

Comparison of the representation of the conventions of the hero's journey in both *Clash of the Titans* and *The Odyssey*.

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The conventions of the hero's journey as set out by Campbell in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1993) are represented more thoroughly and effectively in the movie *Clash of the Titans* than *The Odyssey*. As set forth in this essay, both movies demonstrate the conventions of the hero's journey; however *The Odyssey* demonstrates them more clearly and thoroughly.

The conventions of the hero's journey are divided into three phases: the Separation or Departure stage, the Trials and Victories of Initiation, and the Return. Each of these phases is then divided into several smaller stages. Campbell uses these conventions to explain the hero's journey, and demonstrate that there are similarities in the way that hero myths are constructed. Both movies portray these conventions in different ways, as shown by this essay.

The first phase in the hero's journey is the Separation or Departure phase, in which the hero is called to leave or taken from his homeland. The Call to Adventure is the first stage of this phase, in which the hero is awakened and called to a journey or set of tasks. This is represented in *The Odyssey* when King Menelaus and King Agamemnon arrive in Ithaca and tell Odysseus he has been called to fight with the Greeks in the battle of Troy, and must be separated from his wife and son. In *Clash of the Titans* Perseus does not depart, but is separated from his homeland. Thetis the sea goddess causes him to fall asleep and then places him on the island of Joppa.

After this stage is the Refusal of the Call, in which the hero rails against the gods and refuses to embark on the journey. This is clearly represented in both *Clash of the Titans* and *The Odyssey*. Perseus does not want to fight for his kingdom, but is convinced by Zeus, who says to

him "Fight, and fulfil your destiny." (Harryhausen, Schneer, & Davis, 1981). Odysseus is reluctant to sail to Troy because he loves his home, his wife Penelope and his newborn son Telemachus. He is convinced to depart when Athena appears to him, saying "You must make this journey. It is your destiny to fight at Troy." (Lovell & Konchalovsky, 1997). This scene ties closely into the next stage, Supernatural Aid, in which the hero is assisted by divine means.

Clash of the Titans represents this stage in several ways. First, when Zeus commands Aphrodite, Athena, and Thetis: "Provide him [Perseus] with suitable weapons. Weapons of divine temper. A helmet, a shield, a sword." (Harryhausen, Schneer, & Davis, 1981). The goddess's then do this and bequeath their weapons and armour upon Perseus to help him in his quest. Perseus is also helped in his journey by Pegasus, a mechanical owl called Bubo sent by Athena, who guides Perseus and his men through the desert to the Fates. Odysseus also receives divine aid in his journey. First, from Athena who gives him strength when he first leaves Ithaca. He is also aided by Hermes to overcome Circe's enchantment, and later by Aeolus the wind god to return to Ithaca. These examples show that both movies thoroughly demonstrate the hero's convention of Supernatural Aid.

The fourth stage is the Crossing of the Threshold, in which the hero enters an Otherworld apart from the real one. This is shown in the journey of Perseus when he follows Andromeda in her golden cage to the swamp of Calibos. Upon reaching the swamp Perseus is then in the Belly of the Whale, the convention in which a hero has entered the centre of the Otherworld. *The Odyssey* represents these two stages with Odysseus' many journeys over the ocean by ship. This is all the more so after he has angered Poseidon and is shipwrecked on many different fantastical islands. The Belly of the Whale is shown by Odysseus and his crew passing through a fog on their departure from Troy. Poseidon lays the fog and when it clears they land on the island of the cyclops Polyphemus.

These five stages represent the first phase of conventions of the hero's journey known as Separation or Departure. The stages following this are known as the Trials and Victories of

Initiation, in which the hero undergoes tests and displays feats of strength and wisdom, and is aided by men and gods in continuing his journey.

The first stage of the second phase is the Road of Trials, in which the hero overcomes a series of miraculous ordeals and tests with the help of a supernatural mentor or guide. This is demonstrated by the presence of Pegasus and Bubo in *Clash of the Titans*, who between them guide Perseus to the Fates and aid in building his adventure. *The Odyssey* has a more general representation of this stage. From the point in the story when Odysseus angers Poseidon he is driven off-course to undergo many trials and wander for years before he may return home. In this set of trials and tests Odysseus is aided by Hermes, Athena and Calypso.

The second stage of this phase is the Meeting with the Goddess, which entails the mystical marriage of the hero with the queen goddess, or universal mother representative. Campbell includes this stage because he believes women represent the totality of all experience and enlightenment (Campbell, p. 36, 1993). This stage is thoroughly represented in *The Odyssey* by Odysseus' meeting with Calypso. On her island, although held captive, he finds a safe haven of comfort, and he is her lover for several years. The only equivalent example found in *Clash of the Titans* would be Perseus' meeting with the Fates, although they are portrayed more as an obstacle to overcome than a mother-figure.

The next stage, and the flipside of the previous one, is Woman as the Temptress. Odysseus' meeting with Circe is a clear representation of this; she entices him into her palace and holds him and his men captive for five years. This stage is not clearly represented in *Clash of the Titans*.

The following stage of the hero's journey is Atonement with the Father. This stage is shown clearly in *The Odyssey* when Odysseus, after leaving Calypso's island on a wooden raft, is caught in a raging storm sent by Poseidon. The god speaks to him through the waves and tells him that he will not take his life, but that he must understand and accept his destiny as a

mortal with mortal limitations (Lovell & Konchalovsky, 1997). Again, *Clash of the Titans* does not clearly show this stage.

