their depth charges and its exact location on the Atlantic ocean. In one scene, when, having been wracked by a storm, they have not spotted the sun for fourteen days, U-96 spots another U-Boat, showing that both have lost an understanding of where exactly they are. The Captain complains that the Germans have a dozen U-boats, from Greenland to the Azorres, “but still we almost collide with one of our own. Something’s wrong here … leaving the route wide open, and so we allow the British to shove their whole Armada through.” The Navigator (Bernd Tauber), when asked about U-96’s location, asks the Captain “How to compute?”
Das Boot Tragedy Fifth Phase Analogue: Irony/Satire Fifth Phase

Irony/Satire Fifth Phase Characteristics.

1. Emphasis is on ineluctable fate or fortune. Everything important has already happened or is set unavoidably to happen (237).

2. Thus an emphasis on stoicism (237).

3. The practical situation is more important “than the theoretical explanation of it” (238).

Das Boot fits all three characteristics of Irony/Satire Fifth Phase. Frye writes that “[T]he main emphasis is on the natural cycle, the steady unbroken turning of the wheel of fate or fortune” (237). The movie’s opening statement reads:

La Rochelle, France. Autumn, 1941. Germany’s vaunted U-boat fleet, with which Hitler hoped to blockade and starve out Britain, is beginning to suffer its first major setbacks. British freighters are now sailing the Atlantic with stronger and more effective destroyer escorts, inflicting heavy losses on the U-boats. Nevertheless, the German High Command orders more and more U-boats, with even younger crews, into battle in their ports in occupied France. The battle for control of the Atlantic is turning against the Germans. 40,000 German sailors served on U-boats during World War II. 30,000 never returned.

The fate of the U-boat's crewmen is really very much determined from the movie’s beginning, and there is little they can do about it. They can only sit quietly and wait. “Like the corresponding phase of tragedy, it is less moral and more generalized and metaphysical in its interest, less melioristic and more stoical and resigned” (237).

This phase “expresses a stoicism not of the ‘invictus’ type, which maintains a romantic dignity, but rather a sense, found also in the parallel Second Phase of satire, that the practical and immediate situation is likely to be worthy of more respect than the theoretical explanation of it” (238). This is the Captain’s attitude. Very cynical about Nazi ideology, the Captain points out that the supposedly “drunken paralytic” Churchill (possibly Goering’s term) is actually doing very well with his destroyers and anti-
submarine planes in the Battle of the Atlantic. As mentioned before, the Captain is full of
disdain for Nazi ideologies which require unquestioning obedience, of ‘sacrifice for the
Fatherland,’ which is the “theoretical explanation” for his presence in the Battle of the
Atlantic. Germany’s “big heroes are nothing but hot air,” he says.

However, the Captain is very satisfied with his destruction of Allied shipping,
because this is the practical aspect of his job, which relates to himself personally (even if
it furthers Nazi ideology). The Captain says, with intense satisfaction, after hearing his
torpedoes hit a couple Allied ships: “We hit the first,” and “now they are going to the
bottom.” Later, he triumphantly boasts to the Navigator: “We have really smashed them.
My God, those bulkheads. Did you hear them burst?” Undoubtedly, for the Captain:
“the practical and immediate situation is likely to be worthy of more respect than the
theoretical explanation of it” (238).

Figure 31: Tragedy and Irony/Satire Sixth Phase

Platoon (1986) Tragedy Sixth Phase

Tragedy Sixth Phase Characteristics.
1. “[A] world of shock and horror” which “shocks as a whole” (222) and is
   characterized by sparagmos or the tearing apart of flesh (222).
2. The hero usually has the characteristics of a villainous hero, because the dire situation
   makes him a little Machiavellian (222).
3. There is a demonic epiphany of complete and utter hell (223).
Platoon fits all three Tragedy Sixth Phase characteristics perfectly. Platoon is the story of volunteer Chris Taylor (Charles Sheen), and his tour of duty in Vietnam under two officers in particular: Sergeant Barnes (Tom Berenger) and Sergeant Elias (Willem Dafoe). Barnes is a violent killer who thrives in Vietnam (John Stone notes that, "[f]rom the outset, there is little doubt about the nature of Barnes … [who] is a killing machine, sporting a sickle-shaped scar that runs the entire left side of his face and marks him as a reconstructed Frankenstein-like monster of war" (81)), where he can often kill as many people as he wants, even on his own side, and get away with it. Elias, however, is a much kinder commanding officer, who complains to higher ranking officers about Barnes’ behavior when Barnes orchestrates the slaughter of Vietnamese people in a town in response to the death of one of their American soldiers.

Barnes, later, shoots Elias in combat, leaving him for dead, and the Viet Cong finish Elias off, which makes Elias a martyr. Taylor complains: “It’s the way the whole thing works, people like Elias get wasted, people like Barnes just go on making up the rules any way they want.” The Viet Cong overrun an American position defended by Elias’ former platoon, and napalm is called in to destroy the area. Taylor survives, only slightly wounded, and then finds Barnes (who is more seriously wounded). Barnes tells Taylor to find him a medic. Instead, Taylor shoots and kills Barnes as revenge for Elias’s death.

Platoon is a “world of shock and horror” (222) and a “demonic epiphany” (222). The most shocking thing about this world is simply the realization, as in Apocalypse Now, of how evil human beings can be, without checks and balances in civilization to restrain them. Barnes is the one with the “demonic epiphany.” Like Kurtz in Apocalypse Now, Barnes has realized that it is easier not to think about his actions than to endure the emotional pain of trying to confront moral problems. Barnes simply does what he feels like he should do, even if that means killing many innocent people. Elias has resisted the demonic epiphany of Barnes and Kurtz and remains willing to struggle with the moral ambiguities of Vietnam, although even Elias admits that he loves the moments where he can relax from his moral tension. He tells Taylor, in a scene Avent Beck describes as "a

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37 Judy Kinney writes: “although himself an accomplished killer, Elias is clearly sanctified by identification with traditional Christian iconography. His death takes place in a small jungle clearing with a ruined church nearby. The death scene, agonizing and prolonged through slow motion, culminates as Elias spreads his arms in the gesture of Christ crucified” (161).
quiet scene suggestive of Jesus and Peter in the garden of Gethsemane” (215): “I love this place at night. The stars ... there’s no right or wrong in them. They’re just there.”

Frye writes: “[a]ny tragedy may have one or more shocking scenes in it, but sixth-phase tragedy shocks as a whole, in its total effect” (222). Platoon, of course, does not contain only one, or even a few, isolated tragic scenes. This is the Vietnam War. Platoon contains shocking scene after shocking scene, as the American soldiers one by one are killed or kill each other. The movie ends with Taylor’s statement that the most unbeatable enemy in Vietnam was America herself: “I think now, looking back, we did not fight the enemy; we fought ourselves. The enemy was in us.”

Platoon Tragedy Sixth Phase Analogue: Irony/Satire Sixth Phase

Irony/Satire Sixth Phase Characteristics.
2. The assumption made is that the ruling class takes sadistic pleasure in torturing people indefinitely, “which is precisely the assumption one has to make about devils in order to accept the orthodox picture of hell” (238).

Platoon fits both of these characteristics of Irony/Satire Sixth Phase. In Platoon, life is described, as Frye describes this phase, in terms of “largely unrelieved bondage” (238). The bondage seemingly never ends for the soldiers. Even sleep is barely possible (because of the heat or the bugs or the fears of the guards falling asleep). Frye writes: “Its settings feature prisons, madhouses, lynching mobs” (238). Vietnam is metaphorically a prison or a madhouse. The prisoners are the lower class soldiers put in the jail of Vietnam. Vietnam is a madhouse because one frequent characteristic of madness, complete and utter selfishness, helps people like Barnes survive, where kind, somewhat unselfish people like Elias seem more likely to die more quickly. Certainly, the American soldiers—especially in Viet Cong villages—resemble a lynching mob, as they take vengeance for any of their soldiers who have been killed.
Frye describes this phase as differing “from a pure inferno mainly in the fact that in human experience suffering has an end in death” (238). One begins to realize that death for any of the soldiers is not so bad, because at least they don’t have to live and fight in the Nam any more. The narrator Taylor, as the relatively new recruit, describes Vietnam: “Somebody once wrote: ‘Hell is the impossibility of reason.’ That’s what this place feels like. Hell.” Vietnam during the Vietnam War is hellish, because it is morally ambiguous. Reason, and morality, are very unclear in Vietnam, and such ambiguous morality is perhaps a good definition of hell. Even Taylor admits: “I don’t know what’s right or wrong anymore.”

At the movie’s end, Taylor takes vengeance for himself (and Elias) by killing Barnes, but he has to do so by killing Barnes in the same way Barnes killed Elias (killing a friendly on an enemy battlefield to make it seem as if an enemy shot him). So there is a cast of villainy to Taylor’s action, no matter how much Barnes deserved it. As Frye states: “In such tragedies the hero is in too great agony or humiliation to gain the privilege of a heroic pose, hence it is usually easier to make him a villainous hero” (222).

Frye mentions how “in our day the chief form of this phase is the nightmare of social tyranny” (239). This takes two forms in Platoon. The first is Barnes’ social tyranny. He is convinced that the way he does things is the only right way and says so. He asks fellow soldiers, while they are smoking marijauna: “Ya smoke this shit so to escape from reality? Me, I don't need this shit. I am reality. There’s the way it ought to be, and there’s the way it is.” Of course, one of Barnes’ problems is that he doesn’t examine moral alternatives or his own actions, because that would be too emotionally painful. So he simply does what he wants and forces everybody to follow, and that is social tyranny.

