

Contemporary mythological exemplar

Religion



Mythological exemplar: The Hero's Quest Theory and the Trickster Theory

Mythological theories still feature prominently in modern day studies. This essay focuses on the hero's quest theory and the trickster theory, and seeks to show their prominence in modern day life by applying their concepts to an exemplar. The exemplar of this essay is the Harry Potter movie sequel based on the books by J. K. Rowling. The hero's quest theory describes the adventures of heroes as they leave their normal lives to pursue set goals in an unknown world. According to Campbell (23), the hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder, where one encounters fabulous forces and ultimate victory. The hero then returns with the power to bestow boons on fellow humans. This theory follows seventeen stages that can be grouped into three major sections: departure, initiation and return. In the departure stage, the hero leads an ordinary life when the person receives a call to head into the unknown, a stage called 'The Call to Adventure'. The hero may at first refuse to embrace the journey due to fear or inadequacy, but finally sets off. A guide usually appears to provide wisdom to the hero (Campbell 23). This leads to the 'Crossing of the First Threshold' where the hero actually crosses into the new realm, abandoning his former life. This threshold is sometimes guarded by being to defend the entrance. On crossing, the hero experiences final separation from his past life (Belly of the Whale). The initiation is the second stage. The first part in this section is the 'Road of Trials', consisting of a series of tests to be accomplished. The hero may fail some of these trials and is often aided by a benign supernatural power. During the journey, the hero may meet a person that he or she loves, a stage known as 'The Meeting with the Goddess'. The goddess represents unconditional love and friendship. However, the goddess

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may be manifested as a Woman Temptress who appeals to the pleasurable nature of the hero, with an effort to derail him from his task. The hero comes to the final battle called 'Atonement with the Father' where the person faces his or her greatest fear, commonly represented by a powerful evil being (Campbell 23). At first the hero may appear to be defeated and is shown by physical death or injury (Apotheosis). Finally, the hero defeats the being and achieves the boon or the goal of the quest. In the return stage, the hero goes home with the knowledge acquired during the quest. In some cases, one may refuse to return to the boring, ordinary life led before embarking on a quest. If the hero returns, he or she does so by either escaping with the boon (The Magic Flight) or is rescued by a powerful guide (Rescue from Without) especially when wounded. Upon return to normalcy, the hero achieves a balance between the two worlds, and is often able to go back and forth between the two realms (Master of Two Worlds state). Ultimately, the hero earns the freedom from death and fear, and lives now without restraints. This final state is called the 'Freedom to Live'. The Harry Potter sequel clearly follows the Hero's quest theory. The departure stage introduces the hero growing up in a home of little love and ignorant of the origins of his birth. A letter arrives for him (Call to adventure) but he is prevented from reading it by his uncle (Call refused). Hagrid arrives and delivers Harry's acceptance letter into Hogwarts School and Harry departs with him. In The Sorcerer's Stone, the crossing of the threshold is shown when Harry, Ron and Hermione sooth Fluffy, the guardian of the passage, with music in order to cross. They land on the Devil's snare that only frees those who relax and stop fighting the roots (Belly of the whale). After which they face a series of tests (Road of Trials) including broom flying, wizard chess and the mirror of <https://assignbuster.com/contemporary-mythological-exemplar/>

Erised. Hermione represents the ' Goddess' by encouraging Harry to finish the last part of the quest alone. Harry confronts Voldemort (Atonement with the father) and finally succeeds to thwart his plan. He is found unconscious and taken to the hospital wing for recovery (Apotheosis). Harry is reluctant to return to the Muggle world at the end of the year ((Refusal of return) but finally gives in. He possesses knowledge of both worlds and can move between them from time to time (Master of two worlds) and no longer lives in fear of his uncle and aunt (Freedom to live). The trickster theory describes a character that is witty, mischievous and who achieves his goals by trickery (Hynes & Doty 33-40). The trickster can be an animal, a human or mythological creature that personifies the chaos that the world requires to operate. Hynes & Doty (33) describes five traits of a trickster: ambiguous, deceiver and trick-player, situation-inverter, messenger and imitator of the gods, and sacred and loose bricoleur. The trickster defies conventional behavior and openly mocks authority. In mythology and religion, the trickster deity defies the rules of the gods resulting in ultimate positive outcomes and is more friendly to humanity than other gods. The tricksters in the Harry Potter sequel are the twins, Fred and George Weasley, who are known for their legendary jokes and pranks. They are smart as shown by their dedication to conjuring advanced magic. Like all tricksters, they defy social conventions and rules as shown by their ambition to start a joke shop instead of following their father's footsteps of joining the Ministry of Magic. They also conjure up massive fireworks in the entrance hall of Hogwarts to defy Umbridge's authoritarian rules in the Order of the Phoenix. This defiance is also shown in the Goblet of Fire when they drink an aging potion to fool the age line Dumbledore drew to prevent underage wizards from

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entering the tournament. Like all tricksters, they have a knack for questioning authority and fighting for justice as shown in Order of the Phoenix when they steal Percy's Head Boy Badge and "improve" it to read "Bighead Boy" as a way of pointing out his pompous nature (Hynes & Doty 36). They assist Harry severally in his quest such as giving him the Marauder's Map in the Prisoner of Azkaban to help him navigate the halls without being caught. Works Cited Campbell, Joseph. "The Hero with a Thousand Faces." 2nd ed. California: New World Library, 2008, pg. 23 Hynes, W. J., and Doty, W. G. "Mythical Trickster Figures: Contours, Contexts, and Criticisms" Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1993, pg. 33-40