

Conference Paper

Joseph Campbell's Monomyth in Agatha Christie's Novel *Murder on the Orient Express*

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to discuss about the theory of monomyth and to analyze whether this theory which is usually used in myths and legends can be applied to a mystery fiction novel so that the main character in the novel can be depicted as a hero. The theory of monomyth used in this research comes from Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with A Thousand Faces* (2004). According to Campbell (2004: 28), monomyth is: "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 his mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man". 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. In doing this research, the writer uses qualitative method with a descriptive approach [6]. Based on the result of the analysis, the writer found that the monomyth theory is applied to the novel "Murder on the Orient Express" and the main character is depicted as a hero with some adjustments.

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1. Introduction

The theory of monomyth used in this research comes from Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with A Thousand Faces* (2004). Monomyth comes from two Greek root words. Mono means "one," and mythos, means "story." So, we can define monomyth as one structure that underlies all stories. In recent years, the term has become synonymous with the "Hero's Journey." Monomyth was not really popularized until 1949, when Professor Joseph Campbell published the book, *The Hero with A Thousand Faces*. Campbell was a professor of mythology and spent his life studying all of the ancient stories and fairytales. His research found that each followed a similar template. Furthermore, he stated that every step in the process had a connection with human psychology. Since then, numerous books have been written on the subject. Moreover, several stories,

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movies, and even video games were written following the monomyth template. This is what makes the writer curious whether this theory can also be applied to one of Agatha Christie's novels. As we know, just like her other novels, "Murder on the Orient Express" is one of Agatha Christie's best and famous mystery fiction novels, not only because of its cinematic adaptations but also due to the brazen ingenuity of the plot. A mystery fiction is a genre of fiction usually involving a mysterious death or crime to be solved. The central character must be a detective who eventually solves the mystery by logical deduction from facts fairly presented to the murder. Since both of these theory and novel are contradiction, the writer interests to find out whether the theory of Joseph Campbell can be adapted to this novel and the main character can be depicted as a hero.

2. Literature Review

According to Campbell (2004: 28), monomyth is: "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 his mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man". Joseph Campbell identified roughly seventeen specific steps to the hero's journey; however, the base steps are comprised of a three acts structure. The three main steps are as follows: separation—initiation—return. Each of these steps is divided into some stages, namely: first, separation: call to adventure, refusal of the call, supernatural aid, crossing first threshold, and belly of the whale. Second, initiation: road of trials, meeting with the goddess, temptation, atonement with the father, apostasies, the ultimate boon. Lastly, return, is divided into: refusal of return, magic flight, rescue from without, crossing the return threshold, master of two worlds, freedom to live. For more details, below is the chart of the stages that a hero must undergo in Joseph Campbell's theory of monomyth.

Based on the writer's review, there are some previous researches focus on the same novel but in the different theory, and vice versa, some researchers use the same theory but in the different fields of knowledge, they are: Marc Alexander, University of Glasgow, his journal titled *Rhetorical Structure and Reader Manipulation In Agatha Christie's "Murder on the Orient Express"*. This article focuses on the analysis of the monologue which makes up the dénouement of Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*. The other researcher is Jesper Gulddal, University of Newcastle, his journal titled *Beautiful Shining Order' Detective Authority in Agatha Christie's "Murder on the Orient Express"*, This essay highlights how Christie's novel undermines Poirot's authority as a detective and also his solution. Then, James K began, University of,