The second group of victims of social tyranny in the movie are most of the soldiers themselves and their class level. Taylor notes how these soldiers are: “guys nobody really cares about. They come from the end of the line, most of ‘em .... Two years’ high school’s about it, maybe if they’re lucky a job waiting for them back at a factory, but most of ‘em got nothing. They’re poor, they’re the unwanted, yet they’re fighting for our society and our freedom.” Taylor, himself, is trying to break that pattern, and so he dropped out of college to go to Vietnam: “I wasn't learning anything. I figured why
should just the poor kids go off to war and the rich kids always get away with it.”  

Further, Frye writes: “The assumption is made in this story that the lust for sadistic power on the part of the ruling class is strong enough to last indefinitely” (238). As one of the soldiers, King (Keith David) says: “Everybody know. The poor are always being fucked over by the rich. Always have, always will.”

**Other Movies Examined and Categorized According to Frye's Phases**

![Figure 32: Tragedy and Romance First Phase](image)

**Braveheart (1995) Tragedy First Phase**

**Tragedy First Phase Characteristics.**

1. “[T]he central character is given the greatest possible dignity in contrast to the other characters, so that we get the perspective of a stag pulled down by wolves” (219).
2. This is about “the birth of the hero in romance” (219).
3. “[T]he central and typical figure of this phase is the calumniated woman, often a mother the legitimacy of whose child is suspected” (219).

*Braveheart* fits all three characteristics of Tragedy First Phase. *Braveheart* is the historically fictional story of William Wallace (Mel Gibson), a Scottish outlaw who fought against English oppression in Scotland in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century. The movie depicts the murder of Wallace’s first wife, Murron (Catherine

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38 As Kinney writes: “*Platoon* relies on the traditional structure of the bildungsroman, the tale of the education of a young man, within the context of a modern morality play” (161).
McCormack) (whose actual name, according to tradition, was Marion Braidfute) and Wallace’s revenge against Murron’s murderer, the local English Magistrate (Malcolm Tierney)). After killing the Magistrate, Wallace embarks on a long struggle against the English and their king, Edward "Longshanks" (Patrick McGoohan). The struggle is full of many victories (most notably at Stirling) as well as some defeats, the latter of which the Scottish nobles are often responsible for. When the nobles are not fighting among themselves, they are rather easily bought off by the English.

The movie ends with Wallace’s capture by trickery, and his torture and death. However, Wallace’s death has the strange effect of uniting the Scottish in honor of his memory, and they defeat the English at the battle of Bannockburn. As Mel Gibson states at the movie’s end: “In the year of our Lord 1314, patriots of Scotland, starving and outnumbered, charged the fields of Bannockburn. They fought like warrior poets. They fought like Scotsmen and won their freedom.”

Frye writes that, in Tragedy First Phase “the central character is given the greatest possible dignity in contrast to the other characters, so that we get the perspective of a stag pulled down by wolves” (219). Although Wallace’s immediate fellow soldiers like Hamish (Brendan Gleeson) and Hamish’s father Campbell (James Cosmo) are honorable, likeable people, their courage to fight only results from Wallace’s courage to fight. He is undoubtedly their leader, without whom they would not have revolted at all. As for the rest of the Scottish, most simply see Wallace as a cult figure, whom it is mostly convenient and popular to follow when it suits them. And as mentioned before, the Scottish nobles are easily bought off by the English. Compared to the nobles especially, Wallace is a “stag pulled down by wolves” (219).

Braveheart is completely about “the myth of the birth of the hero in romance” (219) (Frye uses the Moses story as an example of this in Romance First Phase). Braveheart chronicles Wallace’s molding into a revolutionary leader, and the emphasis is on his environment (as is the case with Moses, a timid, violent young man who is gradually molded into a strong leader). The death of one’s wife at the hands of the ruling elite will make almost any man a revolutionary. Although Frye only mentions “the birth of the

39 There is a traditional story that the murder of Marion by the English was the main source for Wallace’s revolt (Fisher 37), which Braveheart, obviously, uses.
hero in romance” and does not mention Moses specifically in Tragedy First Phase, Wallace and Moses’ environments are similar. Both environments mold a seemingly ordinary man full of fear (Moses says: “Oh, my Lord, send, I pray, some other person” Exodus 4: 13 RSV and Wallace at first refuses to challenge the English because he wants to live safely with his family) into a powerful leader.

Frye writes that “[t]he sources of dignity are courage and innocence, and in this phase the hero or heroine is usually innocent” (219). Although quite a few historians, of course, present an ambivalent picture of Wallace (as Andrew Fisher, for instance, does in his biography William Wallace), Braveheart, from the movie’s beginning, presents Wallace as a “hero” who really did no wrong. Robert the Bruce (Angus MacFadyen) only hints briefly at Wallace’s ambivalent reputation among historians with the opening disclaimer that “historians from England will say I am a liar, but history is written by those who have hanged heroes.” A man historically often thought to be guilty of heinous crimes is portrayed as almost completely innocent in Braveheart.

The movie’s ending presents Wallace as a buffoon before the hostile English, but this actually emphasizes his martyrdom, making him more heroic. Wallace is tortured (in an attempt to force him to swear allegiance to Longshanks) as hundreds of English men and women watch in a carnivalesque atmosphere. They throw vegetables and bread and various insults at him, and he is then beheaded after being stretched and castrated. But he never swears his allegiance to Longshanks. Indeed, Wallace’s courage in death, according to the movie, leads to the ultimate undoing of English interests in Scotland in the inspiration (according to the movie) Wallace gives to Robert the Bruce and the Scottish rebellion to continue the fight against the English.

Frye writes that “the central and typical figure of this phase is the calumniated woman” (219). Murron is almost raped by the English soldier Smythe (Michael Byrne), who treats her as if she were a prostitute, and Murron is then slandered as having assaulted the king’s soldiers. The Magistrate kills her in order to draw in Wallace. Frye, referring to the example of the Duchess of Malfi (in John Webster’s play), notes that “we understand how it is that even after her death her invisible presence continues to be the most vital character in the play” (220). Of course, Murron appears numerous times in the
movie as a ghost, usually as a way of urging Wallace to live and die nobly, since, gaining heaven, he will see her as his reward.

_Braveheart_ Tragedy First Phase Analogue: Romance First Phase

Romance First Phase Characteristics.

1. “[T]he myth of the birth of the hero” (198).
3. The new world is preceded by “a universal deluge”, which wipes out the old, rotting world, and then there is “an ark, with the potency of all future life contained in it” (198).

_Braveheart_ fits all three Romance First Phase characteristics, although the deluge mentioned in the third characteristic (which I interpret as Wallace’s Scottish rebellion) is not necessarily universal (although rebellion, of course, is a frequent occurrence all over the world). Frye uses, as an example of this phase, the story of Moses, his gradual shaping from an orphaned child into a timid man with low self-esteem into a heroic leader. Indeed, there are many parallels between Wallace and Moses, largely, as Frye I believe would argue, because the characteristics of great leaders quite often replicate each other (henceforth Frye’s description of heroic leaders with similar characteristics in this Romance First Phase).

Moses, at first, withdraws from Egypt after killing an Egyptian who is beating a Hebrew. However, some of the Hebrews, his own people, fear him, perhaps because of his temper (as Moses is trying to stop a fight between two Hebrews one says: “Do you mean to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?” *Exodus* 1:14b). The Egyptian king discovers what Moses has done, and Moses flees Egypt. As a leader, at that point, he has failed miserably. He escapes to a safe, idyllic existence with his family in Midian, perhaps much like Wallace, at first in _Braveheart_, is concerned more with coming “back home to raise crops, and God willing a family.” Before his wife is killed early in the movie, Wallace does not care about making political points to the English about freedom.
or anything else. He tells Campbell and MacClannough (Sean McGinley), who have summoned him to a war council: “If I can live in peace, I will.”

Murron’s death is Wallace’s Burning Bush experience. Although he does not hear the voice of God or see anything supernatural, Wallace knows that his mission from God is to revenge his wife and raise up his people in the process. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, one commoner later says of Wallace that he cuts through English soldiers “like Moses through the Red Sea.”

Wallace’s actual death occurs when he is captured by Longshank’s men in a supposedly secret meeting with the Bruce, although he is immediately only imprisoned. From that point on, he is essentially dead, although Longshank’s goal is to force him to swear allegiance to England before he dies. Wallace refuses to swear such allegiance, even after being stretched, racked, and castrated. Like Moses, Wallace had a single-minded purpose. Like Moses, Wallace does not see the Promised Land in Braveheart, although, according to the movie, he was primarily the one responsible for leading the Scots to their freedom, just as Moses was responsible for leading the Hebrews to their freedom.

Finally, both Wallace’s and Moses’s single-mindedness also lead to their stubbornness. Wallace stubbornly insists on meeting with Robert the Bruce after the Bruce has already betrayed him once. This, of course, leads to his capture by the English and his death and sets back the Scottish cause, at least temporarily. It is nine years later after Wallace’s death in 1305 that the Scots are victorious at Bannockburn (although the movie erroneously seems to hint—since the characters in the Bannockburn scene don’t seem any older than previously—that Bannockburn was more or less soon after Wallace’s death), and Wallace’s death likely pushed the Scottish Bannockburn further into the future. In the same way, Moses’ striking of the rock is a stubborn act (he strikes the rock in anger when Yahweh simply told him to speak to it to bring out of it water for the thirsty Israelites (Numbers 20: 10-12)), focusing on his own feelings and not on what he has commanded by God to do, so Moses does not see Canaan.

