

Coelho's Heroes and Campbell's: A Similitude

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Abstract

The protagonists of Paulo Coelho have garnered considerable attention from modern literature academics. As many academics have noted, heroes show symmetry in their caricature and development. The majority of academics agree with Paulo Coelho's assertion that heroes ought to be archetypes. In the same vein, this discursive study uses examples from a few of Paulo Coelho's books to highlight instances in which the author's heroes adhere to the archetypal pattern outlined in Joseph Campbell's well-known monomyth. It is noted that Coelho draws inspiration from Campbell's design, which illustrates the archetypal framework of the mythical hero's journey, much like the general consensus. He uses Campbell's carcass as a backdrop for his protagonists. This research adds to the illustrious body of work that honours Paulo Coelho's writing as a never-ending source of inspiration. It significantly improves how well we comprehend the characters created by the renowned author.

Keywords: Heroes, Myth, Campbell, Journey, Coelho

The word "hero" brings a lot of questions into the mind of the reader. For a long time, scholars have been assigning varied meanings to this singular term, and all of their claims are apropos. From the 'Tragic Hero' of Aristotle to the 'Absurd Hero' of Albert Camus, we have abundant ideas to fit a hero into. A hero can take many different forms, and according to different literary masters, none of them can be excluded from their titles. Generally speaking, a hero is someone who does good deeds or someone who has extraordinary abilities and dedicates them for the benefit of society or humanity. But does this idealization of heroes justify all of their various classifications? More explanations than are currently possible to provide may be necessary for this question. For instance, the "Byronic hero" might not embody the same traits as those listed above, but he or she would still be considered one of the heroes. The heroes of Thomas Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero Worship* may also evade properly fitting into this representation because they are regarded as heroes not for having extraordinary qualities but for actually being extraordinary people. A hero is defined as "a person who is admired for having done something very brave or having achieved something great" (Walter) by the Cambridge English Dictionary. Joseph Campbell's extremely well-known and in-depth argument in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* is one example of such a concept. He divides the life and journey of a hero into three major and twelve minor sections. Originally published in 1949, the piece told a monomyth about the journeys of legendary heroes. The journeys were put into an archetypal pattern, stating the quests made by the heroes in classical myths and in real life. In a 1988 documentary titled *Joseph Campbell and The Power of Myth* (later published as a book in the same year), Campbell subtly postulates a definition that is broad enough to incorporate all the inexplicit properties of a hero,

and narrow enough to dodge any questions that oppugn its precision: “A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself.” (Campbell et al. np). Campbell concentrated exclusively on the idea of mythical heroes, which, as a matter of fact, is the skeletal structure for the journeys of Paulo Coelho’s heroes. In Coelho’s novels, a journey symmetrical to Campbell’s appraisal can be clearly observed. The steps and turns that Campbell proposes to be integral (mostly, if not compulsory) parts of the hero’s journey are as follows: 1. The Ordinary World, 2. The Call to Adventure, 3. Refusal to Call, 4. Meeting the Mentor, 5. Crossing the Threshold, 6. Tests, Allies, Enemies, 7. Approach to the Inmost Cave, 8. The Ordeal, 9. Reward, 10. The Road Back, 11. The Resurrection, 12. Return with the Elixir. The steps of the journey may be explained as follows:

1. ‘The Ordinary World’ in Coelho’s Novels – The ecumenical display of the life of an ordinary person is necessary to form a basis of the story. ‘The Ordinary World’ projects a banal person whose mundane life is agitated because of his spiritual, psychological and/or metaphysical enigma. This stage introduces the commonality of the hero's traits and the exceptionality of his or her unique qualities. Additionally, it is a cabalistic illustration of the query that the hero pursues relentlessly as a goal throughout the entire course of the narrative. It depicts the fundamental characteristics of the Ordinary World in order to suggest stark contrasts with the Special World, where the hero would discover the solutions to his problems and the answers to his questions. In *The Alchemist*, Santiago's rather uninteresting and unremarkable life as a shepherd is sharply contrasted with the exciting and enigmatic journey in the Special World (Egypt); in *The Pilgrimage*, Paulo (the protagonist and an image of the author himself) reflects

on the elements which contrast with his position during the journey, such as his "Bermuda shorts and a T-shirt that read 'I LOVE NY'" (20).

2. The Call to Adventure - This stage marks the starting point of the hero's journey to right the wrongs in his world after being inspired by an event or action that causes turbulence. The occurrence could be a fatality, a paranormal revelation, a storm, a kidnapping, the words of a dying man, etc. The hero may need to answer more than one Call in order to accept his fate and move forward. In the novel *The Valkyries* Along with Paulo, Christina is uncertain about discovering her own legend. She questions his sincerity and comprehension of the RAM, but later, after discovering her guardian angel, she becomes aware of her earlier lack of understanding of the Special World. Ralf Hart invites Maria to experience the fascination of sensual pleasure in *Eleven Minutes*. She only fully realizes herself as a result of this pull toward the world of love.

