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# Superman's Ancestors - Beowulf, Odysseus and Roy Hobbs: Application and Analysis of Joseph Campbell's Monomyth Theory

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SUPERMAN'S ANCESTORS-BEOWULF, ODYSSEUS AND ROY HOBBS:  
APPLICATION AND ANALYSIS OF JOSEPH CAMPBELL'S MONOMYTH  
THEORY

By

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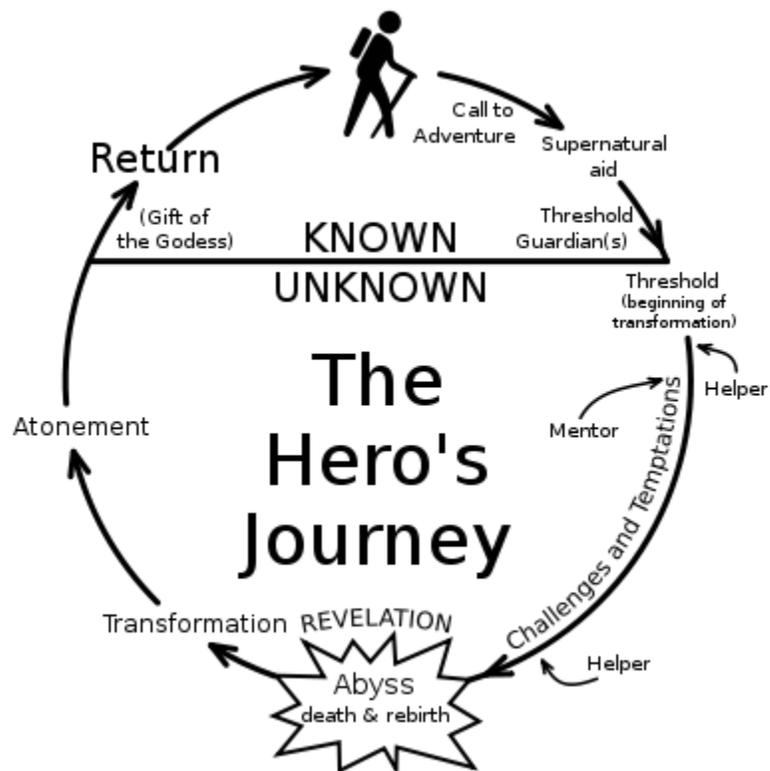
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## Abstract

Heroes have been with us since the beginning of time with some becoming more well known than others. Each and every culture seems to have their own type of hero that embodies their ideals, values and beliefs. It is this truth that Joseph Campbell, author of the 1949 book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, uses as a foundation to discuss his take on why heroes have had and will always have a place within the human fabric regardless of geographical location, religious affiliation or cultural idiosyncrasies. This thesis will apply Campbell's monomyth theory to literary classics such as *Beowulf*, Homer's *The Odyssey* and Malamud's *The Natural*. These diverse pieces will test Campbell's theory and will reveal if the Hero's Journey can withstand the test of not only time but space as well.



## Chapter I: Introduction

The Man of Steel as we know him today was not born of this world. He came from outer space, an alien if you will, a previous resident of the intergalactic planet Krypton. Despite this fact, Superman is strikingly similar to the human beings he so heroically saves from the runaway trains, falling buildings and evil villains that plague Metropolis. His exterior is that of the homo sapien as is his speech and mannerisms (even though he is a bit on the boring side as Clark Kent). He even falls in love with a mere mortal woman. We as a culture have accepted him outright and choose to overlook his foreign alien past. Why? Because he is Superman, that's why. He saves cats from tall oak trees, children from burning high rises and can even reverse the rotation of the Earth. He has superhuman strength, laser x-ray vision and can fly.

He also gives us hope that good will always prevail when evil is present and may even help inspire some to be better citizens, friends, co-workers and spouses. It is his ability to connect to our inner desires and dreams that made kids purchase his comics in the 1940's and filled and continue to fill movie theater seats with the latest Superman blockbuster. Superman, and heroes in general, embody traits and characteristics we as human beings value and long to possess. These desires lie within our subconscious and have for centuries. Superman is our modern day hero who has a long line of ancestral history that spans the globe. Prior to his arrival, countless heroes have come and gone yet all still survive in the fabric of the cultures in which they originated. From Moses to Luke Skywalker,

heroes have influenced, educated and inspired all the world's people since the beginning of time.

Moses and Skywalker both share a similar birth tale as Kal-El (Superman's birth name). As a three-month old infant, Moses was set adrift in the Nile River once Jochebed, his mother, could no longer conceal him from the Egyptians who were ordered to kill all male Hebrew children. Skywalker's mother died during childbirth, and he was taken by Yoda and Obi-Wan Kenobi to Tatooine in order to avoid the dangers of being raised by the Dark Side. Kal-El was rocketed to Earth by his father Jor-El just moments before their planet imploded. All three heroes escaped danger and horrific fates thanks to the actions of their caretakers. Is this a mere coincidence or is there something more to it than meets the eye? Moses' tale, found in the Book of Exodus, originates around the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC in Northern Africa while Superman's story was created in 1932 in North America. Skywalker followed 45 years later. Are these facts significant? Why does each hero escape death from such an early age and turn out to be a savior? Are there others out there? Joseph Campbell's monomyth theory would be something to consider in order to find the answers to these plausible queries in hopes of discovering the common thread amongst them.

Originally a term derived from James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*, Campbell took the monomyth theory to new heights in his most successful book *The Hero With a Thousand Faces*. Born into a staunch Roman Catholic family in White Plains, New York in 1904, Campbell first began his love affair with mythology after experiencing Buffalo Bill's *Wild West Show* as a young child ("Joseph

Campbell” 3). This experience sparked an interest in the young Campbell and he began an intense study of Native American literature prior to entering Dartmouth College in 1921. As a medieval literature major at Columbia University, Campbell advanced his study of mythology and intended on completing his doctorate yet he dropped out citing that the university did not approve of mythology as an acceptable topic for his thesis. This drastic step is proof of his loyalty to the mythological arts and it is to no surprise that Campbell spent the rest of his life writing and teaching about comparative mythology, folklore and religion among other areas of literary study.

In conjunction with his writing career, Campbell took to the classroom and taught literature at Sarah Lawrence College from 1934-1972. In the early 1940’s he edited the works of Heinrich Zimmer and wrote a literary interpretation of Joyce’s *Finnegan’s Wake* in which he explained the story’s archetypal origins (“Joseph Campbell” 4). A multitude of scholars believe that Joyce’s text had a profound effect on Campbell’s monomyth theory. After four laborious years of writing, Campbell produced *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Donald Newlove of *Esquire* interviewed Campbell and commented that Campbell felt “that the four years he put into *The Hero* were sublime madness, a passage of joyous creativity he has not matched since” (136).

During this period of sublime madness, Mr. Campbell defined his take on what monomyth is from his perspective:

The standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: separation-initiation-return: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth. A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a

region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man (30).

This definition lies at the core of Campbell's work and it is from this that he constructs *The Hero*. Does this definition apply to our three previously mentioned heroes? All three were separated from their families. Another way to look at it is that they were also separated from the common man due to the powers they possessed. Moses was chosen by God to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, Luke was destined to save the galaxy and Superman's super powers separated him from all other human beings. All three encounter fabulous forces: Moses converses with God and parts the Red Sea, Luke is blessed with a keen control of the Force and Superman can fly and shoot lasers from his eyes. After numerous trials and tribulations, each hero performs great deeds that result in the betterment and improved quality of life for their fellow man.

This straightforward breakdown is the same approach that Campbell uses in *The Hero*. As he explains his philosophical views about the monomyth he supports his claims with an abundance of mythological and fairy tale references and examples just as was done in the previous paragraph but with much more skill and finesse. For example, in the Departure phase of the Adventure of the Hero, Campbell discusses the Refusal of the Call. In brief, the refusal is essentially a refusal to give up what one takes to be one's own interest (Campbell 60). After laying the groundwork, a series of myths originating from one side of the globe to the other are examined to prove the validity of the concept. In this case, Campbell chooses to use the tale of the Wandering Jew to validate and explain what the

refusal is: “And there is the tale of the Wandering Jew, cursed to remain on the earth until the Day of Judgment, because when Christ had passed him carrying the cross, this man among the people standing along the way called, ‘Go faster! A little speed!’ The unrecognized, insulted Savior turned and said to him, ‘I go, but you shall be waiting here for me when I return’” (63).

This approach seems plausible. It is what is taught to very young writers in their English classes: support your claim with a detailed explanation in conjunction with one or more credible examples. But will it work with such a far-reaching, all-encompassing concept as Mr. Campbell’s monomyth? After all, the word itself is a bit arrogant is it not? One myth? How could this be? Well, according to Mr. Campbell, it is much more complex than that and should not be interpreted so simplistically. Monomyth is a term that can be applied to all the world’s myths, tales and folklore. However, it is the hero within these great tales that should be the focus. Campbell believes that all human beings, regardless of time and space, possess some universal, innate qualities that lie within each and every one of us and that is where the monomyth theory is given a breath of life. He states, “It has always been the prime function of mythology and rite to supply the symbols that carry the human spirit forward, in counteraction to those other constant human fantasies that tend to tie it back,” (11). Essentially, Campbell believes that the appetite of the human spirit is innately similar within every human and the nutrients that satisfy the appetite are found, among other places, in the myths and tales of one’s culture and sometimes beyond. This may explain why the stories of Moses and Superman, although separated by miles and

millennia, share common traits. Humans are humans despite the evolutionary, social and ethical changes that occur over time. We progress in some ways and regress in others but no one can deny the essential basic human needs: food, water, shelter, companionship, love, strength, hope and courage. Campbell believes that heroic tales can provide some of these needs when they are hard to come by in everyday life. His critics who fail to see Campbell's perspective point out that most myths are not identical and do not follow the hero's journey as it is laid out in his book. Here is his response: "If one or another of the basic elements of the archetypal pattern is omitted from a given fairy tale, legend, ritual or myth, it is bound to be somehow or another implied-and the omission itself can speak volumes for the history and pathology of the example" (38). There are of course other critics who attempt to dismantle Campbell and his monomyth theory yet those will be addressed later on in this essay.

It is now time to investigate Campbell's monomyth theory and valiantly apply it to three different heroic myths in order to prove its validity and worth in the world of literary analysis. *Beowulf*, *the Odyssey* and *The Natural* will be thoroughly examined in an attempt to show Campbell's critics that there is an importance to the Hero's Journey and that it is innately imbedded in all the world's people despite such obstacles as space and time which separate and divide us. Furthermore, I will look into the claim that human beings need heroes, real and fictional, in their lives as a means of establishing a set of specific cultural ideals and values in order to strive towards in one's lifetime. Another topic that

deserves attention pertains to the lack of the female heroine and the surprising exclusion of the female as a heroic figure.