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40 Numbers 20: 2-12 RSV: Now there was no water for the congregation, and they assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron. And the people contended with Moses and said, “Would that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord! Why have you brought the assembly of the Lord into the wilderness, that we should die here . . . . [T]here is no
Finally, Wallace, just before his death, famously screams out the word “freedom,” so that he is made to represent the struggle for freedom. Frye writes of “the end of a historical cycle and the birth of a new one” being symbolized by a “universal deluge” and an “ark, with the potency of all future life contained in it” (198). The deluge, at least for the movie, would be the warfare and fighting which characterized the Scottish people’s (supposed) fight for freedom, although it is only universal in a philosophical sense, not in an exactly literal temporal sense. The ark is people like Wallace, who carry within them the fight for freedom (supposedly), and, therefore, “the potency of all future life” (198). The movie seems to hint that it is people like Wallace who maintain humanity’s future power, saving humanity from people like Longshanks.

Figure 33: Tragedy and Romance Second Phase

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water to drink.” Then Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the tent of meeting, and fell on their faces. And the glory of the Lord appeared to them, and the Lord said to Moses, “Take the rod, and assemble the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water; so you shall bring water out of the rock for them; so you shall give drink to the congregation, you and Aaron your brother, and tell the rock before their eyes to yield its water; so you shall bring water out of the rock for them; so you shall give drink to the congregation and their cattle.” And Moses took the rod from before the Lord, as he commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock, and he said to them, “Hear now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?” And Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock with his rod twice; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their cattle. And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not believe in me, to sanctify me in the eyes of the people of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.”
The Dirty Dozen (1967) Tragedy Second Phase

Tragedy Second Phase Characteristics.

1. A youthful, inexperienced hero (or heroes) faces tragedy for the first time (220).
2. There is “some adjustment to a new and more mature experience” (220).

The Dirty Dozen fits both of these characteristics of Tragedy Second Phase. The Dirty Dozen is the story of twelve American military convicts convicted of capital crimes who are assigned to attack and kill as many officers as possible at a German officers' chateau in exchange for the convicts’ possible amnesty. They will be led by Major John Reisman (Lee Marvin) who is also responsible for training them. Reisman is told to “select twelve general prisoners, convicted and sentenced to death or long terms of imprisonment for murder, rape, robbery and/or other crimes of violence and so forth.” The attack is successful (the German officers are hoarded into a dungeon-like basement, which is blown up). Eleven of the twelve convicts are killed and only Reisman and a certain Joseph Wladislaw (Charles Bronson)—the Dirty Dozen’s spiritual leader—survive.

The Dirty Dozen are what Frye describes as “the archetypal tragedy of the green and golden world, the loss of the innocence of Adam and Eve, who, no matter how heavy a doctrinal load they have to carry, will always remain dramatically in the position of children baffled by their first contact with an adult situation” (220). The Dirty Dozen have long since lost their innocence, although they haven’t lost their immaturity. Worse, they have no incentive to hide their immaturity, because they have been condemned to execution or to long prison terms and feel there is no punishment possibly any worse than that which they have already received. As one of the most rebellious, Victor Franco (John Cassavetes), tells Reisman: “Condemned men don’t have to drill, and there’s nothing you can do about it, mister.”

Frye writes: “The Second Phase corresponds to the youth of the romantic hero, and is in one way or another the tragedy of innocence in the sense of inexperience, usually involving young people” (220). Not all of the Dirty Dozen are necessarily younger than Reisman (most of them are), but all of them are much more immature and inexperienced (in the sense that they haven’t had to endure much discipline, at least in the recent past).
The movie hints that part of the Dirty Dozen’s past problems result from bad training. They have not been disciplined, that is, they haven’t been threatened with enough harsh penalties. At the movie’s beginning, as Reisman walks into the jail, all the inmates are hitting their bowls against the prison walls in protest about some unidentified problem (perhaps the problem is a convict’s hanging which Reisman is about to observe). The prison authority is helpless.

However, Reisman has a more disciplined tack than the inmates have seen previously. He seems willing to commit violent crimes against them, if they don’t behave as he wants them to. For instance, Reisman later fights Franco’s stubborn insubordination with violence: “Either you march or I’ll beat your brains out.” Franco, ultimately, attacks Reisman in that scene, and Reisman subdues him and kicks him in the jaw. Reisman then tells the troops: “Now let’s see what they can do with a little close order.” The rest of the Dirty Dozen suddenly march perfectly. Frye writes: “‘Henceforth I learn that to obey is best,’ says Adam, as he and Eve go hand in hand out to the world before them” (220).

So while the soldiers have been demanding their ‘rights’ in jail, Reisman refuses to give his soldiers any, which makes them more mature. Reisman tells his soldiers that their living quarters won’t be built until Reisman believes his soldiers ‘deserve’ them. One scene particularly exemplifies Reisman’s new discipline and the Dirty Dozen’s response to it. One of the Dozen, Pedro Jimenez (Trini Lopez) during exercises climbs almost to the top of a rope and then says he can’t go any further up to the scaffolding on top. Reisman, after various verbal cajoling, finally shoots the rope away just underneath Jimenez, and Jimenez, thinking he is being shot, suddenly has a burst of adrenaline and quickly scurries up to the rope’s top. The Dozen learn self-discipline, it seems in many of their cases, for the first time, because Reisman is willing to push them, even dangerously.

Wladislaw develops as the spiritual leader of the group. The group’s cohesion is cemented by their belief that the institutional army is against them. Of course, since they are convicts, the army is against them. By-the-book Colonel Everett Dasher Breed (Robert Ryan) (who symbolizes, more than anyone else in the movie, the institutional army) wants to know exactly the Dirty Dozen’s mission, and orders two of his thugs to abuse one of the Dirty Dozen (Wladislaw in the bathroom) until he tells them the group’s
mission. After being severely beaten up, Wladislaw is finally rescued by his compatriots, Jefferson (Jim Brown) and Posey (Clint Walker). Wladislaw, after this, develops into the spiritual leader of the Dirty Dozen, because he has, in a partial sense, been martyred. Frye writes: “In many tragedies of this type the central character survives, so that the action closes with some adjustment to a new and more mature experience” (220). Wladislaw, the spiritual leader and, arguably, the Dozen’s most mature convict, is the only one who survives.

The Dirty Dozen Tragedy Second Phase Analogue: Romance Second Phase

Romance Second Phase Characteristics.
1. The innocent youth of the hero who lives in a “pastoral and Arcadian world,” (200) still overshadowed by parents.
2. There is “often a world of magic or desirable law” (200).
3. There is less of an emphasis on adult marriage and more an emphasis on “‘chaste love’” (200) and a sexual barrier.
4. There is a sense of being close to a moral taboo, despite a “sexual barrier” (200).

The Dirty Dozen does not portray its characters at all as innocents, but it fulfills the remainder of the characteristics of Romance Second Phase. The characters are overshadowed by their parents, both literally and metaphorically. For instance, one of the convicts, Samson Posey, is ashamed of his conviction and how it has affected his parents, and he says: “I reckon the folks’d be a sight happier if I died like a soldier.” So his ultimate decision to accept the mission shows how he is still trying to please his parents. The other soldiers, perhaps those without parents, eventually begin trying to please Reisman and his adjutant Sergeant Clyde Bowren (Richard Jaeckal), so they will be recommended for amnesty. For most of these soldiers, Reisman and Bowren have become their surrogate parents.

Frye writes: “In literature this phase presents a pastoral and Arcadian world, generally a pleasant wooded landscape, full of glades, shaded valleys, murmuring brooks,
the moon, and other images closely linked with the female or maternal aspect of sexual imagery” (200). Much of this is typical of the Dozen’s training camp environs. Further, the chateau and the forest around it which the Dirty Dozen are infiltration fit this description perfectly. More importantly, the Dirty Dozen’s skill in negotiating the land is essential for their successful operation. Reisman rehearses with them over and over again the topography of their target, and the buildings’ layout, even writing a number song to assist their memory. Perhaps, understanding the layout of the land can be described as their primary sexual experience. It is their courtship of a woman—“closely linked with the female or maternal aspect of sexual imagery” (200) as they learn the land's topography in order to succeed in the operation.

Finally, the chaste love and the sexual barrier is the development of their cohesion as a group. They learn to rely upon and protect each other, even, in a platonic sense, love each other. Further, Frye writes that this phase’s “heraldic colors are green and gold, traditionally the colors of vanishing youth” (200). However, for the mission the Dirty Dozen has accepted (at least partly because of the possibility of amnesty) they must become mature. Their vanishing youth (where in jail they can pretty much act however they want) is over. As Frye writes: “It is often a world of magic or desirable law, and it tends to center on a youthful hero, still overshadowed by parents, surrounded by youthful companions.” (200). Magically, the Bunch have become disciplined, and they have solidified around their relatively ‘youthful hero’, Wladislaw (although Bronson was forty-five years old when The Dirty Dozen was released). Wladislaw, in comparison to Reisman, is a young leader.

Frye writes that “Johnson’s Rasselas, Poe’s Eleanora, and Blake’s Book of Thel introduce us to a kind of prison-Paradise or unborn world from which the central characters long to escape to a lower world, and the same feeling of malaise and longing to enter a world of action recurs” (200). Of course, the Dirty Dozen’s world is literally a “prison-Paradise” where they might as well be unborn, because in jail they have very little, if any, influence on society. Once the Dirty Dozen are told of their assignment,

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41 The chateau and the forest were both actually constructed for the movie. This forest included “5400 square yards of heather, 400 ferns, 450 shrubs, 30 spruce trees and 6 full-grown weeping willows” (“Trivia for Dirty Dozen”).

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they accept, because the world of action seems much more attractive to them than the world of inaction.

Figure 34: Tragedy and Romance Second Phase

*Glory* (1989) Tragedy Second Phase

**Tragedy Second Phase Characteristics.**

1. A youthful, inexperienced hero (or heroes) faces tragedy for the first time (220).
2. There is “some adjustment to a new and more mature experience” (220).