3. Refusal of the Call - The hero refuses to leave the comfort and security of his world and immediately begin the journey. He seeks refuge in his comfortable home, far from the dangers and uncertainties that may await him on his journey. His world is thrown off balance by the frequent calls from the Special World and the outrageous incidents that keep happening. Thus, the hero is finally coerced or persuaded to set out on his journey. The more calls there are, the more intriguing it is for the audience to watch how the hero goes about completing his or her journey. The audience is further drawn in by the supernatural indulgence because it allows them to imagine potential major events that might occur while traveling. When Santiago in *The Alchemist* and Paulo in *The Pilgrimage* initially reject the endeavours they are expected to undertake, we see their reluctance and hesitation. Both consider it to be a trick played by fate on

themselves. In *The Valkyries*, Christina is never determined to embark on the journey, and in the book *Eleven Minutes*, Maria rejects the advances of several men in order to avoid the irrevocable and entwining effects of love.

4. Meeting the Mentor: During the course of the adventure, the hero frequently encounters something or someone who will serve as his guide. The mentor is a wise man who warns the hero about the challenges and opportunities of his upcoming journey. He may be a man of experience who has traveled on the journey before, a token or map of the Special World, or a man with a broad perspective on life. The mentor might give the hero stringent guidelines, a code of conduct, or even gifts to aid him in successfully completing his journey. The mentor may also take the form of a supernatural being who travels with the protagonist as a guardian angel and provides memories or inspiration. In *The Alchemist*, Santiago is guided by the Duke's Urim and Thummim, while Paulo and Christina are led by Valhalla in *The Valkyries*, though we also notice J. as Paulo's mentor. In *The Winner Stands Alone*, we learn that Igor's guardian angel is Olivia's spirit, also known as the "girl with the dark eyebrows." In *The Pilgrimage*, Paulo encounters Petrus and recognizes him as his travel companion on the Way to Santiago.

5. Crossing the Threshold - This stage represents the hero's ultimate dedication to the journey, which typically entails overcoming fears and refusing to turn back to the ordinary world. By applying motivation or force gained from events and deeds in the ordinary world, the threshold is crossed. The hero might as well enter the Special World willingly and dauntlessly with the ambition to reach his goal but that is not observed frequently, according to Campbell, and also in Coelho's novels. This stage brings up the issue of the journey once more and sparks the hero's drive. The moment Santiago sells his sheep and sets out for Egypt to look for the treasure

described in *The Alchemist*, he passes the threshold. In *Eleven Minutes*, when Maria accepts Ralf Hart's offer of a drink, she crosses the threshold. In *The Winner Stands Alone*, Igor crosses the threshold prepared and determined to exact revenge for the betrayal of his love, and in *The Valkyries*, Christina crosses the threshold having had her first encounter with the "second mind."

6. Tests, Allies, and Enemies - As soon as the hero enters the Special World, his dedication to the journey is put to the test. He faces adversaries who try to stop him from continuing on his journey and overcomes the challenges and distinctions of the Special World. He can get allies he gains through his virtue or his confidence into action to help him overcome such challenges or combat such foes. After being put to the test in terms of his tenacity, he readies himself for more difficult challenges, such as the enemy's ulterior motives or the challenges he will face in order to achieve his goal. In *The Pilgrimage*, as soon as Paulo gets started on his journey, he encounters a gypsy who tries to trick him, but Petrus is there in time to save him. In *Eleven Minutes*, Maria fights her way through the worst kind of soul pain alongside Terence.

7. Approach to the Inmost Cave – This stage is where the hero prepares to face his greatest challenge. In order to face the Ordeal, the apex of his journey, he must intensify his passion and inspire courage within himself. In a sense, this stage serves as both the culmination of the rising action and the entrance to the reward. The hero might as well receive numerous reminders of the impending event and some downtime from his exhausting and tiresome journey through the Special World. In *The Alchemist*, Santiago stops in the Oasis to speak with the alchemist before embarking on his journey into the world of magic and wonder, whereas in *The Pilgrimage*, Paulo is given the opportunity to confront his greatest fear in the form of a dog after mastering the messenger ritual and becoming prepared to confront the devil for the first time.

8. The Ordeal - During this phase, the hero would experience his greatest anxieties and difficulties, as well as the brink of failure, defeat, or even death. He struggles to overcome his challenge as it becomes difficult for him to handle. During this time, he might witness the passing of a close friend or companion, and occasionally he might even be the one to blame. He experiences emotional upheaval or vehemence, which makes his victory a serene or joyous celebration. The audience finds the Ordeal to be the most exciting because it provides an answer to the journey's central question. When Igor finally understands that Ewa was to be held accountable for the betrayal and deserved to be condemned, *The Winner Stands Alone*, The Ordeal comes to life. Before she explores the second mind and loses her composure, Christina's mind is finally ataraxic in *The Valkyries*.