## Chapter II: Departure

The first part of the Hero's Journey, the Departure, is made up of five stages: the Call to Adventure, Refusal of the Call, Supernatural Aid, Crossing of the First Threshold and the Belly of the Whale. The call signifies that destiny has summoned the hero and transferred his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown (Campbell 58). Odysseus experienced such a call when he agreed, although reluctantly, to leave Ithaca and go to battle at Troy. Called upon by King Menelaus, Odysseus initially refused the call and feigned madness as he plowed his fields and sowed salt in an attempt to prove himself unfit for battle.

Beowulf's experience was strikingly different as he and his fellow Geats set out to assist Hrothgar and the Danes in their fight against Grendel. The Call for Beowulf stems from his allegiance to righteousness and his innate desire to honor his ancestors. Interestingly enough, Beowulf sought permission from his king who granted the warrior's wish to help Hrothgar's people.

Roy Hobbs, in *The Natural*, was "called up" to try out for the Chicago Cubs as a pitcher. Unfortunately, Roy never made it to Chicago and had to wait 16 years to get another opportunity to play in the majors. He had to postpone his dream of becoming the "best there ever was in the game".

Despite the differences in each myth's beginning, each hero was called to the adventure in which he embarked upon. It should be pointed out that Odysseus' immediate reaction was to avoid the Trojan War at all costs because he knew what was at stake. After all, he had just become a father and was content with his

life on Ithaca. He had a family, a kingdom and a life that was, in layman's terms, pretty darn good. This needs to be taken into account when comparing Beowulf and Hobbs to Odysseus. As far as we know, Beowulf was a bachelor and had no wife or children. Hobbs was also a bachelor and was young and eager to prove himself as a man. Despite the motivation or lack thereof, each of the three heroes embarked upon the journey in hopes of accomplishing great things: Odysseus would help bring down Troy, Beowulf would bring peace upon the land of the Geats, and Roy would become the greatest baseball player of all-time.

The significance of these actions when considering the social ramifications these myths would have had on their audience is something worth discussing. It can be agreed upon that Odysseus' reaction is one worthy of respect and admiration since he values his family and his kingdom more than personal glory, and showing allegiance to one's flesh and blood first and foremost is quite an honorable act. On the other hand, Odysseus did take an oath to assist Menelaus in defending his marriage rights if need be. Honoring one's promise is also an honorable act and Odysseus, through the words of Homer, cleverly achieves both.

Beowulf's desire to help those in need is inspiring and compassionate. After receiving permission, he and his fellow warriors set out and travel a great distance to destroy the beast that is wreaking havoc amongst Hrothgar's kingdom. His motivation for this heroic act stems from his commitment to honor one's ancestors and lend a helping hand if capable. Furthermore, readers would admire the courage it takes to take on an evil being such as Grendel. These endearing

qualities are what draw those in search of inspiration and hope to this Anglo-Saxon tale.

Hobbs' call to adventure is one of personal glory. He desires to be the best there ever was to play the game of baseball, a very lofty dream. Roy's confidence is impressive and should not be mistaken for arrogance. He has put in the work and the time to get this opportunity. One should not overlook the fact that he also possesses talent that was god-given. These qualities, although not as fantastic as our other two heroes, are desirable and valuable.

The Refusal of the Call is defined by Campbell as essentially a refusal to give up what one takes to be one's own interest (60). Odysseus refused the call for this very reason. He knew that battle meant risking his life, the life of his family and the people of Ithaca. Is it not expected that every human being concern themselves with self-preservation? In his defense, he had a son to look after. However, heroes are not just ordinary humans and it is expected of them to be true to their word regardless of what is at stake. This is why, after some rather persuasive tactics, Homer sends Odysseus to fight the Trojans and risk everything that is near and dear to his heart. That is what makes us respect and revere Odysseus. In essence, he valiantly fights at Troy for two reasons: to honor his fellow Greeks and to survive in order to return to his family and homeland alive. Like Beowulf's and Roy Hobbs', Odysseus' actions are noble, and each woman or man, whether in Ancient Greece, Medieval England or modern day America, should strive to emulate them in real life. Keep your word, love your family and face your fears head on are as relevant today as they were when Homer first told

*The Odyssey*. It is universal ideals like these here that buttress Campbell's monomyth and provide the support for the metaphorical bridge that must be constructed in order to fully digest the notion that all myths are interconnected.

Unfortunately, refusing the call, in some instances, comes with a heavy price. After defeating the Trojans, Odysseus endured a decade of peril and misfortune trying to return to Ithaca. It is said that Poseidon, god of the sea, was responsible for delaying Odysseus' return to his beloved Penelope and Telemachus. There is some speculation that if he had accepted the call wholeheartedly then his return home would have been swift and without delay. Other notable myths feature characters that have also been punished for refusing the call. In *Arabian Nights*, Prince Kamar al-Zaman refused his father King Shahrman's wish that he marry. As a result of his refusal, the king imprisoned his own son (Campbell 64-65). The aforementioned Luke Skywalker refused to go to Alderaan because he desperately needed to return home. Upon his return, Luke found his aunt and uncle dead. Despite their best efforts to elude fate, these three men eventually succumbed to the powers that be. According to Campbell, this is part of the grand plan: "These universal heroes, under many different guises and many different names, all undertake a similar journey regardless of the time or place in which they appear. The protagonist begins at home in what may be described as an immature state, goes on some kind of quest, and in the final stages comes home changed" (Brown 1). These three protagonists fit this description to the letter.

But what about those heroes that embrace the challenges laid before them as Beowulf and Roy did? Campbell calls this a pathology and states that if one of the basic elements of the archetypal pattern is omitted it "...is bound to be somehow or other implied-and the omission itself speaks volumes for the history and pathology of the example..." (38). The word "pathology" is defined as any deviation from the normal condition and Beowulf and Roy both deviate from Campbell's monomyth in this instance. Critics jump on this deviation and try to attack the validity of his monomyth theory by taking the term deviation out of context. Campbell is not saying that every heroic myth is identical in plot and action. There will be parts that differ or are omitted. However, as is evidenced by the vast amount of examples presented in *The Hero*, the monomyth theory, as a whole, is valid and applicable. Campbell even accounts for this possibility of *The Hero* as he introduces the next step in the journey: the Encounter with a Supernatural Aid. He writes, "For those who have not refused the call..." proving that he has permitted some freedom, although quite minimal, to his theory (69).

In *The Natural*, Coach Pop Fisher, an old grumpy man in his late sixties, serves as Roy's mentor in his quest to be the best in the game. According to monomyth theory, the first encounter of the hero-journey is with a protective figure (often a little old crone or old man) who provides the adventurer with amulets against the dragon forces he is about to pass (Campbell 69). In Roy's case, Pop, as he is affectionately called, guides the slugger with words of wisdom at times, and tough love at other points in Hobbs' journey. Once again, Roy's journey is in agreement with Campbell as evidenced by the following: "This

mentor provides courage and hope for success through the sharing of knowledge, wisdom and advice that enables the hero mentally, physically and spiritually. The hero is reaffirmed and now possesses what he once lacked to answer the call. He is ready” (73). It should be noted that in addition to Pop Fisher, Hobbs is provided another supernatural aid in the form of his wooden bat Wonderboy. Handmade from the very tree Roy’s father died by, Wonderboy is the only bat Roy uses during his journey (except when it splinters during his last at-bat). It appears that this magic bat, which Roy created, has divine qualities. What makes it even more interesting is that the very tree it was borne from was struck by lightning, an act that has been linked to divine thunder gods such as the Greeks’ Zeus, the Incas’ Apocatequil and the Norse’s Thor to name a few. This amulet, along with Pop’s guidance, seems to be what Roy needed to accomplish what he set out to do.

Before we examine the role of Supernatural Aid/Mentor in the *Beowulf* and *the Odyssey*, it should be noted that Malamud’s allegorical novel possesses striking similarities to the Arthurian legend of the Holy Grail. As Arthur had Excalibur, Roy had Wonderboy. Arthur was a Knight of the Round Table while Roy played for the New York Knights. Even more interesting is the last name Malamud gives Pop. Fisher, in terms of Arthurian legend, refers to the Fisher King. Although different versions exist, a common thread in the tale of the Fisher, or Maimed King, is that his injury can only be healed by the chosen one. In Malamud’s tale, Hobbs plays the role of the chosen one who is capable of healing

the emotional and psychological wounds that Pop Fisher has endured during his tenure as Knights' coach in pursuit of a trip to the World Series.

The young Geatish warrior was not as fortunate as Roy, at least not at first glance. Beowulf appears to be deficient of a supernatural aid as he appears to single-handedly defeat Grendel with his bare hands not requiring any weapon or divine intervention of any kind. However, in his second battle with Grendel's mother he uses an exceptional sword fit for a giant and employs it to slay the beast in her underwater lair. It should be noted that this sword did not accompany Beowulf into battle. This sword was discovered and used in desperation as Hrunting, the sword lent to Beowulf by Unferth, failed to inflict damage to the creature. Was this mere coincidence or maybe even dumb luck or was it fate running its course? Maybe a better way to analyze this event is to look at it in a different light and remove the superficial lens and replace it with a more meaningful one that sees beyond the surface. That sounds like something Campbell would agree to. So, what does this seemingly minor detail in the myth reveal to its reader? What boon does it bestow upon us? My perspective is this: it reveals that man should have faith even in the most dire of situations life puts us in. This may not be something we consciously consider when reading this passage of *Beowulf* but, as Campbell believes, we should not underestimate the power of our subconscious. He writes:

It would not be too much to say that myth is the secret opening through which the inexhaustible energies of the cosmos pour into human cultural manifestation. Religions, philosophies, arts, the social forms of primitive and historic man, prime discoveries in science and technology, the very dreams that blister sleep, boil up from the basic, magic ring of myth. The wonder is that the characteristic efficacy to touch and inspire deep creative

centers dwells in the smallest nursery fairy tale-as the flavor of the ocean is contained in a droplet or the whole mystery of life within the egg of a flea. For the symbols of mythology are not manufactured; they cannot be ordered, invented or permanently suppressed. They are spontaneous productions of the psyche, and each bears within it, undamaged, the germ power of its source (3).

Campbell continues his discussion on the power of the mind and the role myth plays in it. He believes that there is a distinct link between mythology and the human psyche and it is this connection that links all human beings and thus provides an explanation as to why the stories we create and read, regardless of who writes them, when or where they are written, all have a distinct, common structure. All this from a droplet of Beowulf. What is even more mind-boggling is that this “droplet”, this small event in the Anglo-Saxon myth that has provided the ammunition to make this point about how mythology can “touch and inspire deep creative centers” actually took place in a deep, dark cave.