*Glory* fits both characteristics of Tragedy Second Phase perfectly. *Glory* is the story of the 54th Massachusetts regiment, the first African-American regiment raised to fight against the South in the Civil War. The regiment is led by Colonel Robert Gould Shaw (Matthew Broderick), the son of wealthy Boston abolitionists. After intense training, the regiment is kept out of battle by Union officers, until Shaw threatens to expose some of the officers’ smuggling and contraband operations. The 54th Massachusetts is then sent to the front, where it distinguishes itself in battle. Shaw volunteers the regiment to lead the attack on Ft. Wagner, an attack certain to lead to high casualties. In the attack, Shaw and most of the movie’s central characters are killed, and over half of the 54th Massachusetts regiment is killed or wounded. The movie ends with Shaw being buried in a mass grave with the African-American soldiers.

*Glory*, then, is an example of the Second Phase tragedy “of a youthful life cut off” (220). This is not only Shaw’s life but also those of the young African-American soldiers
in the Massachusetts 54th. *Glory* is an example of a rare type of Second Phase Tragedy. Frye writes that in “many tragedies of this type the central character survives” (220 *italics mine*). Obviously, Shaw does not survive, but as the movie’s postscript points out, the example and spirit of the 54th Massachusetts regiment continues. “President Lincoln credited these men of color with helping turn the tide of the war.” James McPherson writes about the 54th Massachusetts attack on Ft. Wagner: “The unflinching behavior of the regiment … demonstrated [their] courage to millions of white people in both the North and the South who had doubted whether black men would stand in combat against soldiers of the self-styled master race” (128). As Frye writes: “The action closes with some adjustment to a new and more mature experience” (220), and in *Glory* this is not necessarily for the movie’s characters but for the nation as a whole.

Frye writes further: “The Second Phase corresponds to the youth of the romantic hero, and is in one way or another the tragedy of innocence in the sense of inexperience, usually involving young people” (220). Robert Shaw, at the beginning of *Glory*, considers himself to be a romantic hero fighting in a romantic war. The movie begins with quotations from Shaw’s letters: “Dear mother … you mustn’t think that any of us are going to be killed, for they are collecting such a force here that an attack would be insane.” Of course, Shaw’s optimism soon dissolves during the battle of Antietam, in a melange of limbs and bodies. Shaw, himself, is grazed by shrapnel, and finds himself lying on the field, shell-shocked, crouching in the fetal position.

Frye writes, in this phase, of “the loss of the innocence of Adam and Eve, who, no matter how heavy a doctrinal load they have to carry, will always remain dramatically in the position of children baffled by their first contact with an adult situation …. [T]he action closes with some adjustment to a new and more mature experience” (220). Antietam makes Shaw more mature. While the soldiers of the 54th, at least at first, see war as a game of romantic heroism, Shaw continually has flashbacks to Antietam. For instance, after the 54th is issued its rifles, some soldiers pretend to shoot each other, falling over and playing dead. Almost immediately, as he watches them, Shaw hears the horrific screams and the beat of drums at Antietam as his somewhat naïve soldiers fall on the ground.
Even with his battle experience, Shaw finds it difficult to keep his composure as he faces war. Even in the movie’s last battle scene he is like a child, “baffled by [his] first contact with an adult situation” (Frye 220) despite his experience in two battles, when he faces Fort Wagner, terrified, hyperventilating (historically, according to Peter Burchard, before the attack on Ft. Wagner Shaw had told a subordinate “I do not believe I will live through our next fight” (130)). War, in the movie, seems like something which even the most experienced fighters never become fully secure with. It is the type of situation in which the participants “will always remain dramatically in the position of children baffled by their first contact with an adult situation” (220).

Training camp for the soldiers of the 54th is also a “loss of ... innocence” (220). As is normal for young recruits, the African-Americans begin training camp as poor soldiers. As Seargent Major Mulcahey (John Finn) tells the soldiers, as they are marching: “You look like a bunch of crippled old goats.” When—after an especially harsh incident with Private Thomas Searls (Andre Braugher)—Shaw expresses concern that Mulcahey is working the men too hard, Mulcahey replies: “The boy is a friend of yours, is he?”

Shaw replies: “Yes, we grew up together.”

Mulcahey answers: “Let him grow up some more.” Mulcahey implies that tough discipline is the only thing which will make the 54th battle ready.

After this, Shaw becomes much more of a disciplinarian, because he realizes discipline in training camp might save some of his men’s lives. In one scene, Private Jupiter Sharts (Jihmi Kennedy) shoots two glass bottles some distance away with separate, pre-loaded rifles in twenty-five seconds to loud plaudits from his fellow soldiers. Shaw tells him: “You’re a good shot, private.”

He then asks Sharts to load and shoot again. Shaw, louder each time, says: “Faster” three times and then: “Discharge your weapon” twice and finally: “Do it.” Shaw tells those watching that “A good man can fire three shots in a minute.” Stunned, Sharts has barely fired one in thirty seconds. Shaw then asks for a revolver and, while Sharts reloads and fires, Shaw shoots the revolver seven times into the air, attempting to simulate the frequency of gunfire in battle. Shaw repeats over and over again: “Faster” and “Do it.” At the end, a numbed Sharts stops reloading his rifle and looks at Shaw, terrified.
However, by the movie’s end, the soldiers—because of Shaw and Mulcahey’s rigorous training and also some battle experience—are seasoned. The night before the attack on Fort Wagner, in an actual “prayer service the regiment was reported to have had before the battle” (Culbertson 45) the men are singing around a campfire. The songs are interspersed with conversation about their fears of death. The men recognize they will be scared, that they will be like “children baffled by their first contact with an adult situation” (220), like even experienced soldiers are in heavy fighting.

But, of course, the movie portrays them as facing their deaths with courage, despite their fear. As Sharts says in a short monologue during the singing: “So that if I may die at the muzzle of the rifle ... die on water, or on land, I may know that you blessed Jesus almighty are with me ... and I have no fear.” A certain Private Trip (Denzel Washington), who himself has been whipped as a punishment for desertion, states, finally: “It ain’t much matter what happen tomorrow, because we men ain’t we? We men ain’t we? Shit.”

Glory Tragedy Second Phase Analogue: Romance Second Phase

Romance Second Phase Characteristics.
1. The innocent youth of the hero who lives in a “pastoral and Arcadian world,” (200) still overshadowed by parents. There is “often a world of magic or desirable law” (200).
2. There is less of an emphasis on adult marriage and more an emphasis on “chaste love” (200) and a sexual barrier.
3. There is a sense of being close to a moral taboo, despite a “sexual barrier” (200).

Glory fits the first two of these characteristics of Romance Second Phase, although it does not fit the last characteristic, since there are not any examples of the characters falling dangerously close to moral sexual taboos.

Frye writes: “In literature this phase presents a pastoral and Arcadian world, generally a pleasant wooded landscape, full of glades, shaded valleys, murmuring brooks, the
moon, and other images closely linked with the female or maternal aspect of sexual imagery” (200). All the training camp and battlegrounds in Glory are forests and valleys. Further, it seems that the war destroys the landscape with gunsmoke and cannon shot. One of the Antietam battle scene’s impressive shots in the movie is of trees being mowed down by cannon fire. Frye also writes that the phase’s “heraldic colors are green and gold, traditionally the colors of vanishing youth” (200). Shaw’s youth, of course, has vanished at Antietam. In obvious ways, war destroys what is sometimes seen as the land’s feminine vitality and fertility.

Frye writes this phase “is often a world of magic or desirable law, and it tends to center on a youthful hero” (200). Shaw’s idealistic persistence (“world of magic or desirable law” (200)) gives him the courage to fight for his soldiers within a rather racist Union army. A certain Quartermaster Kendric (Richard Riehle) has refused Shaw’s request for new shoes, because he doesn’t want to give important supplies to an African-American regiment. When Shaw learns that Trip had deserted to “find himself some shoes” as Rawlins (Morgan Freeman) tells him, Shaw invades Kendric’s office and calls Kendric “a piece of rat filth,” “son of a bitch,” and, for good measure, a “nasty little cuss.” The 54th regiment gets its shoes. When the 54th is paid only $10 a month instead of $13, Shaw refuses his pay. When Shaw’s superior Colonel James Montgomery (Cliff De Young) asks him to set fire to a Southern village with only women and children in it, Shaw refuses, calling the command an “immoral order,” only submitting when told he will lose control of his regiment until the matter is adjudicated. Shaw is more concerned about following the ideal law than in keeping the (white) hierarchy around him happy.

For Frye this ideal hero is “still overshadowed by parents, surrounded by youthful companions” (200). Historically, as Ira Berlin writes, “Shaw gained his rank through the good offices of his father … and a close friend of Governor Andrew and Senator Sumner” (143). Despite his accomplishments, until the movie’s end, Shaw is still under his parents’ shadow. An exchange between Shaw and another Union officer, when they first meet, is typical. The Union officer greets Shaw and tells him: “I know and admire your parents.” Of course, the speaker doesn’t mention or seem to know what Shaw has done. Trip says of Shaw after one particularly hard day of drilling, and there is some
truth to his statement: “The only reason he is in charge is because his momma and daddy fixed it.”

Lawrence of Arabia (1962) Tragedy Third Phase

**Tragedy Third Phase Characteristics.**
1. The hero’s success is portrayed as being complete (220).
2. The hero’s victory, however, is in the context of a greater tragedy (220).
3. This phase “is often a sequel to a previous tragic or heroic action, and comes at the end of a heroic life” (221) after which there is not much individual success.

*Lawrence of Arabia* fits Tragedy Third Phase characteristics almost perfectly, except for perhaps the first one. There is some incompleteness in the victories of T.E. Lawrence (Peter O’Toole), not necessarily because of his weaknesses but because of the overall English imperial manipulation of the Arabs, which frustrates Lawrence’s plans.