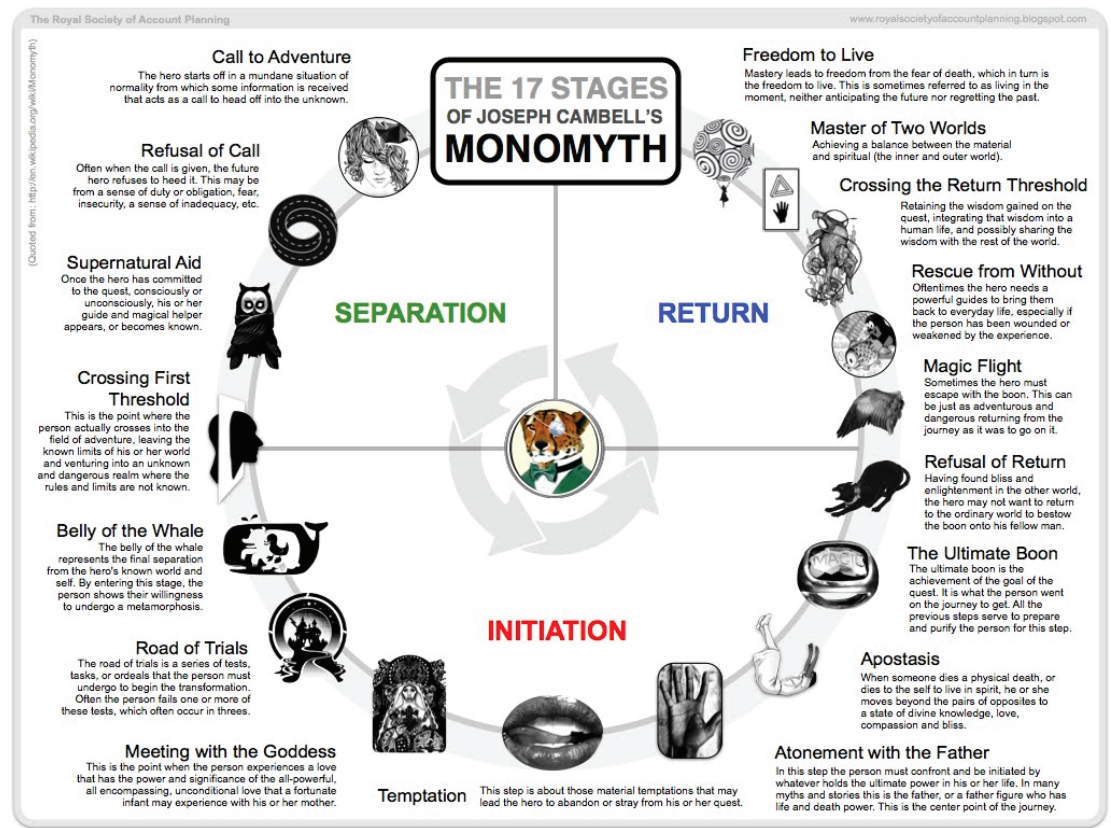


Figure 1: The 17 Stages of Joseph Campbell's Monomyth.

Louisville, his journal entitled *Monomyth, Transformation, and Inspiration: The Hero's Journey in The extreme Fitness Exercise Infomercial*, The present paper describes how the success stories of people profiled in extreme fitness infomercials can be understood as conforming to the structure of the monomyth. And the last is Clive William, Journal of Humanistic Psychology, first published is April 26, 2017, his journal titled *The Hero's Journey: A Mudmap for Change*. His article proposes that the hero's journey provides a comprehensive mudmap for those either seeking or forced to change. Clients present to therapy when significant life problems occur.

Based on the data above, it's clear that the research with the same topic and novel has never been done before by the other researchers.

3. Research Method

In doing this research, the writer uses the qualitative method with a descriptive approach. According to Creswell (2014: 32), qualitative method is a method for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Descriptive approach means that the writer will give some explanations related to the topic based on the documents collected. In doing this research, the

writer uses some steps, they are: collecting the data in the form of documents, such as: books, articles, journals, diaries or letters, then the data are analyzed by finding the compatibility between one and another and finally the writer draws the conclusion in the narrative design.

4. Discussion

As mention above that the purpose of this research is to discuss about the theory of monomyth and to analyze whether this theory which is usually used in myths and legends can be applied to a mystery fiction novel so that the main character in the novel can be depicted as a hero. According to Joseph Campbell (2004: 36) a hero is, "...symbolical of that divine creative and redemptive image which is hidden within us all, only waiting to be known and rendered into life". So, to ensure that the main character deserves to be called a hero, the writer will elaborate the seventeen stages in the monomyth theory to be adapted to the plot and the main character of the novel "Murder on the Orient Express". Below is the explanation:

4.1. Separation

4.1.1. Call to adventure

The hero starts off in a mundane situation of normality from which some information is received that acts as a call to head off into the unknown.

The novel "Murder on the Orient Express" is started when the main character, Poirot, a private detective and retired Belgian police officer, is still in his ordinary world, he just finished a job in Syria, and wants to proceed his journey to Stamboul (Istanbul). But, as soon as Poirot arrives he receives a telegram summoning him back to London. While waiting at the hotel for the next train, Poirot bumps into an old friend, M. Bouc, head of the Wagon Lit. M. Bouc arranges a space for Poirot on the Orient Express. In the dining room of the Tokatlian Hotel, Poirot first spots Ratchett and Hector McQueen eating dinner. Poirot can see that Ratchett is an evil man and he tells M. Bouc about his feeling.