The role of Supernatural Aid in *the Odyssey* is much more discernable in comparison to the other two myths because the relationship between man and the Greek gods and goddesses was an integral part of the Greek cultural tradition during Homer’s time. Odysseus benefits from divine intervention in the form of Athena, the goddess of wisdom, war and justice. It is she who watches over Odysseus and counsels him when appropriate: “I am Pallas Athena, daughter of Zeus, I that am always with you in times of trial, a shield to you in battle” (*Odyssey* 240). Athena helped Odysseus reclaim his kingdom by assisting him, Telemachus and the few loyal servants that remained in defeating the suitors. Yet, Athena’s involvement with Odysseus was not always positive. According to John Protevi, a French Studies professor at Louisiana State University, Athena was

indirectly responsible for the second set of trials Odysseus faced post-Troy. In response to the self-posed question, “After leaving Troy, why does he [Odysseus] get called to a second set of trials/adventures?”, Protevi states that it is because the Achaeans, as a group, did not make a sacrifice to the gods, which angered Athena so she made their homecoming difficult (Protevi 1). Campbell mentions the possibility of the mentor playing both sides of the coin: “Protective and dangerous, motherly and fatherly at the same time, this supernatural principle of guardianship and direction unites in itself all the ambiguities of the unconscious—thus signifying the support of our conscious personality by that other, larger system, but also the inscrutability of the guide that we are following, to the peril of all our rational ends” (73). Athena is mostly protective and dangerous yet she becomes dangerous when the Achaeans, Odysseus being one of them, disrespect the gods. Fortunately for Odysseus, he survives the punishment that his fellow Achaeans did not for he is fated to return home to Ithaca.

The fourth stage of the Departure is the Crossing of the First Threshold.

Campbell defines the Crossing in the following manner:

With the personifications of his destiny to guide and aid him, the hero goes forward in his adventure until he comes to the “threshold guardian” at the entrance to the zone of magnified power. Such custodians bound the world in the four directions—also up and down—standing for the limits of the hero’s present sphere, or life horizon. Beyond the darkness, the unknown, and danger; just as beyond the parental watch is danger to the infant and beyond the protection of his society danger to the member of the tribe (78).

In Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*, Frodo leaves the safety and security of the Shire to embark on his daunting journey to Mount Doom to destroy the ring. In his case, he elects to leave knowing his continued presence in the Shire puts all those who

reside in it in grave danger from the Nazgul. Thus, he crosses the First Threshold leaving the womb of his motherland and enters into the unknown. We humans are somewhat reluctant to enter the unknown whether it is in the form of leaving home for college, starting a new career or jumping out of a plane to skydive. Frodo's bravery is heroic as is the mother who gives birth for the first time or the fireman who enters a burning building. All three are unaware of what lies ahead yet somehow find the courage and strength to take on the challenge.

Another tale that captures the significance of the Crossing is that of Prince Five-weapons. According to Campbell, this prince, who was an earlier incarnation of the Future Buddha, possessed five great weapons he had obtained from his teacher and set out to return to his father the king. The story continues on:

On the way he came to a certain forest. People at the mouth of the forest warned him. 'Sir prince, do not enter this forest,' they said; 'an ogre lives here, named Sticky-hair; he kills every man he sees.' But the prince was confident and fearless as a maned lion. He entered the forest just the same. When he reached the heart of it, the ogre showed himself... 'Where are you going?' he demanded. 'Halt! You are my prey!' (Campbell 85-86).

Prince Five-weapons employed one weapon after another to take down the great monster but failed each time. Yet, the prince did not fear the ogre which perplexed the beast. Little did the ogre know that the prince possessed a sixth weapon known as the Weapon of Knowledge. Using the most powerful of all weapons, the prince subdued the ogre, enlightened him and as he exited the forest he shared his story to the people.

Roy's Crossing is not as clear cut. He initially leaves home for a tryout with the Cubs leaving a less than desirable life behind him. On the train to Chicago, Roy encounters the Whammer, the league's best hitter, and finds himself

in a three-pitch contest set up by his manager Sam. In heroic fashion, Roy strikes the Whammer out and as a result catches the eye of Harriet Bird, a murderous vixen. Before he gets to the tryout, Harriet shoots the young prospect in a hotel room. This is the Crossing, a failed one at that, as Roy succumbs to the evils of the unknown world in the form of Harriet. However, our hero resurrects sixteen years later and continues his quest to make it to the majors. The initial wound Roy suffers does not end him but changes him and his approach the second time around. Malamud does not elaborate on the chunk of time between the shooting and Roy's arrival in New York creating a canvas for the reader to paint his own conclusions. Regardless, we know Roy survives the initial attack and is back to try again. This act of courage is something all people value and hope to do in the face of adversity and this is yet another reason why heroic myths are able to span the globe. Furthermore, this is another example of why Campbell's monomyth theory is valid. Attention should also be given to the gender of the character that brings down Hobbs. Harriet fulfills the role of evil temptress much the same way Calypso and several other female characters do in *the Odyssey* (a more in-depth look concerning the role of the female in heroic mythology will take place at a later point).

Pinpointing the Threshold Guardian in Homer's epic is challenging due to the nature of Odysseus' journey. For starters, his adventure actually began in *the Iliad*. However, the text being discussed here is that of *The Odyssey*. It can be claimed that Tiresias, whom Odysseus encounters in the Kingdom of the Dead,

acts as Threshold Guardian, or at least one of them. After all, it is he who informs Odysseus of the dangers that lie ahead if he is to return to Ithaca:

A sweet smooth journey home, renowned Odysseus, that is what you seek but a god will make it hard for you-I know-you will never escape the one who shakes the earth, quaking with anger at you still, still enraged because you blinded the Cyclops, his dear son. Even so, you and your crew may still reach home, suffering all the way, if you only have the power to curb their wild desire and curb your own, what's more, from the day your good trim vessel first puts in at Thrinacia Island, flees the cruel blue sea (*Odyssey* 252-253).

The dead prophet continues explaining what lies ahead for the trek-battered hero even informing him of his own demise. The problem with making Tiresias the Threshold Guardian is chronological since he appears in the middle of Odysseus' journey. Another way to look at it is simply stating that Odysseus crossed the threshold into the unknown by making the conscious decision to step on the ship that was heading to Troy. There was no person to encounter other than himself. He knew that boarding the ship meant that he severed his connection with the safe, familiar surroundings home brings to us all and will now need to prepare for what lies ahead whatever that may be. It can even be concluded that there were several threshold guardians in *the Odyssey* due to the numerous adventures within the adventure. Campbell does not state that there can only be one threshold to cross. As time passes in a person's life he or she will be faced with many thresholds to cross not knowing what will come of it much in the same way as Odysseus has done. Campbell accounts for this variance in his monomyth theory:

[m]any tales isolate and greatly enlarge upon one or two of the typical elements of the full cycle (test motif, flight motif, abduction of the bride), others string a number of independent cycles into a single series (as in *the Odyssey*). Differing characters or episodes can become fused, or a single element can reduplicate itself and reappear under many changes (246).

In other words, Odysseus goes through several cycles of the Hero's Journey in *the Iliad* and the *Odyssey* while others may only focus on a single aspect of the cycle.

The traditional and straightforward threshold crossing for Beowulf occurs when he and his men are confronted by an armed Danish coast-guard right before they exit their ship. Yet, as Campbell attests, some myths reduplicate elements of the Hero's Journey and Beowulf is one of those myths. The King of the Geats crosses another version of Campbell's threshold prior to his last battle with the dragon. His prior two enemies did not present him with this opportunity since Beowulf was confident of what the outcome was to be. However, there is a sense that Beowulf knows that his journey will end soon as preparation for the battle with "the worm" occurs. From his first battle with Grendel, where only his bare hands were used, to the battle with the dragon, a progression towards external items to assist him are included in his repertoire. Beowulf trades in his wooden shield for an iron-clad replacement. In addition, the great warrior puts on a coat of armor to protect himself from the dragon's flames. The poet of the myth provides further evidence that Beowulf has his doubts about the upcoming clash in line 2327: "To the good king it was great anguish, pain deep in mind. The wise man had believed he had broken the old law; his breast welled with dark thoughts strange to his mind" (*Beowulf*). According to Harold Bloom, Beowulf even considered that the attack by the dragon on his people might be divine punishment for some sin he has committed (18).

Beowulf's encounter with the Threshold Guardian is non-traditional meaning he does not fear for his own personal safety. What the noble king does

fear is what will be the fate of his people upon his departure. It is this truth that separates Beowulf from most humans and this is yet another quality men and women from all walks of life would find impressive. The willingness to place the well-being of others before one's own is often discussed and slightly less often applied in everyday life. It is even rarer to hear about it occurring in a life-and-death scenario as in *Beowulf*, *the Odyssey* and numerous other tales of heroes.

The fifth and final stage of the Departure is dubbed by Campbell as the Belly of the Whale. To better illustrate the concept, assistance will be provided by *Pinocchio's* Monstro the whale. In the 1940 Disney classic, Pinocchio searches the sea to find his father Geppetto who has been swallowed up by Monstro the whale. After scouring the sea, the enraged beast captures Pinocchio and he and his father are trapped in the whale's belly facing the grim prospect of being digested. Heroic actions are needed and the wooden boy delivers devising a plan that ultimately results in the safety of Geppetto. However, during the escape from Monstro, Pinocchio's wooden body is found lifeless as he sacrifices himself (in similar fashion as Beowulf did) for the ones he loved. Fortunately, the Blue Fairy fulfills Pinocchio's wish of becoming a real boy and is brought back to life.

Campbell's description of the Belly is quite similar. Here's his take: "The idea that the passage of the magical threshold is a transit into a sphere of rebirth is symbolized in the worldwide womb image of the belly of the whale. The hero, instead of conquering or conciliating the power of the threshold, is swallowed in to the unknown, and would appear to have died" (90). Pinocchio set out to find his father and disregarded the safety of waiting it out safely ashore. He enters the

unknown world of the sea and literally enters a belly of a whale. He conquers the whale but his wooden body is destroyed in the process. It appeared he had died and in a way he did. However, he left his wooden body and was reborn as a real living boy. What Campbell is saying is that once the hero crosses the threshold and enters the belly his former self no longer exists as he or she will be forever changed going forward from this point on in his or her life much in the same way as Pinocchio's life changed after he entered Monstro's belly only to come out to bestow the great boon of life onto his fellow man, or in this case, his father Geppetto.