*Lawrence of Arabia* is the story of T.E. Lawrence, a British soldier whose courageous leadership of the Arabs cemented them as an important force against the Turks during World War I. The movie chronicles Lawrence’s incredible, improbable rise in almost single-handedly uniting the Arabs, something nobody had done since Muhammed and after him. As Frye writes: “The Third Phase, corresponding to the central quest-theme
of romance, is tragedy in which a strong emphasis is thrown on the success or completeness of the hero’s achievement.” (220).

This describes Lawrence of Arabia well, since he is considered one of the most amazingly successful figures in history. Lawrence’s goal of uniting the Arabians is incredibly difficult. Indeed, faced with such an incredible challenge of uniting the Arabs, even some incomplete success seems complete. But although Lawrence is amazingly successful in his task, even he cannot keep the Arabians together for a very long period of time. In the movie, there is the dissolution of the Arab council, which Lawrence had founded, after the Arabians under Lawrence have captured Damascus. The Arab Council’s disintegration is the nadir of Lawrence’s life, after which he returns to the United Kingdom. He then dies in a motorcycle accident while he is driving recklessly (the scene is actually shown at the movie’s beginning) some years later.

Frye writes: “The essential element of plot in romance is adventure” (186). Soon after Lawrence’s death in the opening scene, we see him in 1917 (at roughly the age of twenty-nine) in what is for him a boring desk job as a cartographer. We see him cavalierly holding a match—and then, seemingly easily and painlessly—carefully snuffing out the match with his fingers. A colleague William Potter (Harry Fowler) however, tries to do the same thing and singes his fingers, complaining that “it hurts.” Lawrence agrees and then states: “The trick ... is not minding that it hurts.” This incident is an important clue to understanding Lawrence’s desire for adventure. Lawrence has to find adventure in something, even if the best he can find (when a cartographer) is to light a match and snuff it out with his fingers.

A friend of Lawrence, a certain diplomat named Dryden (Claude Rains), is attempting to convince Lawrence’s superior General Murray (Donald Wolfit) to station Lawrence in Arabia. Murray finally agrees, despite Lawrence’s eccentricities. Lawrence is ecstatic when told: “Of course, I’m the man for the job. What is the job, by the way?”

Dryden—who is a bit concerned about Lawrence’s assignment, despite his own role in securing it for him—explains the job is in the Arabian desert: “For ordinary men, it’s a burning, fiery furnace.” Despite this, Lawrence is always pleased with a challenge. Challenge in the movie is his metaphorical bride, whom he courts endlessly.
Lawrence is considered something of a buffoon by his superiors. Frye writes: “Samson is a buffoon of a Philistine carnival and simultaneously a tragic hero to the Israelites, but the tragedy ends in triumph and the carnival in catastrophe” (220-221). Bentley, the reporter who breaks the story on Lawrence in the movie, describes him just after the funeral for Lawrence: “One of the most shameless exhibitionists since Barnum and Bailey.” General Murray tells Lawrence: “I can't make out whether you're bloody bad-mannered or just half-witted” (Lawrence replies in his typically buffoonish way: “I have the same problem, sir”).

Even Lawrence’s friend Dryden tells Lawrence, after Lawrence has mentioned he thinks the desert will be fun: “It is recognized that you have a funny sense of fun.”

Steven Caton writes that General Murray “can’t stand [Lawrence’s] ‘type’ for the deeper reason that Lawrence thumbs his nose at precisely those conventions on which military authority rests. He is in short subversive and therefore potentially dangerous” (146). Nevertheless, Lawrence’s buffoonery is partly responsible for his success, because his unique way of looking at life is partly what makes him so successful, that he is not so concerned about conventions.

Frye writes: “Much the same is true of the mocked Christ in the Passion. But just as the Second Phase often ends in anticipation of a greater maturity, so this one is often a sequel to a previous tragic or heroic action, and comes at the end of a heroic life” (221). As it happens, Lawrence’s capture of Damascus is the high point of his dramatic life, and his life is relatively uneventful from then on, until his motorcycle accident. Although the motorcycle accident didn’t take place until roughly seventeen years after the capture of Damascus, the movie doesn’t show any of those seventeen years. Further, historically, after Lawrence’s heroics, the Arabian situation fell apart, as England and France divided Arabia in the Sykes-Picot Treaty. This is much like one of Frye’s examples for Tragedy Third Phase, Henry V. Frye writes: “Shakespeare’s Henry V is a successfully completed romantic quest made tragic by its implicit context: everybody knows that King Henry

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42 The reason for Lawrence’s buffoonery and separateness can perhaps be traced to his own background. We discover later in the movie that Lawrence is a bastard. As Caton writes: “Like the two servant boys whom he adopts and learns to love, Lawrence is a social outcast. How much more damning the sense of ostracism as a bastard would be for audiences in the sixties than today is perhaps self-evident” (146).
died almost immediately and that sixty years of unbroken disaster followed for England” (221).

*Lawrence of Arabia* Tragedy Third Phase Analogue: Romance Third Phase

**Romance Third Phase Characteristics.**

1. Contains “the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle” and “the exaltation of the hero” (187), also known as the struggle, “the point of ritual death” (187) and “the recognition of the hero” (187).

2. “Cyclical imagery is likely to be present” (188).

3. A king, whose land is attacked by a dragon, is “sometimes suffering from an incurable malady or wound” (189) which represents the land’s sterility.

4. The hero arrives and kills the dragon, then marries the king’s daughter and eventually becomes king himself (188).

5. The king’s daughter, having been rescued from a very dangerous place, is strongly connected with Jocasta in *Oedipus the King* (193).

6. “If the leviathan is death,” … “the hero has to die” and is then resurrected (192).

7. After the dragon is dead, his previous victims “come out of him alive” led by the hero who has gone down “the monster’s open throat” (190).

8. Following the dragon’s death, the life-giving rains which have been pent up inside him herald the coming of spring (191-192).

*Lawrence of Arabia* fits all of these characteristics, except for the last one. Earlier, while working at the desk at his cartography job, Lawrence had snuffed out a match with his fingers, an action symbolizing his boredom. He is looking for something to excite him. Only a few seconds after learning he is about to go into Arabia, Lawrence lights a match again, but this time he blows it out, instead of snuffing it out with his fingers. His Arabian assignment, happily, is something which will prevent him from having to find adventure in little things, like snuffing out matches with his fingers.

Frye writes: “The complete form of the romance is clearly the successful quest, and such a completed form has three main stages: the stage of the perilous journey and the
preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die; and the exaltation of the hero” (187). This cycle repeats itself over and over again in Lawrence. With the Arabians, Lawrence is continually crossing deserts like the Nefud, which is supposedly impossible to cross. Crossing the Nefud is Frye’s equivalent of the perilous journey. Lawrence then fights in Aqaba, in the desert, and Damascus, which are his crucial struggles, during which and after he experiences the exaltation of the hero.

Frye writes about “cyclical imagery,” specifically writing that “solar imagery is normally prominent among cyclical images” (188). In Lawrence of Arabia there are many long shots of the sun (although this might also be because the film is set in a desert). Despite Lawrence’s belief that he can ‘walk on water,’ that he is impregnable, he is really not. The movie’s constant shots of the sun remind us, for instance, of how it has outlasted many other men as great or greater than Lawrence.

Like other human beings, Lawrence will grow weak and die, no matter how successful he is at any given moment. Even an amazingly heroic Lawrence cannot stop the inevitable decomposing effect of time. This is all reinforced with Lawrence’s motorcycle death, at the movie’s beginning. From the beginning, despite all his heroic behavior, we know it has always been fated that Lawrence will follow life’s cycle like any other human being—he will grow weak and die. As The Preacher argues in Ecclesiastes 1:9b: “there is nothing new under the sun.”

At the movie’s beginning, Lawrence is obsessed with attacking Aqaba, a port city on the modern day Gulf of Arabia held by the Turks. Aqaba is an important supply point for the Arabians, which, if it remained uncaptured, would force them to retreat further inland into the Saudia Arabian desert. The problem is that the British cannot attack Aqaba from the sea, because of formidable twelve inch guns fixed towards the sea. Further, the conventional belief is that attacking Aqaba across the Nefud desert would be impossible, because the Nefud is apparently immeasurably large and cannot be crossed, even with large supplies of water.

Lawrence, however, decides to cross the Nefud and tells the Arab leader Sherif Ali Ibn El Kharish (Omar Sharif) this.
Sherif replies: “You are mad. To come to Aqaba by land, you should have to cross the Nefud Desert .... The Nefud cannot be crossed.” Later, Sherif states: “the Nefud is the worst place God created.” When Lawrence still wants to cross it, Sherif repeats his own personal belief about the madness of anyone wishing to cross the desert. Sherif predicts Lawrence will lead the Arabians to death in the Nefud. This is the ritual death of which Frye writes: “Thus the romance expresses more clearly the passage from struggle through a point of ritual death” (187). For the Arabians, Lawrence’s attempt to cross the Nefud is simply a ritual death.

Frye also writes of how the ritual death “leads to a recognition scene that we discovered in comedy” (187). Amazingly, Lawrence and his men (along with Sherif) are able to cross the desert and, eventually, take Aqaba, an accomplishment which is the beginning of Lawrence’s heroic legend. So what seemed like Lawrence’s ritual death actually leads to his recognition as a great leader.

As they have almost crossed the Nefud, one of the Arab soldiers Gasim (I.S. Johar) is discovered missing from his camel, and Lawrence realizes that Gasim must have fallen asleep and fallen off the camel many miles back. Lawrence decides to return for Gasim, although Sherif stridently commands him not to: “If you go back, you’ll kill us all. Gasim you have killed already.” Lawrence refuses to heed.

Another Arab states: “Gasim’s time is come, Lawrence. It is written.”