9. Reward - This stage determines whether the hero has recovered or obtained the reward, which may take the form of a job, an elixir, an important object, the ability to reconcile with a lover, the realization of one's own self and soul, or ascent to the metaphysical. The hero may occasionally not have earned the reward, but he or she may still be able to convince his or her allies that they should have it by describing their struggle. In *The Alchemist*, Santiago is rewarded with the ability to control natural forces; in *Eleven Minutes*, Maria receives the feeling of love; in *The Pilgrimage*, Paulo conquers his fear of the devil and achieves purity; and in *The Winner Stands Alone*, Igor is finally able to rationalize his retaliation and focus on carrying it out.

10. The Road Back - After his ordeal, the hero must return to the ordinary world, but this time he requires encouragement to make the commitment to do so. The force is provided by an event or action, such as the possibility that the Ordinary World will be destroyed soon, the villain taking back the reward or elixir, the hero's lover being in danger of dying, etc. In order to bring

both worlds into balance, the hero may also decide to do so internally. The hero needs this push because he begins to believe that he belongs in the Special World because he struggled and overcame his dismay. He needs to give off some indication that he's from the Common World. In *The Winner Stands Alone*, the protagonist's desire is frustrated after learning that the rumored treasure of Egypt was only a hoax and that he would have to return empty-handed, whereas Santiago's desire is frustrated in *The Alchemist*. In *The Pilgrimage*, Paulo's fear of the dog persisted even after he defeated it, until Petrus advised him and reminded him of his target.

11. The Resurrection: In this, the hero's last battle with fear, which doubts whether he deserves to keep the reward, the hero must decide whether to keep it or not. He is willing to confront the theft accusation and demonstrate that he did not obtain the reward through deception or trickery. He has to exert himself greatly once more in order to overcome his ordeal and come to the realization that he does not belong in the Special World and must leave as soon as possible. He might once again be required to make sacrifices or witness the demise of his army, a friend, or a loved one. It frequently appears that not just the hero's life but also his entire world may be on the verge of extinction at this point. In response, the hero gives his best performance out of desperation and agitation. In this stage, the hero's motivations are also purified because he has come to understand that his world's needs come first, not his own. In *The Winner Stands Alone*, Igor encounters Ewa and Hamid for defeating them; in *The Alchemist*, Santiago is nearly killed by Arab refugees who rob him of his gold but accidentally find his treasure. In *The Pilgrimage*, Paulo encounters the man on the hill and learns how nature had been directing him toward his sword.

12. Return with the Elixir – The journey and the hero's struggles culminate in the return. The hero has atoned for his sins and demonstrated through his resurrection that he is deserving of keeping the elixir/reward. He would use the payment to treat the physical or psychological injuries that the Ordinary World had caused. His knowledge of the Special World would help him stabilize the Ordinary World. As he becomes more aware of his obligations to his men, his wife, and himself, his relationships with his world become more solid. In *The Winner Stands Alone*, Igor exacts revenge on his love and discovers that he is capable of loving, Santiago discovers a chest full of gold at the conclusion of *The Alchemist*, Maria discovers the true meaning of love in *Eleven Minutes*, Paulo retrieves his sword and learns crucial information about the Road to Santiago in *The Pilgrimage*. At the conclusion, every hero receives a reward.

One gets the impression that Coelho believes heroes to be the most authentic mythical figures because he frames the majority of his heroic characters in accordance with Joseph Campbell's definition of heroism. Nevertheless, a few of his more recent works, including *The Spy*, *Adultery*, and *The Archer*, feature various hero prototypes. Paulo Coelho frequently cites Joseph Campbell as an inspiration and acknowledges Campbell's ideas in his blog and interviews, so it is reasonable to assume that the general regard for Coelho as a hero is also based on Campbell's theory. Because Paulo Coelho frequently cites Joseph Campbell as an inspiration and acknowledges Campbell's ideas in his blog and interviews, it is reasonable to assume that the general admiration for Coelho's heroes is also based on Campbell's theory. The first traces of Campbell's name are found on Paulo Coelho's blog dated October 16th, 2010 where he describes him as "American mythologist, writer and lecturer" (Coelho *Character of the week: Joseph Campbell*) but gives no great detail about his work. Another mention is in an article dated

November 27, 2013, where he accredits him: “Joseph Campbell is another proof that if we are following our dreams, things will come to us in the exact timing. Even so, we do not always have the courage to choose our destiny” (Coelho *Campbell on himself*). In his article titled ‘The Hero's Journey’ (Coelho) from November 4, 2013, he goes into great detail about the archetypal structure of Campbell.

In a conversation with Oprah Winfrey on The Oprah Winfrey Show, Coelho also acknowledges the similarities between Santiago's journey in *The Alchemist* and the archetypal hero's journey described by Joseph Campbell. The interview's highlights were published on Paulo Coelho's (Coelho) official blog on May 15, 2020. Thus, the archetypal representation of heroism that Campbell has painted for Paulo Coelho can provide an answer to the unanswered question of heroism. One could safely assert that the Paulo Coelho characters who exhibit traits of Campbellian heroism are heroes. We can confidently state that Coelho's protagonists meet the criteria for heroes not only by mythological standards but also by all modern, psychological, and artistic standards.

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