Poirot boards the Orient Express. Ratchett and Hector McQueen are also aboard the train. The next day, Ratchett approaches Poirot and asks if he will work for him, Ratchett tells Poirot he has been receiving threatening letters and that someone is trying to kill him. Poirot refuses the case. At night Poirot observes some strange occurrences. Early in the morning, Poirot is wakened by a cry from Ratchett's compartment next

to him. The wagon lit conductor responds knocks on Ratchett's door and a voice from inside responds, "Ce n'est rien. Je me suis trompé" (It is nothing. I am mistaken). Poirot has difficulty sleeping because there is a peculiar silence on the train. Mrs. Hubbard rings her bell and tells the conductor that a man is in her room. Poirot rings his bell for water and is informed by the conductor that the train is stuck in a snow bank. Poirot hears a loud thump next door. The next morning, the train still stopped, M. Bouc informs Poirot that Ratchett has been murdered and the murderer is still aboard the train. Here, the call of the adventure is come. When M. Bouc asks Poirot to handle the murder case.

"Come, my friend," said M. Bouc. "You comprehend what I am about to ask of you. I know your powers. Take command of this investigation!..." (Christie, 2009: 36)

4.1.2. Refusal of the call

Often when the call is given, the future hero first refuses to heed it. This may be from a sense of duty or obligation, fear, insecurity, a sense of inadequacy as we can see in this sentence, "And suppose I do not solve it?" (Christie, 2009: 36)

4.1.3. Supernatural aid

Once the hero has committed to the quest, consciously or unconsciously, his guide and magical helper appear or become known. In this case, the supernatural aid can be considered as M. Bouc's persuasion to Poirot to be willing to accept the case.

"Ah, mon cher!" M. Bouc's voice became positively caressing. "I know your reputation. I know something of your methods. This is the ideal case for you. To look up the antecedents of all these people, to discover their bona-fides—all that takes time and endless inconvenience. But have I not heard you say often that to solve a case a man has only to lie back in his chair and think?...". (Christie, 2009: 36)

4.1.4. Crossing first threshold

This is the point where the person actually crosses into the field of adventure, leaving the known limits of his or her world and venturing into an unknown and dangerous realm where the rules and limits are unknown.

As soon as Poirot accepts the case, M. Bouc feels relieved and promises to give all the help he needed.

"You accept then?" said M. Bouc eagerly.

"C'est entendu. You place the matter in my hands."

"Good—we are all at your service." (Christie, 2009: 36)

4.1.5. Belly of the whale

The belly of the whale represents the final separation from the hero's known world and self. By entering this stage, the person shows willingness to undergo a metamorphosis.

"To begin with, I should like a plan of the Istanbul-Calais coach, with a note of the people who occupied the several compartments, and I should also like to see their passports and their tickets." (Christie, 2009: 36)

4.2. Initiation

4.2.1. Road of trials

The road of trials is a series of tests that the person must undergo to begin the transformation. Often the person fails one or more of these tests, which often occur in threes.

As Poirot investigates, the murdered man, Rachett, with Dr. Constantin, a passenger who happens to work as a doctor, he finds many obstacles as the evidences obtained does not match the facts encountered. We can see from the conversation between Dr. Constantin and Poirot.

The doctor looked at him curiously. "You will pardon me, M. Poirot, but I do not quite understand you."

"I do not understand myself," said Poirot. "I understand nothing at all. And, as you perceive, it worries me." (Christie, 2009: 50)

4.2.2. Meeting with the Goddess

This is where the hero gains items given to him that will help him in the future. It was a very tiny scrap. Only three words and part of another showed.

'—member little Daisy Armstrong'

"Ah!" Poirot gave a sharp exclamation.

"It tells you something?" asked the doctor.

Poirot's eyes were shining. He laid down the tongs carefully.

"Yes," he said. "I know the dead man's real name. I know why he had to leave America."

"What was his name?"

"Cassetti."

"Cassetti?" Constantine knitted his brows. "It brings back to me something. Some years ago. I cannot remember.... It was a case in America, was it not?"

"Yes," said Poirot. "A case in America." (Christie, 2009: 52)

4.2.3. Temptation

This step is about those material temptations that may lead the hero to abandon or stray from his or her quest.