Lawrence replies: “Nothing is written.” A few seconds later, Lawrence says: I shall be at Aqaba. That is written ... [points at head] ... in here.” Indeed, Lawrence rescues Gasim, which creates a sense of awe in Sherif and the other Arabians, because Lawrence, in, at the very least, a divinely inspired way, has circumvented destiny.

Sherif even tells Lawrence: “Truly, for some men, nothing is written unless they write it.” Later, after Lawrence has been wounded by a Turkish soldier after an attack on a Turkish train, Colonel Harry Brighton (Anthony Quayle) asks him whether he is alright.

Lawrence replies: “Not hurt at all. Didn't you know? They can only kill me with a golden bullet.”

Finally, through the American journalist, Jackson Bentley (Arthur Kennedy), Lawrence is exalted even in the West.
Bentley tells another Arab leader, Prince Feisal (Alec Guinness) “It’s very simple sir. I'm looking for a hero ... certain influential men back home believe that the time has come for America to lend her weight to the patriotic struggle against Germany, uh and Turkey. Now I've been sent to find material which will show our people that this war is, uh ...”

Prince Feisal interrupts him: “Enjoyable?”

Bentley replies: “Oh hardly that, sir. But to show them its more adventurous aspects.”

Frye writes: “A land ruled by a helpless old king is laid waste by a sea-monster, to whom one young person after another is offered to be devoured, until the lot falls on the king’s daughter: at that point the hero arrives, kills the dragon, marries the daughter, and succeeds to the kingdom”(189). There is no literal daughter or love interest for Lawrence. Indeed, no female character speaks at any point in the movie.\[43\] There is, however, the Challenge, particularly, of unifying the Arabians, which is Lawrence’s bride. “The ritual analogies of the myth suggest that the monster is the sterility of the land itself [in Lawrence of Arabia the desert] and that the sterility of the land is present in the age and impotence of the king, who is sometimes suffering from an incurable malady or wound, like Amfortas in Wagner” (189). The Arabians’ “incurable malady or wound” is their constant quarreling over the limited resources in the desert (specifically water rights), instead of their unification.

Frye writes: “This bride-figure is ambiguous: her psychological connection with the mother in an Oedipus fantasy is more insistent than in comedy. She is often to be found in a perilous, forbidden or tabooed place” (193). As mentioned before, there is no literal bride figure in Lawrence of Arabia. But, again, Lawrence’s bride which he pursues, I would argue, is Challenge. This is why Lawrence tries to cross a desert impossible to cross, for instance, among many other things in the movie.

Lawrence, after leading the crossing of the Nefud, is given Arabian clothes. He decides to wear them, burning his British uniform, because he is obsessed with Arabia and the Challenge it represents. Lawrence wears these Arabian clothes for much of the

\[43\] Robert Bolt, the screenwriter of the final script, said: “In what, perhaps oblique ways, then, might the ‘female’ be present in this movie? Some male and female spectators, myself included, have commented that they can identify with the main character as portrayed by Peter O’Toole because he is feminized” (qtd. in Caton 206).
movie.⁴⁴ Later, however, after Lawrence is raped by an Arab bey (something of an equivalent to a magistrate) while masquerading as an undercover Arab at Deraa, Lawrence changes drastically. Lawrence had been very overconfident in Deraa, even drawing attention to himself with various antics like walking through mud puddles with his arms stretched out and walking directly past a Turkish patrol, telling Sherif Ali that he is ‘invisible’.

But Lawrence is not invisible, as he realizes when he is singled out to be raped, at least partly because of his fair skin and blue eyes. Lawrence realizes that he is not impregnable. His lust for adventure has actually led him to be raped. Not surprisingly, he has begun to lose his adventurous side and, not coincidentally, his Arabian clothes.

Sherif has earlier prophesied about Lawrence, after Lawrence has decided to journey to British headquarters at Cairo to tell them of the Aqaba victory: “In Cairo, you will put off these funny clothes. You will wear trousers and tell stories of our quaintness and barbarity.” Although Lawrence, upon his return to Cairo, remains in Arab garb, ultimately Sherif is right. Lawrence, after his rape at Deraa, is no longer obsessed with the Challenge the Arabians present, or any challenge for that matter. He returns to wearing a British uniform. Frye writes: “If the hero of a romance returns from a quest disguised, flings off his beggar’s rags, and stands forth in the resplendent scarlet cloak of the prince ... we have the literary device of displacement” (188). For Frye, displacement entails changing mores and customs, even appearance, to fit into a society, and Lawrence tries for some time to fit back into English society.

Lawrence is not even so loyal to England as he is to Challenge. When Feisal confides to Lawrence Feisal’s fear that the English are really intent on controlling the Arabian desert, Lawrence replies: “Then you must deny it to them.”

Feisal: “You are an Englishman. Are you not loyal to England?”

Lawrence: “To England, and to other things.” These other things, I argue, can all be rolled into one, anything associated with a Challenge. The movie even ends with Lawrence leaving Arabia, watching yearnedly as a motorcyclist drives recklessly past...
him. Lawrence watches closely, his interest obviously piqued. The motorcycle will be his next dangerous and adventurous Challenge (ultimately leading to his death).

Finally, there is Frye’s mention of the king’s daughter who is “often to be found in a perilous, forbidden, or tabooed place” and how she is similar to Jocasta in *Oedipus the King*. The Arabians, of course, are the ones who are in a dangerous place. However, like Jocasta—who wants to hide from Oedipus the truth that she is his mother, although such dissembling would continue the plague upon the Thebans—they are each more concerned about their individual well-being than forming a verifiable unity. So Lawrence’s dreams ultimately are not fulfilled, at least partly because of Arabian selfishness (as portrayed in the movie).

However, Frye’s last characteristic of Romance Third Phase—that the “life-giving rain waters whose coming marks the spring” (192) have been unleashed—does not take place at the movie’s end. Instead, Lawrence drives off from the desert still in a cloud of dust. Lawrence’s driver says, with multiple meanings: “Well, sir, ... Goin’ ’ome, ... ’ome, sir.”

![Figure 36: Tragedy and Romance Third Phase](image-url)
The Longest Day (1962) Tragedy Third Phase

Tragedy Third Phase Characteristics.
1. The hero’s success is portrayed as being complete (220).
2. The hero’s victory, however, is in the context of a greater tragedy (220).
3. This phase “is often a sequel to a previous tragic or heroic action, and comes at the end of a heroic life” (221) after which there is not much individual success.

The Longest Day fits all three of the Tragedy Third Phase characteristics. It is the story of June 6th, 1944, told from both the German and American perspectives. As Frye describes it, the Third Phase “is tragedy in which a strong emphasis is thrown on the success or completeness of the hero’s achievement” (220). Of course, Normandy’s fall was one of the falling dominoes (along with the Russian victories in the East), which helped ultimately to bring about Hitler’s fall.

“The Passion belongs here, as do all tragedies in which the hero is in any way related to or a prototype of Christ, like Samson Agonistes. The paradox of victory within tragedy may be expressed by a double perspective in the action” (220). A few brief sections of The Longest Day present the French forces as they are about to attack their own homeland. Admiral Jaujard, of the Forces Francaises Libres, tells the French soldiers: “Soon, we shall be engaged in battle. To drive the enemy out we must fire on our homeland. This is the price of liberty.” This is the ‘double perspective in the action,’ the fact that the year 1940 (when Germany invaded France) was one of the greatest debacles in French history, which makes their ultimate victory in the days after D-Day not as exhilarating as it might have been. The successful invasion of Normandy is more a relief from years of death and hardship than an exhilarating mastery of power.

Further, war itself is full of such tragedy that even complete victory contains much individual tragedy. One of the invasion points on the Normandy coast was the Point du Hoc, where large guns sat atop cliffs overlooking some of the Normandy beaches below. The attack on the point included the scaling of the cliffs, from the top of which German snipers killed many Army Rangers. Once the Rangers, after fairly high loss of life, reached the top of the cliffs and blasted their way into the Point du Hoc, they quickly discovered the guns were not there. They had been moved elsewhere. Of course, loss of life is a horrible aspect of any war. But when the loss of life turns out to have been
absolutely useless (even in the strictly strategic military sense), war becomes even more tragic, even for those who find some redemptive value in it (such as Patton).

War, as has been mentioned before, is always about at least some Tragedy for almost all its participants, at least partly because of its random, confused nature. Miscommunication in war often leads to Tragedy. At Point du Hoc, some German soldiers come out of a bunker, one of them crying “Bitte, bitte” (please, please). An American soldier callously shoots and kills them and then says to himself: “Wonder what bitte, bitte means?” Flight Officer David Campbell (Richard Burton) expresses war’s randomness and confusion perfectly when he tells a lost soldier, as they sit watching a dead German officer whom Campbell has killed: “It’s funny isn’t it. He’s dead, I’m crippled, you’re lost. I suppose it’s always like that ... I mean war.”

Frye writes: “But just as the Second Phase often ends in anticipation of greater maturity, so this one is often a sequel to a previous tragic or heroic action, and comes at the end of a heroic life” (221). D-Day, of course, was near the end of the German rule of France and near the defeat of Nazi Germany. It followed years of brave fighting by many Frenchmen who were far from their homeland, the ‘previous tragic or heroic action.’ Commandant Philippe Kieffer, a French commando, tells his soldiers: “You have been fighting everywhere for four years in Abyssinia, Libya, Egypt, Crete. But this time you are going to fight on French soil in our fields, in our villages, under the eyes of our own people.” D-Day is the culmination of all they have been fighting for, near “the end of a heroic life” for the French resistance forces, who are about to capture France for good from the Nazis, although there is still the drive towards Berlin and, for the Americans, the Pacific theatre.