Other examples that provide further evidence of the prevalence of Campbell's Belly of the Whale throughout the world's mythology are discussed in *the Hero*. He recalls the Zulu story of two children and their mother who are swallowed up by an elephant: "When the woman reached the animal's stomach, 'she saw large forests and great rivers, and many high lands; on one side there were many rocks; and there were many people who had built their village there; and many dogs and many cattle; all was there inside the elephant'" (Callaway 331). It appears that in this Zulu myth everything that the mother needed resided inside the elephant's stomach. The question that remains is how is this to be interpreted? Is it meant to illustrate the idea that all one requires to live lies within the individual's decision to enter the unknown in order to be reborn? To take it another step further, are the Zulus, and Campbell for that matter, trying to reveal that when we are brave enough to cross the threshold and enter the belly it is then that we will find what we have been seeking and as a result of the discovery our

old selves will cease to exist? It is a logical conclusion and should be considered. Campbell comments on this stating that “the temple interior, the belly of the whale, and the heavenly land beyond, above, and below the confines of the world are one and the same” (92).

In addition, to the Zulu story, there is Christianity’s Jonah and the Whale, Ireland’s Finn MacCool, Germany’s Red Ridinghood, Polynesia’s Maui and Greece’s Kronos which all possess similar Belly of the Whale versions. So where do our three heroes encounter the Belly of the Whale in their journeys? There are two possibilities for Beowulf, the first being the dragon’s lair and the second being the underwater cave of Grendel’s mother. Both locations fit the physical description of what the belly could resemble. It should be noted that the Belly of the Whale does not always have to be a physical location. For example, Yvette K. Khoury elaborates on the different types of “bellies” in her *Literature-Film Quarterly* article, “To Be or Not to Be in ‘The Belly of the Whale’: A Reading of Joseph Campbell’s ‘Modern Hero’ Hypothesis in *Hamlet* on Film”-where she argues that the director “Zeffirelli uses the hollow darkness of a lifeless space as ‘The Belly of the Whale’ as opposed to the psychoanalytical reading of Olivier’s Hamlet, who prompts a darkness of the mind for his” (3).

In *Beowulf*, however, the belly is a physical locale. An argument can be made for the dragon’s lair as it meets the physical demands of the belly. It is also the place where Beowulf’s physical life ends and where his legend begins. Furthermore, the great warrior’s doubt of the outcome leads the reader to believe he is uncertain of what will happen, thus meeting Campbell’s definition of being

swallowed into the unknown. Campbell also states that “once inside [the belly] he[the hero] may be said to have died to time and returned to the World Womb, the World Navel, the Earthly Paradise” (92).

Grendel’s mother’s cave is another possibility for *Beowulf’s* Belly of the Whale and is the more commonly accepted of the two proposed here. Located in the depths of the dark and isolated swamp, the cave itself is unknown to Beowulf. Yet, he enters it with confidence and in the end comes out not only the victor but a changed man as well. This change can be looked at as the symbolic death of the great Geatish warrior who existed prior to the battle. Fidel Fajardo-Acosta agrees that a metamorphosis takes place in Grendel’s mother’s cave. Yet, he believes the change is of an evil nature. In his book *The Condemnation of Heroism in the Tragedy of Beowulf*, Fajardo-Acosta argues that “the battle with Grendel’s mother represents the initiation of Beowulf into full-fledged Cain-gianthood, and into the status of demonic being”. He continues stating, “At the same time, his former self, his gentle humanity, suffers an irrevocable blow which effectively constitutes the death of Beowulf the man at the hands of Beowulf the monster”(83-84). I agree that a change occurs but feel that it is not one of evil but of prowess. Grendel’s mother is the evil one and is demonic in nature, killing innocent people as a result of her rage that resulted from her child’s death. Beowulf slays her to protect those surviving men and women who escaped her offspring’s bloodthirsty attacks.

After a heartfelt farewell, Beowulf and the Geats return home and share their adventures as well as their booty with King Hygelac. Pleased with the outcome and impressed by the actions of Beowulf, Hygelac rewards the hero with

a golden sword, the most prized possession amongst their people. In addition to the gift, Beowulf receives the distinction of Lord. As a result of his bravery in this initial Belly of the Whale, Beowulf has made his country and his king proud and has created a reputation that will eventually lead him to the rank of king. His actions have given birth to a new life that is well-deserved for the heroic deeds he has performed.

The Kingdom of the Dead is the primary landscape for *The Odyssey's* Belly of the Whale portion of the Hero's Journey. It is here where the brave Odysseus must enter leaving his foolish yet loyal soldiers behind in search of Tiresias. Fear was prevalent in the heart of Odysseus as it would be for any man to walk through hell as a mortal man. The hero recounts the experience:

I took the victims, over the trench I cut their throats and dark blood flowed in-and up out of Erebus they came, flocking toward me now, the ghosts of the dead and gone...Brides and unwed youths and old men who had suffered much and girls with their tender hearts freshly scarred by sorrow and great armies of battle dead, stabbed by bronze spears, men of war still wrapped in bloody armor-thousands swarming around the trench from every side-unearthly cries-blanching terror gripped me! (Homer 250).

Yet, the brave Greek treaded on, finding the dead prophet and with him the knowledge of the grim trials that lay ahead for not only himself but for his men as well.

Another Belly of the Whale experience that can be found in *The Odyssey* occurs with Odysseus' encounter with Polyphemus. Trapped in the Cyclops' cave, Odysseus and his men fear that their days are numbered. The wily Odysseus devises a clever plan that allows him and his men to escape while blinding

Poseidon's one-eyed kin. Although the hero succeeds in besting the beast, his vicious action against the Cyclops does not go unnoticed by the gods.

For Hobbs, the Belly of the Whale comes to the reader in the form of revelation. For 15 years the slugger had never told another about his tragic past until his date with Iris Lemon. Roy was frightened to divulge the events of that day and it had been an obstacle that had stood in the way of his journey. When asked by Iris what happened, Roy, feeling an urge to cry, says, "I was just a kid and I got shot by this batty dame on the night before my tryout, and after that I just couldn't get started again. I lost my confidence and everything I did flopped" (Malamud 234). In this case, the hero has experienced a setback in the belly and struggled to get back on his feet to continue the journey. Heroically, Roy finds the strength to give his dream another shot after an extended period of time of what might have been a combination of self-reflection and self-pity. The innocent Roy Hobbs that existed before the tragic night in the hotel room died after being shot. An older, braver Hobbs now continues his quest to become the best baseball player the game has ever seen. Unfortunately, our tragic hero fails to learn from his previous mistakes leading to his ultimate failure in his last at-bat of his career.

The Belly of the Whale in *The Natural* comes in the form of Harriet Bird, a disturbed woman who attempts to kill the best professional baseball player of her time for reasons unknown. Strikingly different when compared to *Beowulf's* Belly of the Whale scenario, Hobbs enters Harriet's hotel room expecting sex. He, as does Beowulf, makes a conscious decision to enter. However, Beowulf is aware of the possible dangers within the belly and prepares accordingly while

Hobbs is unaware of what he will actually encounter in Harriet's room. Hobbs is blind-sided by the bullet and it takes him 15 years to get back in the game while Beowulf conquers his enemy and saves the day. Therefore, can it be concluded that Beowulf is more of a hero than Roy or just a different one? Do heroes have to slay dragons and defeat evil on the first try or are they allowed some room for error? I believe that one of the criteria to be a heroic fictional character is that one has to overcome great odds in the face of adversity for the greater good. Hobbs achieves this, although in a less traditional way when compared to the likes of Beowulf. Roy's is a more contemporary heroic act of getting back on your feet when life knocks you down and therefore could be more meaningful to modern day readers. Yet, there is no love lost when considering the physical strength, superior intelligence and overall "bad ass-ness" that both Beowulf and Odysseus possess. All three are heroes in their own right, just in different ways.

Perhaps it might be best to share Jeffrey Helterman's perspective on Beowulf in order to further analyze the aforementioned notion that he is a hero amongst heroes. In his essay "*Beowulf: The Archetype Enters History*," Helterman feels that Beowulf fulfills a dual role. He writes:

Myth, in its most general sense, provides a link between the eternal and the human, as manifested in the human. That is to say about Beowulf what is readily apparent: he is more than a man and yet no more than a man. Under this double aspect, Beowulf can surpass man's tragic limitations and yet is involved in them. Myths fuse the world of actuality with the world of desire or in psychological terms, the dream world with the waking one (2).

Helterman feels that Beowulf, despite his superhuman abilities and accomplishments, is still, at times, just a man like everyone else. Furthermore, he

sees the connection between myth and the real world in much the same light as Campbell did. Myth allows man to “accomplish” what he only dreamt of accomplishing in real life or aspires to accomplish some day. What I mean by “accomplish” is that the reader is able to project himself or herself into the myth or into the hero while reading or hearing or seeing the myth unfold right before his or her ears, his or her mind and eyes. In this action, the myth and all of its pertinent parts awaken the subconscious realms of the reader’s soul linking what Helterman calls the world of actuality with the world of desire. Campbell talks of the importance of dreams and provides a plethora of dream analyses in *The Hero* that he uses throughout the book to show the relationship between myth and dream. Campbell professes that “Myth is related to dream as the deeper zones of the sea to the shallows. In myth, as in dream, it is the secret of the inner world that comes to us...” (Larsen 7). Hence, it can be concluded that the relationship between our inner desires and our everyday selves is somehow enhanced by the power that lies within the mythology of our world.

### Chapter III: Initiation

Once the hero has passed through the Belly of the Whale he or she must now proceed down The Road of Trials which is the beginning of the Initiation.

This long, arduous journey is defined by Campbell in the following passage:

Once having traversed the threshold, the hero moves in a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where he must survive a succession of trials. This is a favorite phase of the myth-adventure. It has produced a world literature of miraculous tests and ordeals. The hero is covertly aided by the advice, amulets, and secret agents of the supernatural helper whom he met before his entrance into this region. Or it may be that he here discovers for the first time that there is a benign power everywhere supporting him in his superhuman passage (97).

As mentioned by Campbell, the Road of Trials is one of the most favorite segments of the Hero's Journey because it is where we get to see the hero in action employing the superpowers that he has been blessed with. Some myths, like *The Odyssey*, are filled with these trials from start to finish. Others are simplified having just one battle, one obstacle or one enemy to overcome.