After Poirot listens to the testimonies of some passengers, such as the conductor, Rachett's secretary, the American Lady, the Swedish Lady and the Russian Princess, now it's the turn of Count and Countess Andrenyi to testify, but for some reasons, Count Andrenyi appears alone in the restoration car. After being interviewed, Count Andrenyi insists that no need for his wife to be interviewed as according to him she will not give more information than he knows, but fortunately Poirot can be assertive, even he still show a friendly attitude as both of the passengers use diplomatic passports.

"It will be quite unnecessary for my wife to come here," he said. "She can tell you nothing more than I have."

A little gleam came into Poirot's eye.

"Doubtless, doubtless," he said. "But all the same I think I should like to have just one little word with Madame la Comtesse."

"I assure you it is quite unnecessary." The Count's voice rang out authoritatively.

Poirot blinked gently at him.

"It will be a mere formality," he said. "But, you understand, it is necessary for my report." (Christie, 2009: 92)

4.2.4. Atonement with the father

In this step the person must confront and be initiated by whatever holds the ultimate power in his or her life. In many myths and stories this is the father, or a father figure who has life and death power. This is the center point of the journey.

At this point, Poirot has received some testimonies from the passengers, not all of these testimonies are meant something, but there are some important points which become a note for Poirot, such as M^qQueen's testimony that Rachett cannot speak in French, the handkerchief found in Rachett's room, none of the passengers admits that it's belong to one of them, and the broken watch which is found in Rachett's pajamas. All of these evidences are meaning something to Poirot, but not to his friends, M. Bouc And Dr. Constantin.

"From now on, it is all here." He tapped himself on the forehead. "We have thrashed it all out. The facts are all in front of us—neatly arranged with order and method. The passengers have sat here, one by one, giving their evidence. We know all that can be known—from outside..."

He gave M. Bouc an affectionate smile. (Christie, 2009: 161)

4.2.5. Apostasis

This is the point of realization in which a greater understanding is achieved. Armed with this new knowledge and perception, the hero is resolved and ready for the more difficult part of the adventure.

"My friends, I have reviewed the facts in my mind, and have also gone over to myself the evidence of the passengers—with this result: I see, nebulously as yet, a certain explanation that would cover the facts as we know them. It is a very curious explanation, and I cannot be sure as yet that it is the true one. To find out definitely I shall have to make certain experiments (Christie, 2009: 163)

4.2.6. The ultimate boon

The ultimate boon is the achievement of the goal of the quest. It is what the person went on the journey to get. All the previous steps serve to prepare and purify the person for this step.

Finally Poirot finds his ultimate boon, that is the handkerchief. After long time, no body admits the owner of the handkerchief, then Poirot starts to test his hypothesis.

Before the meal was served, Poirot had caught the chief attendant by the sleeve and murmured something to him. Constantine made a pretty good guess as to what the instructions had been when he noticed that the Count and Countess Andrenyi were always served last and that at the end of the meat there was a delay in making out their bill. It therefore came about that the Count and Countess were the last left in the restaurant car.

When they rose at length and moved in the direction of the door, Poirot sprang up and followed them.

"Pardon, Madame, you have dropped your handkerchief."

He was holding out to her the tiny monogrammed square.

She took it, glanced at it, then handed it back to him.

"You are mistaken, Monsieur, that is not my handkerchief."

"Not your handkerchief? Are you sure?"

"Perfectly sure, Monsieur."

"And yet, Madame, it has your initial—the initial H."

The Count made a sudden movement. Poirot ignored him. His eyes were fixed on the Countess's face.

Looking steadily at him she replied:

"I do not understand, Monsieur. My initials are E. A."

"I think not. Your name is Helena—not Elena. Helena Goldenberg, the younger daughter of Linda Arden—Helena Goldenberg, the sister of Mrs. Armstrong." (Christie, 2009: 170-171)

4.3. Return

4.3.1. Refusal of the return

Having found bliss and enlightenment in the other world, the hero may not want to return to the ordinary world to bestow the boon onto his fellow man. Finally Count and Countess Andrenyi tells Poirot the truth. Even in fact, the handkerchief doesn't belong to Countess Andrenyi, but she tells Poirot many important facts, such as mention about that she is Mrs. Armstrong's sister, the mother of Daisy Armstrong who has been killed by Rachett alias Casetti, her husband, Count Andrenyi has erased his wife's initial name

in the passport identity, and about all persons related to the Amstrong family. (Christie, 2009: 170-175)

4.3.2. Magic flight

Sometimes the hero must escape with the boon, this can be just as adventurous and dangerous returning from the journey as it was to go on it.