*The Longest Day* Tragedy Third Phase Analogue: Romance Third Phase

**Romance Third Phase Characteristics.**

1. Contains “the stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle” and “the exaltation of the hero” (187), also known as the struggle, “the point of ritual death” (187) and “the recognition of the hero” (187).45

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45 The Greek term is ‘anagnorisis’, used by Aristotle in describing Tragedy, although Frye also uses it to refer to Romance. ‘Anagnorisis’ can refer to either the hero’s recognition of the true tragedy of his
2. “Cyclical imagery is likely to be present” (188).
3. A king, whose land is attacked by a dragon, is “sometimes suffering from an incurable malady or wound” (189) which represents the land’s sterility.
4. The hero arrives and kills the dragon, then marries the king’s daughter and eventually becomes king himself (188).
5. The king’s daughter, having been rescued from a very dangerous place, is strongly connected with Jocasta in *Oedipus the King* (193).
6. “If the leviathan is death,” … “the hero has to die” and is then resurrected (192).
7. After the dragon is dead, his previous victims “come out of him alive” led by the hero who has gone down “the monster’s open throat” (190).
8. Following the dragon’s death, the life-giving rains which have been pent up inside him herald the coming of spring (191-192).

*The Longest Day* fits all of these characteristics except for the second and perhaps the fifth one. There is no especially noticeable cyclical or solar imagery in *The Longest Day*. Further, although, historically, many French collaborators certainly resisted the Allied invasion, *The Longest Day* portrays only the French citizens who fought against the Germans (so that France is not portrayed as a selfish Jocasta). Of course, in *The Longest Day*, the ‘preliminary minor adventures’ are the suspense leading up to the Allied Normandy invasion, all the false starts and anticipation. Norman Cota (Robert Mitchum) says about Eisenhower on June 5th, 1944: “He can’t call it off again.” There is then the crucial struggle in Normandy. Finally, there is the movie’s ending, where the Allied soldiers are portrayed moving off the beach into France, as loud upbeat music plays.

Frye writes: “Thus the romance expresses more clearly the passage from struggle through a point of ritual death to a recognition scene that we discovered in comedy” (187). Of course, *The Longest Day* is full of ritual death, even for those who were not injured at all. As in much of war, whether one lived or died on D-Day was truly a matter of luck, one of the things that makes war so tragic. There were some soldiers on D-Day who walked onto their designated beach with no resistance, and there were some combat situations or to the plot’s recognition of the true hero (Liddell 101). Although "most modern critics prefer to define 'recognition' also as a gaining of self-knowledge and moral awareness by a tragic protagonist" (Maxfield 200), Frye uses the term only in the second sense.
teams which were decimated. Since no-one on the planes or in the boats knew whether they would be lucky or unlucky, they all, imagining what might await them, experienced a ritual death in the tense moments before landing in France.

Frye writes that a “land ruled by a helpless old king is laid waste by a seamonster, to whom one young person after another is offered to be devoured, until the lot falls on the king’s daughter: at that point the hero arrives, kills the dragon, marries the daughter and succeeds to the kingdom” (189). The monster, of course, is Nazi Germany, which has previously (in 1940) overrun the ‘helpless old king’—the French and British expeditionary forces—with the blitzkrieg. The ‘helpless old king’—an excellent way to describe the French political and military machine in 1940 before the German blitzkrieg—is “the sterility of the land itself … present in the age and impotence of the king, who is sometimes suffering from an incurable malady or wound” (189).

Frye writes: “And as the leviathan, in his aspect as the fallen world, contains all forms of life imprisoned within himself, so as the sea he contains the imprisoned life-giving rain waters whose coming marks the spring” (191-192). The Germans, throughout the early part of The Longest Day, consistently state that the Allies would never attack in the rain. What they don’t realize is that Allied weather forecasters, apparently with better meteorologists and equipment locations, have accurately forecast that the bad weather will break on the morning of June 6th, a perfect moment for an unexpected attack.

“In the folk tale versions of dragon-killing stories, we notice how frequently the previous victims of the dragon come out of him alive after he is killed. Again, if we are inside the dragon, and the hero comes to help us, the image is suggested of the hero going down the monster’s open throat … and returning with his redeemed behind him” (190). Those coming out of the dragon after he is killed are the French Resistance, upon which there is a great deal of emphasis in the movie. The Resistance is stirred up by code messages throughout the movie to begin sabotaging communication lines and railroads.

One of the movie’s opening scenes shows German soldiers inspecting a hay cart with their bayonet. Janine Boitard (Irina Demick), an attractive female member of the French resistance, rides a bicycle past them, distracting them from their job. Instead of finishing the hay-cart examination they ask her for her papers. The hay-cart passes the
soldiers. The camera then focuses on what is apparently a farmer leading the horses and the hay-cart. Suddenly, two men pop their heads out of the hay near the front. These are members of the French Resistance, who have just been saved by Boitard and her feminine wiles.

“This bride-figure is ambiguous: her psychological connection with the mother in an Oedipus fantasy is more insistent than in comedy. She is often to be found in a perilous, forbidden, or tabooed place, like Brunnhilde’s wall of fire or the sleeping beauty’s wall of thorns, and she is, of course, often rescued from the unwelcome embraces of ... giants or bandits or other usurpers” (193). In many ways, Boitard is symbolic of what the Allies are trying to rescue from the Germans. The Resistance is only to be rescued, of course, with the liberation of France, where there are many German soldiers and large amounts of German armor.

So the dragon is killed. As Rommel (Werner Hinz) had said at the movie’s beginning, the key is to “destroy the enemy … at the water’s edge. The first 24 hours of the invasion will be decisive.” Rommel’s implication is that the invasion’s fate relies on whether the Allies can secure a foothold. The movie shows how they are able to. After this, Nazi Germany’s fate has been sealed, although Germany has not ‘officially lost.’ The Allied heroes have gone into “the monster’s open throat,” and they have returned with their “redeemed behind” them (190).

Figure 37: Tragedy and Irony/Satire Fifth Phase
**Paths of Glory** (1957) Tragedy Fifth Phase

**Tragedy Fifth Phase Characteristics.**

1. The heroic decreases, and there is an emphasis on simple, everyday experience, and the characters often look like very small human beings part of large, machine-like populations (221).

2. The characters are “in a state of lower freedom than the audience” (221).

3. There is the “tragedy of lost direction and lack of knowledge” (222).

*Paths of Glory* fits all three characteristics of Tragedy Fifth Phase. *Paths of Glory* is the story of a certain French Colonel Dax (Kirk Douglas) who is asked to suicidally attack an important German trench bastion dubbed the ‘Ant Hill.’ French military staff have inexplicably planned the attack despite the expected casualties of at least fifty percent, probably more. Colonel Dax agrees to lead the suicidal attack when his only alternative clearly is that he be removed from leading his men.

While Dax leads some of his own men toward the Ant Hill, half of the companies refuse to leave the trenches. Dax returns to the trenches to attempt to lead them out, but withering fire from the Ant Hill and the French casualties everywhere reinforces the attack’s suicidal nature to the attacking soldiers, and they continue to refuse to leave their trenches. Dax, himself, is knocked back into the trenches by the body of an apparently dead French soldier, thrown backward by German fire. So the attack ends. The French divisional General Paul Mireau (George Macready) who ordered the attack—incensed that some of the soldiers haven’t even left the trenches—orders his own artillery to fire on them, although Captain Rousseau (John Stein) refuses to obey the order without seeing it in writing.

Mireau decides to court-martial and execute three token soldiers for cowardice (originally, he wanted to execute one-hundred men, but the higher-ranking Corps Commander General Broulard (Adolphe Menjou) convinces him to settle for three). A

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46 Rousseau’s name is almost certainly an allusion to the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s version of the Lockean ‘social contract’. Rousseau agreed with Locke that the government only has the right to rule by the consent of the governed. Rousseau believed, of course, that once the interests of the governed were no longer represented by the government, revolt was justified. The *Paths of Glory* character Rousseau is breaking the power of the governmental hierarchy (Mireau specifically), because it no longer truly represents the government’s best interests in that it harms the people the government supposedly represents.
former civilian lawyer, Dax—incensed because both Broulard and Mireau are more concerned that somebody be blamed and punished for the suicidal attack they planned, than that justice be recognized—defends the three accused soldiers: Corporal Philip Paris (Ralph Meeker), Private Pierre Aurnad (Joe Turkel) and Private Maurice Ferol (Timothy Carey). However, the court has already decided from the beginning that the accused be found guilty as examples. The three men are executed by firing squad.

Just before the soldiers were executed, Dax had learned (from Rousseau) that Mireau ordered artillery fire on his own division. Attempting to save the three soldiers’ lives, Dax had revealed to Broulard Mireau’s action. Broulard continues with the soldiers’ execution, but, after the execution, tells Mireau that Mireau will be the subject of an investigation (which could lead to his own execution). Broulard then offers Dax Mireau’s job, although Dax refuses, calling Broulard a: “degenerate, sadistic old man.”

Dax, dismissed, returns to his office, dejected. As he is walking, he hears French soldiers carousing in a nearby bar. Putting his head in to watch the scene, Dax sees the bar owner (apparently) introduce to his inebriated audience a young German girl (Christiane Harlan) captured during the war, who then begins to sing the German song: “The Faithful Soldier”—“Treue Hussar” in German (Dirks p. 3 par. 19). At first the soldiers laugh derisively and talk among themselves, but then eventually they grow quiet and somber as they listen to the girl sing passionately. Dax smiles as he turns away, and thus, Paths of Glory, saturated with much pessimism, ends with optimism. There is some hope in the masses, who will eventually find beauty in the enemy (i.e. see them as people too) and realize that war is often simply an egomaniacal exercise in power.