Of the three heroic myths under analysis in this essay, *The Natural* is the least vicious. It does not contain the slaying of monster-beasts in the literal sense yet is a more civilized, modern tale of a Midwestern baseball player who wields a wooden bat instead of a large metal sword. Yes, he does face 95 mile-per-hour fastballs, nasty breaking balls and the occasional spitball. However, Roy's greatest trial lies within himself and his intense desire to be the best in the game. Along the way, he encounters evil creatures in the forms of Harriet Bird, Memo Paris, Max Mercy, Gus Sands and the Judge. After being gunned down by Bird, Roy spends the next 15 years getting back into the game and eventually gets his shot in major league baseball with the lowly New York Knights. This can be

viewed as his first trial post-Harriet. Roy then faces the challenge of getting into the lineup ahead of Bump Bailey, the current Knights' right fielder. This is accomplished after Bailey's death in which he died from injuries endured in a collision with the right field fence in pursuit of a fly ball. Roy took full advantage of this opportunity and became the talk of the town with his clutch hitting and powerful swing that helped lead the Knights back into the hunt for the pennant.

His next trial once again involved a woman by the name of Memo Paris. Her seductive charms began to corrupt the slugger as she intended since she was "in cahoots" with the Judge and Gus Sands. As their relationship continued, Roy began to slump and Pop Fisher's team was headed back to the cellar. Enter Iris Lemon, the lady in the red dress who stands in the crowd refusing to see the slugger fail. Her presence in Roy's life gets him and the Knights back on track and eventually within one game of the pennant. It is this dilemma between the two women where Roy shows one of his few weaknesses. Superman's was kryptonite and Roy's was women. Roy's tragic flaw is his inability to make the right decisions when it comes to relationships. He chooses the sexy, sultry Memo over the young grandmother Iris which ultimately leads to his downfall.

Campbell states that during the Road of Trials the hero is provided with advice from the supernatural helper that will aid him in overcoming the trial(s) that lie ahead. Malamud supplies Roy with this help in the form of Pop Fisher. When Pop finds out Roy is seeing Memo he advises the slugger not to pursue a relationship with her. Pop says to Roy, "What I started to say is that although she is not really a bad person, yet she is unlucky and always has been and I think that

there is some kind of whammy in her that carries her luck to other people. That's why I would like you to watch out and not get too tied up with her" (Malamud 186). Yet Roy fails to heed Pop's advice and pursues her anyway. In the end, Roy makes an immoral decision to "throw the last game" in order to acquire enough money to permit he and Memo to get married. Although he does not go through with it after learning that Iris is pregnant with his child, Roy seems to be doomed for his less than admirable actions and strikes out in his final at-bat. Much in the same manner as Odysseus, it appears Roy is punished by the greater powers that be for his hubris.

What is the reason for Roy's downfall? Was it simply just his fault or were there other powers at play? Accordingly to Ronald V. Evans, Roy's flawed approach to women is a result of his negative relationship with his mother. He writes:

Roy Hobbs' rite of passage has also been seen as an interrupted maturation process in which he remains in what Grief has called 'the eternal child' role, seeking only the vital energies of life in his compulsive response to both Harriet Bird and Memo Paris, while he rejects Iris Lemon, who is limited by her association with time and death. Malamud has constructed a marvelous metaphor of childhood passing to maturity, but flawed in the process by an inability to give up comfortable certainties associated with the mother (225).

What Evans is saying is that Roy's past negatively impacts his decisions with women because although he has matured into a man in the physical sense, the absence of a true mother figure as an adolescent steers him away from women like Iris and towards dangerous "dames" like Memo and Harriet. Evans continues his discussion about Roy's upbringing:

His father has abandoned him to the nurturing and control of his mother, whom Roy considers 'a whore'. She holds him back from baseball as long as she can. But his father has also left him with the injunction 'to be the best there ever was in the game.' Faced with such a dichotomous background, Roy can be seen as the prototype of family-romance characters, in part rejecting his matriarchal bond, but not its sensual nature, and in part accepting the patriarchal challenge, but not its stern asceticism. Roy splits himself into the gifted athlete with a strong sense of competition (animus traits) and a lustful lothario with a penchant for shallow women (anima traits) (225).

This dichotomous background Evans speaks of is only presented in piecemeal but never elaborated upon by Malamud. This is quite unfortunate because Hobbs' Road of Trials began way before the start of the novel. Despite his best efforts to put it behind him, Roy's past catches up with him leaving him with an inadequate set of Campbell's so-called amulets to overcome the Road of Trials as an adult. In retrospect, Roy's parents could have possibly been the supernatural helpers he needed then *and* now.

Odysseus' upbringing can be assumed to be quite different and much more positive than Roy's and does not have a negative impact on how he deals with his Road of Trials. *The Odyssey* is brimming with numerous ordeals of heroic deeds that Odysseus overcomes time and time again. After conquering Troy, he and his men set out to return to their native Ithaca. Yet, the gods have other plans in mind and it is on the island of the Cicones that Odysseus comes across his first of many trials. Odysseus recounts the ordeal to the Phaeacians:

The wind drove me out of Ilium on to Ismarus, the Cicones' stronghold. There I sacked the city, killed the men, but as for the wives and plunder, that rich haul we dragged away from the place—we shared it round so no one, not on my account, would go deprived of his fair share of spoils. Then I urged them to cut and run, set sail, but would they listen? Not those mutinous fools; there was too much wine to swill, too many sheep to slaughter down along the beach, and shambling longhorn cattle. And all

the while the Cicones sought other Cicones, called for help from their neighbors lining inland: a larger force, and stronger soldiers too, skilled hands at fighting men from chariots, skilled, when a crisis broke, to fight on foot. Out of the morning mist they came against us-packed as the leaves and spears that flower forth in spring-and Zeus presented us with disaster, me and my comrades to suffer blow on mortal blow (Homer 213).

Miraculously, Odysseus eludes the Cicones' attack and gets back to his ship along with a handful of his men. From there they travel the Mediterranean enduring encounters with the Cyclops, the Witch Circe and a few other minor bumps in the road until they visit the Land of the Dead. It is here where Odysseus learns of the path he must take in order to see his Penelope again and it goes through Scylla and Charybdis. He alone escapes death and is left adrift at sea where he washes ashore on Calypso's island.

Exhausted, the King of Ithaca finds comfort and rest on the island and falls under the spell of the nymph. He is held captive by Calypso for seven years. Enter the supernatural helper Athena, the goddess who was partly responsible for Odysseus' long and arduous Road of Trials, who, with the permission of her father Zeus, releases Odysseus from Calypso's grip. The question that arises at this point in the hero's Road of Trials is this: what role does Athena play in terms of Campbell's definition? She has assisted Odysseus before (in the Battle of Troy for example) and pleads for his release. However, she, along with other gods, makes the journey back home much more difficult. Campbell talks of a benign power that supports the hero in his superhuman passage. Is that benign power fate or Zeus, or are they one and the same? Regardless of how the role of fate is perceived, Odysseus washes ashore on the island of Scheria, home to the

Phaeacian people, and it is here that he assumes a similar role to Homer and recounts his extensive wanderings.

Yet, the Road of Trials does not conclude there. Upon his return to Ithaca, Odysseus is faced with the mighty challenge of dealing with the many suitors who have been trying to take his kingdom. With the help of Eumaeus, the most loyal of Odysseus' men, and his son Telemachus, the King of Ithaca takes back his throne after successfully passing Penelope's test of the Great Bow (and slaughtering the suitors). A comparison can be made here of Odysseus' journey and a dream that Campbell shares in *The Hero*. Campbell uses a dream explained in Wilhelm Stekel's 1911 publication *Die Sprache des Traumes*:

I am dreaming that I have to go through endless corridors. Then I remain for a long time in a little room that looks like the bathing pool in the public baths. They compel me to leave the pool, and I have to pass again through a moist, slippery shaft, until I come through a little latticed door into the open. I feel like one newly born, and I think: 'This means a spiritual rebirth for me, through my analysis' (286).

The "endless corridors" of this dreamer are reminiscent of Odysseus' Road of Trials. What is even more striking is that when the dreamer navigates his way through these corridors he then comes upon another location where he remains for a long period of time. This could be linked to Odysseus' stay with Calypso or even his encounter with the Phaeacians. The term "they" could refer to the Greek gods as they too compel Odysseus to leave Calypso's island en route to Ithaca. Furthermore, the dreamer, after getting through all previous obstacles is faced with yet another one as Odysseus is upon setting foot on his home soil. Eventually, like the dreamer, Odysseus is reborn into a new life with a new perspective. Yes, this could be looked at as a mere coincidence. Yet, it provides

evidence that Campbell's take on dreams has a place in mythology. After all, it is only in our imaginations where we can assume different forms, take on dragons and fly through the air unassisted. I believe Campbell sees that our dreams are subconscious explanations of our desires, needs and fears. Myths like *The Odyssey* allow us to (1) experience these things in a conscious state of mind and (2) provide us with the tools that color our imagination and provide us with ideas that artistically paint and sculpt our dreams.

Richard Chase's perspective on Campbell's work concerning mythology and psychoanalysis would be fitting to share here. Chase writes:

Now there is a momentous analogy between the Oedipus myth and the dream of a man that one day he was shingling the roof, dropped a hammer on his father's head, killed him, and was comforted by his mother. Dreams are collections of fragmentary private symbols which can often be interpreted by clinical analysis. But a myth! What is it if not an artistic construction, a piece of literature operating in the open air, controlled by the conscious minds of poets, mirroring the individual or society which produced it, and bearing strongly upon the intellectual, moral, and cultural life form of man? I see no reason for studying myth at a lower rate of expectancy, since any other approach inevitably reduces myth to a fragment of its whole possibility-whether we think of myth as the ritual of the dying god, the mirror of the 'white goddess,' or, with Mr. Campbell, the iconography of the hero who, in Tonybee's words, 'withdraws and returns' in order to achieve spiritual transfiguration and save his people (18).

Chase believes myths should be interpreted much the same way as dreams are. He feels that myths possess the potential to reveal things about the society of the author, the author himself and the reader that may go unnoticed or are left undiscovered or unexamined. When people analyze their dreams (and myths) they unearth truths in much the same manner that an archaeologist does on a

prehistoric dig in some remote landscape. Campbell himself practices this theory in his personal life. Here's an example:

Even more important than the integration of Freudian and Jungian approaches to his own inner life, however, was another practice that Joseph and Jean developed during [the] early years of their marriage: sharing the night's dreams at breakfast. In this way, the couple was able to address certain areas of incompatibility manifested in the dream imagery. For example, on one night they noticed that the dreams of each had some expression of resentment toward the other. By looking into the specific nature of the resentments, rather than acting them out, they were able to take measures to avert them (Larsen 10).

