

Sample Research Essay 2

Paul Atreides: The Hero's Journey

Introduction

In Frank Herbert's novel *Dune*, published in 1965, Paul Atreides is the nominal hero of the story. In this essay I will look at Paul's journey in the novel and evaluate it according to Joseph John Campbell's (1949) template of the hero's journey¹.

Campbell's Hero's Journey

The hero's journey works over three acts, broadly departure (Act 1), initiation (Act 2) and return (Act 3). The hero leaves on a journey and acquires the necessary skills for their triumphant return home, as can be seen from Table 1 below.

Act	Campbell (1949)
I. Departure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Call to Adventure• Refusal of the Call• Supernatural Aid• The Crossing of the First Threshold• Belly of the Whale
II. Initiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Road of Trials• The Meeting with the Goddess• Woman as the Temptress• Atonement with the Father/Abyss• Apotheosis• The Ultimate Boon
III. Return	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Refusal of the Return• The Magic Flight• Rescue from Without• The Crossing of the Return Threshold• Master of the Two Worlds• Freedom to Live

Table 1: The Hero's Journey Campbell (1949)

While Campbell's template has been criticized for being culturally specific – the American monomyth – and excluding stories which do not fit into the scheme proposed (Jewett and Lawrence, 1977, Ellwood, 1999), it has been widely influential and is still considered of importance, despite other models being proposed, chiefly Leeming (1981), Cousineau (1990) and Vogler (2007).

Discussion

In the first act, Paul Atreides' journey starts on the planet of Caladan. His father Duke Leto of the House of Atreides has been appointed the governor of Arrakis, a desert planet with valuable resources of melange, a spice drug that is the key to interstellar travel. This is the first *Call To Adventure* but one Paul makes with his entire family and their troops. Duke Leto, his concubine, Jessica, and Paul, his adviser, Thufir Hawat, and his master-of-arms, Gurney Halleck all suspect a trap by their rivals, the Harkonnens, led by Baron Harkonnen in league with the Emperor. The appointment cannot be refused though and then the Atreides arrive on Arrakis and the Duke quickly moves to secure the planet against a Harkonnen attack. His plan is to enlist the Fremen, the tough natives of the Arrakeen desert, as allies.

Paul begins to learn more about the Fremen, not actually *Refusing The Call*, while Jessica, a member of the Bene Gesserit, a school of quasi-mystical witches with strange powers, intrigues the Fremen.

¹ I chose to focus on Campbell (1949) rather than Leeming (1981), Cousineau (1990) and/or Vogler (2007) due to space reasons.

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The Bene Gesserit had seeded the mythology of the planet (and others) with stories and prophecies thousands of years before, and this could be understood as Campbell's *Supernatural Aid*.

The Harkonnens arrive and wipe most of the Atréides out through the treachery of Dr. Yueh and by using Sardaukar, the super-soldiers of the emperor, who is secretly helping the Harkonnens. The Duke dies trying to kill Baron Harkonnen with poison gas hidden in a false tooth. Jessica and Paul escape into the desert - this could be seen as the second *Call To Adventure*, or as *Crossing The Threshold*.

The Fremen capture Jessica and Paul - they are now in *The Belly Of The Whale*. Paul immediately fights a duel - he is not an untrained hero - the first of *The Road Of Trials* and the beginning of the second act. Paul trains, and then rides a sandworm, the end of the standard Fremen *Road of Trials*. He has a child with a Fremen woman, Chani, the daughter of Kynes (perhaps *Woman as a Temptress?*); meanwhile his mother has given birth to Alia, Duke Leto's daughter. Paul takes the name "Muad'Dib" and teaches the Fremen to fight using the "weirding way," the advanced fighting techniques of the Bene Gesserit.

Paul then decides to drink the Water of Life without consulting anyone. No male has ever successfully completed the Fremen's Water of Life ritual. He lies in a coma for three weeks and then awakes with increased mental awareness - he has been transformed into the Kwisatz Haderach. This episode represents a combination of Campbell's act 2 stages: *The Meeting with the Goddess*, *Atonement with the Father*, here the *Abyss*, *Apotheosis*, where greater understanding is achieved, and *The Ultimate Boon*, the power to achieve the quest as the pure all-knowing, all-seeing Kwisatz Haderach.

In Act 3, the elements of the Refusal of the Return and The Magic Flight do not really appear, though Paul is worried by visions of a violent jihad across the galaxy by the Fremen if he wins, and perhaps riding sand worms could be seen as magic flight. *The Crossing of the Return Threshold* is where the Fremen led by Paul attack the Arrakeen capital, defeat the Sardaukar and the Harkonnens. Alia kills Baron Harkonnen (perhaps *Rescue from Without?*) in the battle, and, at the confrontation with the Emperor, Paul kills Feyd-Rautha, who had challenged him for the right of vengeance. Paul becomes *Master of the Two Worlds* - Arrakis and the Fremen, and the Empire, and has the *Freedom to Live* by marrying the Emperor's daughter, Irulan.

Conclusion

Many elements of Campbell's hero's journey template appear in Dune. Paul is forced rather than called to adventure by the machinations of the Emperor and the evil Harkonnens, escapes to the desert and there learns how to defeat his enemies. He is transformed twice - once into Muad'Dib and then into the Kwisatz Haderach. He becomes Muad'Dib to survive with and then lead the Fremen in the desert, and to have a child with Chani (becoming a man), and then Kwisatz Haderach to defeat the Emperor.

Word count excluding tables, figures and references: 839

References

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