In this part, we can interpret that refusal of the return means that Poirot doesn't want to go backward anymore, he will try his best to get the real and honest recognition from all passengers. Although, it is proved that the handkerchief does not belong to Countess Andreny, but at least she is confessed. Finally, Princess Dragomiroff comes and tells Poirot that the handkerchief belongs to her.

M. Bouc broke off. The door at the end had opened, and Princess Dragomiroff entered the dining-car. She came straight to them and all three men rose to their feet. She spoke to Poirot, ignoring the others, "I believe, Monsieur," she said, "that you have a handkerchief of mine." (Christie, 2009: 177)

4.3.3. Rescue from without

Often times the hero needs a powerful guide to bring them back to everyday life, especially if the person has been wounded or weakened by the experience. Finally, Poirot gets all the clues that he needed to make an important decision about who the murderer of Rachett is.

"You are going to make another of these famous guesses of yours?"

"Precisely"

"It is really a most extraordinary case," said Constantine.

"No, it is most natural. (Christie, 2009: 188)

4.3.4. The crossing of the return threshold

Retaining the wisdom gained on the quest, integrating that wisdom into a human life, and possibly sharing that wisdom with the rest of the world.

As usual, at the end, Poirot will know who did the murder. But contrast to the other cases he has faced, this time he will take an extraordinary step in which he decides to profound two solutions for the murder case.

Poirot looked at him. "You do not understand," he said. "You do not understand at all. Tell me, do you know who killed Ratchett?"

"Do you?" countered M. Bouc.

Poirot nodded. "Oh, yes," he said. "I have known for some time. It is so clear that I wonder you have not seen it also." He looked at Hardman and asked: "And you?"

The detective shook his head. He stared at Poirot curiously. "I don't know," he said. "I don't know at all. Which of them was it?"

Poirot was silent a minute. Then he said:

"If you will be so good, M. Hardman, assemble everyone here. There are two possible solutions of this case. I want to lay them both before you all." (Christie, 2009: 192-193)

4.3.5. Master of two worlds

Master of two worlds can be clarified as an achievement of a balance between the material and spiritual (the inner and outer world).

This murder case is different from the previous case faced by Poirot. After seeing the background of the murder, Poirot realizes that this is a form of revenge for a brutal murder committed by Ratchett alias Casetti to a little girl named Daisy Armstrong who has caused the whole members of the family's death. Poirot himself does not like Ratchett from the beginning. That is why Poirot rejects Ratchett's offer to deal with his case, with all of these backgrounds, finally Poirot proposes two solutions to all the passengers, one of them is to cover the real incident, and create a shadow-killer who seemed to have escaped from the train, as described below:

Poirot cleared his throat.

"Messieurs et mesdames, I will speak in English since I think all of you know a little of that language. We are here to investigate the death of Samuel Edward Ratchett—alias Casetti. There are two possible solutions of the crime. I shall put them both before you, and I shall ask M. Bouc, and Dr. Constantine here to judge which solution is the right one." (Christie, 2009: 194)

4.3.6. Freedom to live

Mastery leads to freedom from the fear of death, which in turn is the freedom to live. This is sometimes referred to as living in the moment, neither anticipating the future nor regretting the past.

This is the end of a problem solving, in which Poirot has succeeded in completing an abrupt case with a solution that satisfied everyone. Although the solution is not the real solution, but it is the most appropriate solution to the crimes committed by Rachett alias Casetti, "Then," said Poirot, "having placed my solution before you, I have the honour to retire from the case...." (Christie, 2009: 206)

5. Conclusions

Based on the result of the analysis, the writer found that the monomyth theory is applied to the novel "Murder on the Orient Express". We can see this through the seventeen stages from the phase of "departure" until "return". All the stages in the theory of monomyth are fit to this novel, but of course with some adjustments, considering this monomyth theory is usually applied in myths and legends, and now the writer is applied to a mystery fiction novel. Besides that, the main character is also depicted as a hero by the reasons of, first, actually every man in this world is a hero at least for him/herself, and, second, the plot of the novel is fit to the seventeen stages of Joseph Campbell's monomyth theory.

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