As Campbell benefited from his and his wife's dream analysis, we too as readers of myth can benefit not only from the entertainment fairytales and myths provide but myth analysis enables us to tap into the inner realms of ourselves permitting us to discover the things that make us tick. Aside from the self-revealing byproducts of this approach, a greater, less selfish action, as described by Chase, is possible. He writes, "The study of myth continues to be the least rational of the humanities. Joseph Campbell, coauthor of 'A Skeleton Key to Finnegans Wake,' now comes forward with an amiably befuddled volume the purpose of which is to discover the 'secret' truths concealed in myths and to apply these truths to our desperate modern situation" (17). It is through myth that we can learn about ourselves as well as our fellow man. The knowledge acquired should be used to improve the condition of not only the individual but that of our tribe, town, community, nation and world.

Beowulf believed in this approach and was willing to fight three great beasts in order to save the lives of many. His Road of Trials is much less cumbersome than Odysseus' as Beowulf follows the rule of threes. As mentioned

before, he first engages in fisticuffs with Grendel. Next up is Grendel's Mother who proves to be more of a challenge for the hero of Geats. During this battle, Beowulf utilizes both weapon and armor to prevail, beheading the beast. It then appeared that he would live out his days in Sweden as the King of the Geats. However, his Road of Trials concludes with his death in a battle with a dragon. Despite successfully killing the beast, Beowulf eventually succumbs to the wounds inflicted during the epic brawl. Upon his death bed, Beowulf displays great courage and character. Judy King writes, "As Beowulf lies dying, he focuses in his restraint, especially in relation to staying within his own borders, keeping only what is rightfully his, refraining both from feuding [with humans] and from swearing oaths which he did not intend to keep" (239). Each one of his achievements serves as a template for those in power including governments past and present. Beowulf serves as a model citizen for all people since he is a hero that possesses great abilities with both his sword *and* his heart. *Beowulf* should be a mandatory read for all modern day presidents and politicians in hopes that his civilized approach to leadership would become contagious.

Once the hero safely navigates the Road, the next step in the Hero's Journey is a Meeting with the Goddess. Campbell defines it as the "ultimate adventure" for the hero to experience. Here's his definition: "[The Meeting with the Goddess] is commonly represented as a mystical marriage of the triumphant hero-soul with the Queen Goddess of the World. This is the crisis at the nadir, the zenith, or at the uttermost edge of the earth, at the central point of the cosmos, in the tabernacle of the temple, or within the darkness of the deepest chamber of the

heart” (109). As is customary, Campbell elaborates on this stage in the journey with mythical examples. One of interest is of the young sportsman Actaeon and his encounter with Diana whom Campbell describes as “chaste and terrible”.

Here’s an abridged version of the tale told through Campbell:

Actaeon chanced to see the dangerous goddess at noon; that fateful moment when the sun breaks in its youthful, strong ascent, balances, and beings the mighty plunge to death. He had left his companion to rest...and without conscious purpose had gone wandering, straying from his familiar hunting groves and fields, exploring through the neighboring woods. He discovered a vale, thick grown with cypress and pine. He penetrated curiously into its fastness...This shaded nook was the resort of Diana, and at that moment she was bathing among her nymphs, absolutely naked...When the young, roving male broke into the pleasant haunt, a shriek of female terror went up, and all the bodies crowded about their mistress, trying to hide her from the profane eye. But she stood above them, head and shoulders. The youth had seen, and was continuing to see. She glanced for her bow, but it was out of reach, so she quickly took up what was at hand, namely water, and flung it into Actaeon’s face. ‘Now you are free to tell, if you can,’ she cried at him angrily, ‘that you have seen the goddess nude’ (111-12).

What transpired thereafter was quite tragic. Actaeon turned into a deer, was hunted down by his own dogs and fellow companions and was slaughtered, all to the appeasement of Diana. Unfortunately for Actaeon, his journey ended there.

The clarity of what the Meeting with the Goddess is supposed to entail (based on the two previous explanations) may still be unclear. Enter Liz Warren, professor of Humanities at South Mountain Community College in Phoenix. Her version of what the Meeting with the Goddess entails is defined here:

The meeting with the goddess represents the point in the adventure when the person experiences a love that has the power and significance of the all-powerful, all encompassing, unconditional love that a fortunate infant may experience with his or her mother. It is also known as the "hieros gamos", or sacred marriage, the union of opposites, and may take place entirely within the person. In other words, the person begins to see him or

herself in a non-dualistic way. This is a very important step in the process and is often represented by the person finding the other person that he or she loves most completely. Although Campbell symbolizes this step as a meeting with a goddess, unconditional love and /or self unification it does not have to be represented by a woman (1).

Warren sheds light on this segment by providing an alternate explanation that, when combined with Campbell's, provides a solid explanation of what the Meeting with the Goddess entails. The reason Actaeon met his maker in such a gruesome way is because his motivation for pursuing Diana was not pure but animalistic. Campbell states:

The goddess guardian of the inexhaustible well-whether as Fergus, or as Actaeon, or as the Prince of the Lonesome Isle discovered her-requires that the hero should be endowed with what the troubadours and minnesingers termed the 'gentle heart'. Not by the animal desire of an Actaeon, not by the fastidious revulsion of such as Fergus, can she be comprehended and rightly served, but only by gentleness... (118).

He continues stating that "the meeting with goddess is the final test of the talent of the hero to win the boon of love, which is life itself enjoyed as the encasement of eternity" (118). Of the three heroes that have been under analysis up to this point, Beowulf comes closest to displaying a "gentle heart" yet he does not do it for a single woman but for an entire nation of people. Hobbs' appears to possess flashes of it as well yet his encounters with Harriet and Memo are reminiscent of Actaeon's. When it comes to Odysseus, he actually encounters several goddesses including Circe en route to returning to his Penelope. It can be argued that Penelope views her husband as having a "gentle heart" yet some critics would challenge this claim. As readers, those who have watched from afar during his quest, we know of Odysseus' sexual conquests with Circe. Here's an excerpt from *The Odyssey*:

[Circe spoke] 'Come, sheath your sword, let's go to bed together, mount my bed and mix in the magic work of love-we'll breed deep trust between us.' So she enticed but I [Odysseus] fought back, still wary. 'Circe, Circe, how dare you tell me to treat you with any warmth? You who turned my men into swine in your own house and now you hold me here as well-teeming with treachery you lure me to your room to mount your bed, so once I lie there naked you'll unman me, strip away my courage! Mount your bed? Not for all the world. Not until you consent to swear, goddess, a binding oath you'll never plot some new intrigue to harm me!' Straightway she began to swear the oath that I required-never, she'd never do me harm-and when she'd finished, then, at last, I mounted Circe's gorgeous bed... (240-241).

Is this the gentle heart of a hero who claims to love his wife yet sleeps with another? Some would say no. Yet, it does appear that Odysseus agrees to have sex with Circe in order to save himself and his men from any further detriment. By Campbell's definition, Odysseus is somewhat sympathetic and displays charity by giving himself to Circe as a means of guaranteeing safe passage for him and his crew. The waters are murky when one goes fishing for the truth about Odysseus' legacy as honest, loyal hero. Despite this, he does return home to his Penelope, his lifelong love, and therefore this can be another Meeting with the Goddess.

To better understand the next step of the Hero's Journey, Woman as the Temptress, Warren will be used again:

At one level, this step is about those temptations that may lead the hero to abandon or stray from his or her quest, which as with the Meeting with the Goddess does not necessarily have to be represented by a woman. For Campbell, however, this step is about the revulsion that the usually male hero may feel about his own fleshy/earthy nature, and the subsequent attachment or projection of that revulsion to women. Woman is a metaphor for the physical or material temptations of life, since the hero-knight was often tempted by lust from his spiritual journey (1).

This stage does not apply to Beowulf as he does not show distaste for his earthly nature nor does he concede to any female temptation in his journey. He is a

confident, strong man who has faith in himself and rarely shows any doubt (except in preparing for the battle with the dragon). Furthermore, Beowulf does not waiver in the tasks that lie before him but does meet them head on with an envious courage. An argument could be made that Beowulf was tempted to conquer Grendel and Grendel's Mother in order to obtain material possessions. Bloom states that by risking his life, Beowulf can win honor and fame-which, it was believed, was the only thing that endured beyond this ephemeral life (Bloom 10-11). This fame Beowulf sought is neither physical nor material so this is an argument that fizzles out rather quickly.

Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for Mr. Hobbs. Twice he is tempted by women and twice is he bitten by their seductive charms resulting in the derailment of his then-present course. There, too, is a subtle notion of self-doubt throughout the book as Roy knows that no matter what he tries to do, things will never quite workout in the end. As mentioned earlier, this could relate back to the dynamics of his great disdain for his mother which correlates with Campbell's Woman as the Temptress theory. His revulsion for his own mother due to his past directly and negatively affects him in his present. In other words, Roy's poor choice in women, which by no stretch of the imagination is quite poor, is a result of his conscious and/or subconscious perception of his own birth mother.

Campbell touches on how women, among other things, can impact the hero's soul:

But when it suddenly dawns on us, or is forced to our attention, that everything we think or do is necessarily tainted with the odor of the flesh, then, not uncommonly, there is experienced a moment of revulsion: life,

the acts of life, the organs of life, woman in particular as the great symbol of life, become intolerable to the pure, the pure, pure soul (122).

As a result of the disconnect from his mother, Roy's soul is in disarray and makes him susceptible to the temptations of the evil Bird and Paris. Campbell feels it necessary to point out flaws, shortcomings and failures in myth and in life:

The whole sense of the ubiquitous myth of the hero's passage is that it shall serve as a general pattern for men and women, wherever they may stand along the scale. Therefore it is formulated in the broadest terms. The individual has only to discover his own position with reference to this general human formula, and let it then assist him past his restricting walls. Who and where are his ogres? Those are the reflections of the unsolved enigmas of his own humanity. What are his ideals? Those are the symptoms of his grasp of life (121).

This is why myth has sustained itself in the social fabric for eons. It allows us to improve our own self through conscious reflection during *and* after the tale we read or hear. We are all storytellers who can learn from the stories of others regardless of their real and unreal origin. For Roy, he does not quite find the answer to Campbell's question about ogres in time. This fact may motivate readers to avoid making the same mistakes as Hobbs did. He, therefore, serves a purpose that goes beyond mere entertainment.

*The Odyssey* contains several women who fit the mold for Woman as Temptress in much the same way as it does for Meeting with the Goddess. In fact, the two crossover and meld together quite well. As discussed earlier, Circe fulfills the role of Goddess. She also is seen as a temptress who distracts Odysseus from his original quest. Another goddess that tempts Odysseus is Calypso. After holding him "captive" (in a less than convincing way) for seven long years Zeus, at the request of Athena, sends the messenger god Hermes to inform Calypso that

she must free the man. Disgruntled and angry, she informs the mortal hero yet makes one final attempt to keep him on her island:

Good luck to you, even so. Farewell! But if you only knew, down deep, what pains are fated to fill your cup before you reach that shore, you'd stay right here, preside in our house with me and be immortal. Much as you long to see your wife, the one you pine for all your days...and yet I just might claim to be nothing less than she, neither in face nor figure. Hardly right, is it, for a mortal woman to rival immortal goddess? How, in build? In beauty? 'Ah great goddess,' worldly Odysseus answered, 'don't be angry with me, please. All that you say is true, how well I know. Look at my wise Penelope. She falls far short of you, your beauty, stature. She is mortal after all and you, you never age or die... Nevertheless I long-I pine, all my days-to travel home and see the dawn of my return (Homer 158-159).