Apotheosis, or enlightenment, is the next stage of the hero's journey. In this stage the hero is often transformed into a deity, or given supernatural recognition of their achievements. This stage is shown in both *Clash of the Titans* and *The Odyssey*. Perseus, of the former, is set among the stars as a constellation, along with his wife Andromeda, Andromeda's mother Queen Cassiopeia, and the horse Pegasus. This is to remind future generations of the value of bravery and heroism. In *The Odyssey*, Odysseus is told by Athena "Your destiny is to become immortal, to have your name on the lips of endless generations." (Lovell & Konchalovsky, 1997). This statement shows the apotheosis of Odysseus.

Following Apotheosis is the Ultimate Boon, in which the hero breaks through personal limitations and experiences spiritual growth. This is represented in *Clash of the Titans* when Perseus returns from his journey to the gorgon's lair, having slain Medusa and carrying her venomous blood and head as a trophy. Perseus, although weakened from the fight, then rescues Andromeda from sacrifice to the Kraken, killing it and emerging from the ocean triumphant. In this sequence Perseus overcomes personal limitations when he kills the Kraken and rescues Andromeda, despite his own fatigue. This stage is also evident in *The Odyssey*, although in a different manner. It could be said that Odysseus' entire journey home to Ithaca is about him overcoming personal limitations to achieve the ultimate boon; his return to Penelope and Telemachus. It could also be said that Odysseus himself is the ultimate boon: he is an absent husband and father-figure and he is the leader that his kingdom needs. Odysseus overcomes all personal limitations in returning to Ithaca to restore himself to those who need him. In this way, *The Odyssey* portrays the stage of Ultimate Boon.

The last phase of Campbell's hero's journey is the Return. First stage of this phase is the Refusal of the Return. This stage is not clearly shown in *Clash of the Titans*, and neither is it evident in *The Odyssey*. Even though Odysseus undergoes many trials and setbacks, his

ultimate goal is always to return home to Ithaca. The closest he comes to the Refusal is when he is on the island of Calypso, but even then he chooses to leave when given the opportunity. This is the only convention not evident in *The Odyssey*.

Next in the hero's journey is the Magic Flight. This stage is evident in a very literal sense in *Clash of the Titans*. When Perseus returns to rescue Andromeda he does so flying on Pegasus' back. This stage is also alluded to in *The Odyssey*, although it is not visibly shown. After Odysseus is given a ship and crew by the king of Phoenicia he again sets sail for Ithaca. During the night he falls asleep, and when he wakes up he is lying on the shore of Ithaca, with no apparent personal effort. This small scene is a simple representation of the Magic Flight, because although Odysseus is on a ship to Ithaca when he falls asleep, it is not explained how he came to be lying on the shore in the morning.

Next in the conventions is the Rescue from Without, wherein the hero must be brought back from his fantastical adventure by means of outside assistance. *The Odyssey* shows this stage when Hermes arrives on Calypso's island and informs her that Odysseus must be allowed to leave, as it is not his destiny to end his days on her island. Had Hermes not intervened with this message Odysseus may never have left Calypso's island. This stage is also portrayed in *Clash of the Titans* when Perseus escapes the island of the Gorgons on the back of Pegasus. Had it not been for Pegasus, Perseus would not have been able to leave the island and rescue Andromeda from the Kraken. Both Odysseus and Perseus were brought back from their journeys with the help of outside sources, and in this way both movies represent the stage of Rescue from Without.

Next in the Return phase is the Crossing of the Threshold. This stage is the period when the hero crosses back over into the ordinary world. Again, the flight on the back of Pegasus' represents this stage in *Clash of the Titans*. The journey from Phoenicia to Ithaca in which Odysseus fell asleep represents the crossing of the return threshold in *The Odyssey*.

Second last of the conventions is Master of the Two Worlds. This stage acknowledges the power of the hero to cross back and forth between the world divisions. Perseus achieves this status by conquering several monsters in the Otherworld, such as killing Calibos, Medusa and the Kraken, and outwitting the Fates. On his return to the real world Perseus marries Andromeda, and reclaims his kingdom. In this way Perseus has conquered both the Otherworld and the world of men. Odysseus also achieves this status of Master of the Two Worlds, in that he defeats all obstacles put in his path between Troy and Ithaca. When he finally returns to Ithaca and finds his house full of suitors, he kills them all, reclaiming the throne of Ithaca. These achievements elevate Odysseus to the status of master of both worlds as he has conquered both the Otherworld and the world of men. These points demonstrate that both *Clash of the Titans* and *The Odyssey* clearly and thoroughly portray the convention of Master of the Two Worlds.

The final stage in Campbell's conventions is Freedom to Live. This stage is the result of the entire miraculous passage, from the Call to Adventure, Trials and Victories, to the Return. Perseus attains this stage when he marries Andromeda and becomes king, freeing himself from his step-father and others who tried to rid of him. Odysseus also attains Freedom to Live by returning home to Ithaca; his destiny is fulfilled and he is free to live with his wife Penelope and son Telemachus. Both heroes attain the status of Master of Two Worlds,, and also Freedom to live, delivering them from their limitations and elevating them to heroes.

As can be seen from the many examples given here, the movies *Clash of the Titans* and *The Odyssey* both demonstrate many of the conventions of a hero's journey as set out by Campbell in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1993). Although both films clearly depict many of the hero's conventions, *Clash of the Titans* does not effectively portray as many as *The Odyssey*. Due to these factors, the conventions of the hero's journey as set out by Campbell are represented more thoroughly and effectively in the movie *Clash of the Titans* than *The Odyssey*.

References

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