Frye writes that in Tragedy Fifth Phase “we cross the boundary line from innocence to experience” (221). Indeed, it is a historical commonplace that World War I was a dramatically new type of war in which, according to John Keegan, roughly ten million soldiers on both sides died within the space of four years (11). Death, on such a large magnitude, had never been heard of before in any war, even the Civil War, where only some 600,000 to 700,000 soldiers died (Davis 215). World War I made very clear that industrialized war—with machine guns, mustard gas, and trenches—is not romantic in any way.
World War I had become more about great machines (made up of people) smashing against each other than any kind of romantic heroism. There was very often little innocence in World War I when one was simply a member of a large machine which often did horrible things one couldn’t control to the other large machine. Regardless of one’s level of innocence, it is difficult to be or even feel innocent in the middle of such horror, where one is inflicting the same horror on the enemy it inflicts upon you. Courage, even, often simply led to useless deaths. Even victories were, as the movie’s narrator (Peter Cappell) states, “measured in hundreds of yards … and paid for in lives by hundreds of thousands,” and these victories might be taken back again only a few hours later.

Frye points out how the hero falls in the direction of experience. Although Dax, for instance, doesn’t succumb to military corruption, he exists in a situation in which “the ironic element increases, the heroic decreases, and the characters look farther away and in a smaller perspective” (221). For instance, Dax leads his company out of the trenches, blowing a whistle across No Man’s Land towards the Ant Hill. However, he soon notices that the companies of a certain Lieutenant Roget (Wayne Morris) haven’t moved, and he returns to encourage those companies on.

But Roget refuses to lead his soldiers out, and when Dax blows his whistle, leading the charge, Dax is thrown back into the trench under a Frenchman who has just charged forward, been shot, and thrown back. The lone result of Dax’s useless heroism is that more soldiers have been killed than would have otherwise. Unlike movies where heroism is portrayed positively as uplifting (i.e. Glory) and saving lives (Sergeant York), in Paths of Glory Dax’s heroism is absolutely useless (even harmful). As Frye terms it: Irony—the “‘realistic’ level of experience” (Frye 366) is emphasized, as opposed to any heroism. Dax’s heroic courage is viewed from “further away and in a smaller perspective” (Frye 221).

Indeed, the outpost’s name, Ant Hill, symbolically clarifies the audience’s distance from the characters. The audience watches the movie’s characters, like human beings watching ants—soldiers holding and attacking the fort seem like indiscernible specks in huge masses of movement. Frye’s statement that “[t]he ironic perspective in tragedy is attained by putting the characters in a state of lower freedom than the audience” (221) fits
perfectly. Like ants to human beings, and like the German submariners in *Das Boot*, the French soldiers in *Paths of Glory* are in much more difficult circumstances than the movie’s particular 1957 audience.⁴⁷

Frye writes that this phase is “for the most part the tragedy of lost direction and lack of knowledge” (222). Although again, this is not as much the case for *Paths of Glory* as for *Das Boot*, *Paths of Glory* portrays French officers who not only no longer understand their own troops and have lost an understanding of any kind of purpose in the war. French generals, much like actually happened in World War I, have lost perspective and become more focused on face and ‘winning’ than anything else. Originally, Mireau honestly has told Broulard that an attack on the Ant Hill is impossible for his men. But, when career advancement for him is suggested, he says: “Nothing is beyond those men once their fighting spirit is aroused” and agrees to attack. That is a loss of perspective.

*Paths of Glory* Tragedy Fifth Phase Analogue: Irony/Satire Fifth Phase

**Irony/Satire Fifth Phase Characteristics.**

1. Emphasis is on ineluctable fate or fortune. Everything important has already happened or is set unavoidably to happen (237).

2. Thus an emphasis on stoicism (237).

3. The practical situation is more important “than the theoretical explanation of it” (238).

*Paths of Glory* fits all three of these characteristics, especially the first and third (some behavior of the characters decidedly lacks stoicism—although other characters are perfect examples of it). *Paths of Glory* emphasizes the inability of the three French soldiers accused of cowardice to escape their fate, or of Colonel Dax to help them. They have no opportunity to explain their situation. They are not allowed to speak about why they retreated (i.e. enemy fire etc.). They are only allowed to state that they retreated. Even

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⁴⁷ Admittedly, however, these French ground soldiers are in a little better situation than the German submariners in *Das Boot*, since there are more ways they can escape and control their fate (almost all the German submariners—except for the captain and perhaps the chief engineer—have really no control over
one soldier’s reaching the German barbed wire is pushed aside as unimportant, because the fact that he didn’t die in the attack supposedly confirms his guilt (for the court). The court’s argument is that “it’s accepted practice in the French army to pick examples by lot.” This is the general payment of Fate that must be made, regardless of individual guilt.

Dax’s stoicism is clear even after he has already led his company on a fruitless attack on the Ant Hill.\textsuperscript{48} Having noticed that Roget’s company is not attacking, he returns to encourage his soldiers to obey their orders and tries to lead them out of the trenches. Dax focuses on doing one’s duty regardless of the environment—an excellent stoic characteristic. Dax has considered “the practical and immediate situation”—that he must lead his troops on a suicidal attack, or else the command of his troops will be given to another, perhaps less caring, officer. This “practical and immediate situation” is “worthy of more respect than the theoretical explanation of it” (238)—i.e. theoretically, Dax is aiding and abetting unjust and immoral orders from evil people he fervently dislikes (this is the same situation for the Captain in \textit{Das Boot}).\textsuperscript{49}

\textbf{Conclusion.} Frye writes that the "tragic hero is very great as compared with us" (207). Indeed, most audiences admire most soldiers in combat for the sufferings they endure merely by having the courage to be in combat. Consequently, portrayals of soldiers like \textit{Sergeant York}, where the backwoods hero is immortalized, are common in the War film. In \textit{The Dirty Dozen}, army convict Samson Posey recognizes the prestige of dying in battle for one's country and so willingly accepts a dangerous mission, because he says "I reckon the folks'd be a sight happier if I died like a soldier." \textit{The Dirty Dozen} works to almost canonize Posey and people like him, because of their self-sacrifice in choosing to fight on the front lines (even if Posey's alternative is to serve a sentence for a capital crime).

\textsuperscript{48} The court-martialed soldiers, on the other hand, give into their emotions and, at one time or the other, are not very stoic about their deaths. But ultimately, they are encouraged to remain stoic as they face death by various characters, like the priest, although one of the three men, Ferol, whines almost all the way to his death.

\textsuperscript{49} In this way, Dax is a lot like the Captain in \textit{Das Boot}. He simply does his duty as a soldier despite the fact that he despises those for whom he does his duty.
This idolization does not simply apply to enlisted men. Even aristocratic officers like Robert Shaw in *Glory*, not necessarily grunts, are eulogized for their courage. Movies like *The Longest Day* intentionally give roughly equal screen time to enlisted men and officers. Even portrayals of deeply flawed officers in War films, like George Patton, leave us feeling slightly nostalgic for Patton's type, even if he was egotistical and sometimes sacrificed his own men's lives for greater glory for himself. That is, a War movie can make even somebody as flawed as Patton a hero, because he fights for the country, even if he makes colossal mistakes.

In *Apocalypse Now*, another flawed leader, Colonel Kurtz, has experienced the heartlessness and impersonality of war. Kurtz has decided the best way to survive such a war is to be heartless himself. Kurtz's ruthlessness actually leads him to develop a huge group of followers because his viciousness seems to allow them to survive longer than they otherwise would. As Frye writes: "Those who attract most devotion from others are those who are best able to suggest in their manner that they have no need of it" (208). His enormities, however, are combined with a refusal to obey orders, and it is this insubordination, which leads the army to categorize him as insane, and so Kurtz is killed, which is Frye's "nemesis" (209)--an important aspect of Tragedy for Frye.

So even for the most powerful military leader, and even more certainly for the average soldier, there is "something on the side of him opposite the audience, compared to which he is small" (Frye 207). This is especially true in movies like *Das Boot*, where the German submarine crew has very little autonomy under the sea. There is truly nothing the crewmen can do except listen and wait. In *Platoon*, Army recruit Chris Taylor desires to fight in Vietnam because of his sympathy for the lower class soldiers whom he perceives as being used by the American system. However, in Vietnam, Taylor's idealism is useless, and he is simply another powerless pawn trying to stay alive.

So even the most valiant soldiers are small in the face of the dehumanizing, impersonal and institutionalized aspects of war. In *Sands of Iwo Jima*, the most skilled and experienced fighter in the movie, Sergeant Stryker, is killed by a Japanese sniper, even while some the most inexperienced soldiers underneath him survive. This shows war's arbitrariness, that sometimes even the best fighters are killed, while sometimes the worst, and even the most cowardly, soldiers live. Frye emphasizes, in Tragedy, "the
omnipotence of an external fate" (209), and this fate almost seems whimsical, and yet unavoidable, to the characters in a War movie.

From their beginning, movies like Lawrence of Arabia emphasize the intractability of external fate. Lawrence of Arabia begins with Lawrence's death in a motorcycle accident and then shows how Lawrence's life, with his lust for adventure, inescapably leads to that conclusion. In Braveheart, it seems that Wallace's death is fated from the beginning, exactly because he cares for other people and wants to trust them and join with them for Scotland's betterment. This diplomatic attitude leads him to be duped into a meeting with Robert the Bruce, and just before this meeting Wallace is captured. In Paths of Glory, the Frenchman Colonel Dax valiantly tries to lead his soldiers in a suicidal attack. All his courage is wasted, however, when most of his men don't follow him, and most of those who do follow him are killed. Paths of Glory inexorably moves to its conclusion where three soldiers are selected to be executed for the cowardice of their division. The institutional nature of the army, and its actions, makes it easier to see war as Frye's fate, contrary to which nothing can really be done.