Her last ditch attempt to tempt the great Greek hero fails as he is determined to see his homeland, his wife and his son once again.

Another temptress appears in the Greek myth when Odysseus encounters the Sirens in Book 12. Circe informed Odysseus that he and his men would encounter the singing women and warned him of their great wooing powers. As advised, he filled his men's ears with beeswax but none for him as he was to endure the Sirens himself and, if needed, he was to be tied down to the mast of the ship to prevent him from being lured in. Odysseus recounts the experience:

We were just offshore as far as a man's shout can carry, scudding close, when the Sirens sensed at once a ship was racing past and burst into their high, thrilling song: 'Come closer, famous Odysseus-Achaea's pride and glory-moor your ship on our coast so you can hear our song! Never has any sailor passed our shores in his black craft until he has heard the honeyed voices pouring from our lips, and once he hears to his heart's content sails on, a wiser man (Homer 277).

Yet, once again, Odysseus stays the course and continues onward narrowly escaping the mighty force that is the Sirens.

A shift in the Hero's Journey occurs after temptation is eluded. The role of the father now takes center stage in what Campbell calls the Atonement with the Father. In this step of the Hero's Journey, the hero must make amends with the father figure or one that possesses immense power. Campbell uses Jonathan Edwards' *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* to illustrate the concept. In his 1742 rant, Edwards attempts to instill fear into his New England congregation by pointing out, in rather redundant fashion, the wrath God will cast down on those who sin. Here is an example:

The Bow of God's Wrath is bent, and the Arrow made ready on the String; and Justice bends the Arrow at your Heart, and strains the Bow; and it is nothing but the mere Pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any Promise or Obligation at all, that keeps the Arrow one Moment from being drunk with your Blood... (Campbell 126).

In this case, the father is the almighty God and his children are the people of the congregation. According to Edwards, those who have sinned, have thought about sinning or who will sin in the future will face the wrath of their spiritual father and will be "swallowed up in everlasting Destruction." According to Campbell, Edwards went a bit over the top in describing the father figure. He says that "the magic of the sacraments, the protective power of primitive amulets and charms, and the supernatural helpers of the myths and fairy tales of the world, are mankind's assurances that the arrow, the flames, and the flood are not as brutal as they seem" (129). Thus, the hero must address the "ogre aspect of the father" in order to move forward in his quest. Campbell claims that the "ogre" perspective of the father is a reflex of the victim's own ego (129). In other words, the father figure is not as bad as the hero perceives him to be and so the hero must abandon

his “self-generated double monster” in order to achieve atonement. Atonement consists in no more than the abandonment of that self-generated double monster—the dragon thought to be God (superego) and the dragon thought to be Sin (repressed id) (Campbell 130). In order to achieve this, the hero must let go of his ego which Campbell sees as the most challenging part of it all. In order to make amends with the father one must have a faith that the father is merciful, and then have a reliance on that mercy.

*The Odyssey*, *Beowulf* and *The Natural* all contain versions of the Atonement with the Father stage in some fashion. Lord Odysseus’ father figure is the almighty Poseidon whom he has angered through his actions at Troy as well as with the Cyclops. It is Poseidon who elongates Odysseus’ journey and it is he who punishes the Greek hero in *Book 5: Odysseus –Nymph and Shipwreck* as Odysseus clings to life and his raft at sea. Sensing that his end is near, Odysseus pleads to the gods begging for mercy:

Hear me, lord, whoever you are, I’ve come to you, the answer to all my prayers—rescue me from the sea, the Sea-lord’s curse! Even immortal gods will show a man respect, whatever wanderer seeks their help—like me—I throw myself on your mercy, on your current now—I have suffered greatly. Pity me, lord, your suppliant cries for help! (Homer 166).

It is here where he displays humility as he, the mighty Odysseus, is no match for the gods. He, like the Twin Warriors of the Navaho, has survived the challenges and tests of the father figure and as a result receives acceptance. Beowulf’s father substitute role, or mystagogue, is fulfilled by King Hygelac. In his youth, Beowulf was not highly regarded by the Geats. In fact, according to the poet of the myth, the Geats “all were convinced he was slow, or lazy, a coward of a noble” (Bloom

17). After returning home and sharing his booty, Hygelac showed his acceptance to Beowulf by presenting him with his father's gold sword, ample amounts of land, a hall and the title of Lord.

Achieving atonement for Roy is something he never attains with his birth father. In the novel, we never hear from his old man yet Hobbs informs us time and again that his father wanted him "to be the best there ever was in the game" of baseball. It is this that motivates Roy as he strives to appease his deceased father by doing just that. Despite a valiant attempt, Hobbs falls short of his father's wish and Malamud leaves the tragic hero in atonement limbo for the rest of his days. On a positive note, all three heroes, after confronting their "father", gather a more in-depth knowledge of the self and of life through the process.

In some cases, this new breed of knowledge allows the hero to achieve the next step in the Hero's Journey: Apotheosis. Defined as the elevation or exaltation of a person to the rank of god, Apotheosis is the stage that the hero first realizes that he possesses the divine within himself. Hobbs attempts to achieve the rank of god in baseball terms but fails to do so as greed and lust overpowered the slugger's mind resulting in his failed attempt to become the Knights savior and baseball's best. Therefore, Apotheosis in *The Natural* is possible momentarily yet is never achieved (though it is achieved in the film version). Roy's spirit and his short-lived legend died after striking out in his last at-bat. The final page of *The Natural* confirms these truths:

And there was also a statement by the baseball commissioner. 'If this alleged report [of throwing the game] is true, that is the last of Roy Hobbs in organized baseball. He will be excluded from the game and all his records forever destroyed.' Roy handed back the paper to the kid. 'Say it

ain't true, Roy.' When Roy looked into the boy's eyes he wanted to say it wasn't but couldn't, and he lifted his hands to his face and wept many bitter tears (Malamud 361).

Hobbs' attempt at becoming the best there ever was, which would have undoubtedly placed him amongst the gods of the game, sadly and abruptly came to a bitter end. He fails to learn the divine knowledge necessary for his journey and never realizes the Ultimate Boon thus concluding his tragic quest. Karma comes back to collect from Roy's lustful and greedy actions in a wicked way. This is yet another lesson taught via the Hero's Journey. In this case, talent and fame were simply not enough for Hobbs to succeed. Malamud's story, which was a success with readers, concludes in a strikingly different way than *Beowulf* and *the Odyssey* as the hero ultimately fails to fulfill the role of hero in the traditional sense.

Apotheosis in *Beowulf* occurs for the hero posthumously. During a eulogy delivered by the myth's poet: "They said that he was of worldly kings the mildest to men, and the most gentle, the kindest to his people, and the keenest for fame" (Bloom 111). Andy Orchard sees this as apotheosis due to the alliterative nature of the lines:

...a strongly religious flavour to the description of Beowulf as the 'mildest to men, and the most gentle' (line 3181), since the alliterative pair *milde ond monowere* (or equivalent) is of rather frequent occurrence in Christian contexts, being used to describe, amongst others, Christ, Saint Neot, Bishop Eata, and the Archangel Gabriel (Bloom 111).

Gale R. Owen-Crocker agrees citing the presence of double alliteration in *Beowulf's* eulogy and its connection to Christianity (Bloom 223). Yet another

interesting similarity between Beowulf's funeral rituals and Christianity's is the presence of the twelve mourners:

Traditional material seems to be interwoven with Christian associations here. The ritual of riding around the corpse, while uttering a eulogy, is paralleled in Virgil's *Aeneid* and the fifth-century account of Atilla the Hun's funeral; but the fact that the Beowulf-poet specifies twelve noble mourners is reminiscent of the twelve disciples of Christ (Bloom 223).

Although these observations are interesting and deserve further analysis, there is also contextual evidence that Beowulf achieves a version of Apotheosis.

It is true that through this elaborate Christian-inspired funeral ritual Beowulf achieves the godlike status of the divine. But there is more to Campbell's Apotheosis than just being categorized as divine. The hero, according to Campbell, will achieve knowledge or enlightenment during this stage that will permit him to go beyond the last terrors of ignorance and become free of all fear, something mere ordinary mortals fail to do (151). It is unclear in the text if Beowulf truly achieves this form of Apotheosis. He fears the safety of his people as he breathes his final breaths although it appears he does not fear his own death as he believes it was his fate to end his days in this manner. A tertiary form of Apotheosis is similar to the previous description of gaining knowledge yet this one has a different twist. In this case, the hero becomes god-like when he discovers the essence of life. In this case, Beowulf may have achieved this form of Apotheosis upon receipt of the throne. It is during his reign as king that he devotes his entire self to his people, ultimately sacrificing himself for them in the battle with the dragon. Buddha would be pleased since, according to *Vajracchedika*, "All beings are without self" or "All things are Buddha-things"

(Campbell 151). Beowulf, now realizing that he and his people are one and the same, has been enlightened and achieved Apotheosis upon realizing this truth.

One would think that *the Odyssey* is brimming with Apotheosis due to its abundance of Greek gods and goddesses and their interactions with mortals. However, this is not the case. One example of it does occur as Odysseus is preparing to depart Calypso's island. As a final attempt to win the heart of Odysseus, the goddess offers the mortal man the opportunity to become a god himself but it is to no avail as he turns her down. It is in this moment of refusal of the divine that Odysseus reveals that he has identified his true self. He acknowledges his mortality and his purpose and that is to return to Ithaca, reclaim his throne and live out his days with his wife and son. Selfish men would have said "yes" to Calypso's appealing offer but Odysseus is not such a man, he is a hero.

The final stage of the Initiation phase is dubbed the Ultimate Boon. It is during this segment that, simply put, the hero achieves the goal of the quest. Hobbs fails to accomplish his goal of winning the pennant and becoming a baseball legend so this stage does not pertain to *The Natural*. In *Beowulf*, the Ultimate Boon is the safety of the people Beowulf set out to protect whether it was on foreign soil or in his homeland. Treasure, a golden sword and Grendel's head serve as material rewards for Beowulf's accomplishments yet these were never his primary goal. What was Beowulf's goal, his Ultimate Boon, was to achieve legendary status for his heroic selfless deeds for those who were

threatened. Richard J. Schrader's essay *Succession and Glory in Beowulf*, explains why glory was central in *Beowulf*:

The celebration of glory has such emphasis because human praise is the highest goal of the pagan characters, providing justification for individuals and a collective heaven for nations in a world where nearly all the apparent motion leads to dead ends (Bloom 21).

What Schrader is saying is that the people of the Anglo-Saxon culture valued praise from their fellow man and sought it in their everyday lives just as Beowulf did in his fictional life. It can be argued that today's society has flipped this concept on its head seeking wealth and material possessions first and respect a distant second. This is yet another reason why we need literature, specifically mythology, in our classrooms, libraries and colleges. Furthermore, it shows the importance of the monomyth as a means to examine the present self in terms of improving the future self and subsequently the world the self resides in. Odysseus' Ultimate Boon is quite simply to return home to his wife and son which he does so but not without a last Road of Trials. His cleverly devised plan to rid his home of suitors was further evidence of his skill, his will and his might.

## Chapter IV: Return

The final phase of the Hero's Journey is that of the Return. The first step in this phase is known as the Refusal of the Return. Campbell claims that some heroes do not look favorably upon returning to their original homeland:

Even the Buddha, after his triumph, doubted whether the message of realization could be communicated, and saints are reported to have passed away while in the supernal ecstasy. Numerous indeed are the heroes fabled to have taken up residence forever in the blessed isle of the unaging Goddess of Immortal Being (193).

However, there is no evidence that Beowulf or Odysseus did not desire a return to their homeland but quite the contrary as previously explained in Chapter III.

Therefore, we shall proceed to the next step so as not to appear redundant. Keep in mind, not all steps in the Hero's Journey are fulfilled in every myth.

Yet again, we come across a step that does not have much significance in the myths discussed here. The Magic Flight occurs when the hero escapes with the boon, an elixir or amulet that has been guarded by the gods. Further explanation is provided here by Campbell:

If the hero in his triumph wins the blessing of the goddess or god and is then explicitly commissioned to return to the world with some elixir for the restoration of society, the final stage of his adventure is supported by all the powers of his supernatural patron. On the other hand, if the trophy has been attained against the opposition of its guardian, or if the hero's wish to return to the world has been resented by the gods or demons, then the last stage of the mythological round becomes a lively, often comical, pursuit. This flight may be complicated by marvels of magical obstruction and evasion (196-7).

It is possible that Beowulf, after displaying the defeated Grendel's arm as a trophy, is sought out by its mother who is determined to get it back. However, the encounter between she and Beowulf is hardly comical although it is lively. This

example is still unconvincing. A vote for the Magic Flight in *the Odyssey* might be claimed when one considers Poseidon and his intense dislike for Odysseus. Ever since Odysseus blinded Polyphemus, Poseidon's one-eyed giant son, he pledged to make the mortal's life extremely difficult by obstructing his safe passage to Ithaca. The problem is that the eye of the Cyclops fails to possess any magical or supernatural powers that Odysseus can use, although ridding society of one less man-eating giant can be seen as a gift to the masses. As a result of these facts, it makes it difficult to claim them as examples of Campbell's Magic Flight not only for the aforementioned reasons but also for the timing of the events as well in regards to the myth's chronology.

During the Hero's Return, assistance from a higher power may be necessary to bring the hero back from the "bliss of the deep abode" (Campbell 207). At times, the hero may balk at the notion of returning to society for a variety of reasons that include, but are not limited to, fear as well as comfort in his current environment. Only *the Odyssey* presents scenarios of the Rescue from Without with Athena playing the role of puppet master. After all, it is she who vouches for the hero in a discussion with Zeus about freeing the imprisoned Odysseus from Calypso's spell. If she did not intervene, the "death" of Odysseus would have carried on as his odyssey would never have been completed. Another rescuer of sorts appears in the form of the Phaeacians. After enduring Poseidon's final punishment at sea, Odysseus washes upon the shores of the Phaeacian people and is rescued by a young Phaeacian princess. After some much needed rest and replenishment, Odysseus reveals his identity and recounts his adventures

to King Alcinous and his court. Upon the completion of his infamous journey, Alcinous sets into motion the safe delivery of the long lost hero to his home in Ithaca.

The fourth step in the Return phase is the Crossing of the Return Threshold. The returning hero, to complete his adventure, must survive the impact of the world (Campbell 226). Beowulf achieves this with relative ease upon his safe return to Sweden. He is met with open arms and is honored by his king. He even becomes a lord. Odysseus' Crossing of the Return Threshold was much more difficult as he had to convince his son of his true identity and devise a plan to kill one-hundred suitors who resided in his own home, all the while keeping his identity secret. After succeeding with his plan, he is put to the test by Penelope in order to prove that he is truly Laertes' son and not some imposter conjured up by the gods. During this final set of Trials Odysseus does not waiver but exudes a confidence that is quite impressive despite the odds set against him. For both heroes, returning to the land and life they left at the start of their quests is achieved although they do take separate routes in getting there. We are left to determine Roy's return but as we consider it the question of where he would return to is raised. Malamud chooses not to provide the details further proving that Hobbs' journey ends in the Ultimate Boon portion of the Hero's Journey.

One of the last steps in the Hero's Journey according to Joseph Campbell is called the Master of the Two Worlds which Campbell defines in a way that only he could:

Freedom to pass back and forth across the world division, from the perspective of the apparitions of time to that of the casual deep and back-

not contaminating the principles of the one with those of the other, yet permitting the mind to know the one by virtue of the other-is the talent of the master (229).

The best known example of this comes from none other than the Christian faith. In the Transfiguration of the Christ, Jesus, along with his three disciples Peter, James and John, travel to a mountain top where God the Father shows himself to his Son as well as the other men. This miracle symbolizes the Master of the Two Worlds. Jesus is part of the spiritual world of God and is also in the real world as the others. In essence, he serves as a bridge between the worlds and a master of both. Neither *Beowulf*, *the Odyssey* nor *the Natural* possess this step.

Campbell's final piece to the puzzle that is the Hero's Journey is something people of all generations across the world have valued: the Freedom to Live. Campbell explains:

Man in the world of action loses his centering in the principle of eternity if he is anxious for the outcome of his deeds, but resting them and their fruits on the knees of the Living god he is released by them, as by sacrifice, from the bondages of the sea of death. 'Do without attachment the work you have to do...Surrendering all action to Me, with mind intent on the Self, freeing yourself from longing and selfishness, fight-unperturbed by grief' (239).

This freedom described here eludes the grasp of Hobbs although it is feasible to see him possessing it if he followed the path of his film version twin. In Barry Levinson's 1984 film, Roy has learned from his past mistakes and hits a towering homerun to win the pennant in his last at-bat of his life. Levinson then concludes the story with Roy playing catch with his son, back home on the farm with his wife observing from a distance.

For Beowulf and Odysseus, it can be argued that the two mighty heroes did in fact achieve this final step. Although Beowulf dies at the end of the myth, he has lived a full life in service to his fellow man without fearing his physical death. As for Odysseus, after twenty long years away from his most beloved wife and son and battling all the gods and the world could throw at him, he deserves to live out his days with this type of approach to life and it appears Homer grants him this gift.

## Chapter V: Where is Wonder Woman?

Now that a thorough analysis of what each myth contains in relation to the Hero's Journey, I would like to take a moment and examine what they, as is the case with most heroic myths, are missing. I, of course, speak of the absence of the heroine in not only *Beowulf*, *the Odyssey* and *the Natural*, but for an overwhelming amount of myths in and around the mythological canon. What is the reason for this? Why are most heroes male? In order to attain answers to these important questions one would have to perform a vast amount of research and could even write a separate thesis on the topic. For the sake of this thesis, a smaller-scale approach will be used with the intention of raising questions about the lack of the female heroic figure that will inspire further conversation and more in-depth analysis on an important issue.

If one of the purposes of myth, as stated previously, is to inspire its readers to improve the self and therefore the world, why have women been overlooked? They too live in our world and deserve to have role models and heroines to emulate. David Emerson, author of *Innocence as a Super-Power: Little Girls on the Hero's Journey*, argues that the reason for a lack of the heroine as protagonist is due to the physical attributes that are attached to and come associated with heroes such as Beowulf and Odysseus:

The quest story in ancient myths and traditional fairy tales almost invariably featured male protagonists, who relied on things like the use of force to defeat an enemy, or courage and daring in order to voyage to unknown lands and face dangerous opponents and hazardous circumstances... We generally consider such traits as physical strength, courage independence and self-reliance, and the tendency to use force as 'masculine traits', as opposed to traits identified as 'feminine' such as empathy, nurturance, connection with community, and negotiation (2).

What Emerson is alluding to is that the lack of heroines in ancient and classic myths is due in part to the maltreatment of women over centuries. What I mean is that women, until recently, have been oppressed and it is reflected in the world's mythologies by the lack of the heroine. Fortunately, the plight of women has improved over time as evidenced by more contemporary fictional heroines that are now common household names such as Jane Eyre. It is now more acceptable, at least in the Westernized world, to be strong in both masculine and feminine ways regardless of one's gender. Still, there are women who find themselves abiding by the outdated laws of their culture who are in desperate need of real-life heroes, both female and male. Someday, myths will be written about the real-life heroes who will help these oppressed women in much the same manner as their ancestors were.

## Chapter VI: Conclusion

The primary objective of this project was to apply Joseph Campbell's monomyth theory to three distinctly different hero-myths in order to prove its worthiness and validity in the realm of literary analysis. Furthermore, a second established goal was to show, through analysis of each of the three Hero Journeys, that readers, regardless of time and space, are able to identify common threads within each myth that aid in understanding the self and understanding their fellow man and, as a result, apply these findings to the improvement of not only the individual's life experience but the community in which he lives within. I believe this was an intention of Joseph Campbell's work and I believe that both of these lofty goals were met within the scope of this thesis. The Hero's Journey is a relevant mapping of not only the myths we read but is also relevant to the lives we lead. It is quite foolish to believe that all myths will be interpreted the same by all those who read it (my apologies to the New Critics who read this). However, it is inspiring to think that each and every one of us, regardless of time, gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, zip code or financial portfolio, share certain undeniable traits, virtues, attributes, needs and fears that lie within our cores. With acceptance of this belief, the world would be a more tolerable, more peaceful place as it would shed more light on our similarities and dim the lights on our differences. This, I believe, is what motivated Joseph Campbell and it is this belief that motivated the beginning and end to this project. Understanding of the self will lead to understanding of others which is a solid recipe for equality and

peace. Some say it is an impossible goal to attain. That is why we need heroes like Superman.

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