Classical Heroes in Modern Movies: Mythological Patterns of the Superhero

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As the central figure in the film experience, the hero is the integral archetype in the collective unconscious of American culture. He is at once a collective and personal encounter, as each individual in the audience identifies personally with the hero’s story, while the hero simultaneously embodies the collective hopes and ideals of the culture that creates him. It is this compound phenomenon—the personal identification with the collective hero—that makes the hero archetype so psychologically powerful. This compound identification with the hero fulfills what Carl Jung called the transcendent function of myth and dreams.

In Jungian psychology, myths are collective dreams, the communal expression of a culture’s goals, wishes, anxieties and fears. Dreams, on the other hand, are personal myths. They are the individual expression of personal unconscious issues, amplified into visions and projected onto a screen in the theater of the mind, in the form of a personalized movie. Experiencing a modern myth in the form of a film is, in a Jungian sense, a transcendent experience, because when we identify with the hero and vicariously experience his journey, we transcend our own private conscious existence and integrate a collective cultural archetype. Furthermore, as a function of the film-going experience, we transcend our own individual neuroses, allowing ourselves to commune with the rest of the audience through a shared understanding, integrating the collective encounter on a personal level.

The genre of superhero movies, (which is currently at its zenith of popularity), seems to impart the most direct embodiment of the archetypal hero that Jung delineated. The modern superhero, derived primarily from comic books, combines characteristics of the classical heroes of Greco-Roman hero traditions with the more humble and god-fearing heroes of the Judeo-Christian traditions. While superheroes generally have superpowers—traits analogous to the semi-divine status of Greco-Roman heroes, who were typically the sons of gods—they also tend to have human frailties and weaknesses more indicative of normal people. The modern superhero must not only face powerful super-villains and incredible odds, he must also overcome his personal doubts, fears and anxieties about himself and his atypical identity. Incorporating both the grand and mundane in his character, the superhero allows viewers to enjoy his colossal struggle on a mythological level, while also identifying with his personal anxieties on an individual level.

Though there have been many studies of the hero archetype, ranging from philosophical to psychological, sociological and anthropological, the most seminal theories on the subject
remain the original models of Otto Rank, Lord Raglan and Joseph Campbell. Each one of these theorists delineated a pattern of the mythological hero's structure in distinctive yet complimentary ways. Otto Rank's model, influenced principally by Freudian theory, focuses primarily on the birth of the hero represented in movies as the superhero's backstory. Lord Raglan's model was influenced primarily by Sir James Frazer's view of myth as a script for religious ritual, [see Frazer's decisive opus on myth and ritual, The Golden Bough (1922)]. In this sense, Raglan's model focuses more intently on the latter stages of the hero's saga, the downfall and death of the hero, in which the hero becomes ritualistically transformed from a living person into an immortal legend. Joseph Campbell's model, while influenced heavily by Freud, Rank and Frazer alike, is most clearly structured around Jung's model of the hero archetype. In keeping with Jungian psychology, Campbell saw the primary role of the hero as a symbol of the self, and his adventure as the symbol of life. Therefore, Campbell's model focuses entirely on the hero's journey, the events occurring subsequent to the hero's birth and childhood, and prior to his downfall and death. Hence, the three seminal studies of the hero Rank's, Raglan's and Campbell's while overlapping considerably, are also perfectly complimentary, as they focus on, respectively, the beginning, end and middle of the hero's life story.

This article will break each of these models down to their most basic coherent forms, their theoretical cores, which will then be applied to the analyses of modern superhero movies. Since these three models were based on classical mythologies that, as a rule, were androcentric, (focusing exclusively on male heroes and male issues), a fourth model, that of Maureen Murdock's, will also be addressed and used to analyze a female movie superhero. With the addition of a female perspective on the superhero, this article intends to provide a comprehensive, albeit succinct, overview of the mythological hero's pattern, and how it is being revived and reinterpreted by Hollywood, in the form of the modern superhero movie genre.

**Otto Rank: The Birth of the Hero**

In his influential monograph, The Myth of the Birth of the Hero (1914), Otto Rank delineated a thematic pattern of the classical mythological hero that is easily discernible in the sagas of legendary figures such as Jesus, Moses, Gilgamesh, Cyrus, Perseus, Hercules, Telephus, Oedipus, Romulus, Paris, Siegfried, Lohengrin, Tristan, Sargon, Karna and scores of others. Rank formulated the saga as follows:

The hero is the child of most distinguished parents, usually the son of a king.

His origin is preceded by difficulties, such as continence, or prolonged barrenness, or secret intercourse of the parents due to external prohibition or obstacles. During or before the pregnancy, there is a prophecy in the form of a dream or oracle, cautioning against his birth, and usually threatening danger to
the father (or his representative). As a rule, he is surrendered to the water, in a box. He is then saved by animals, or by lowly people (shepherds), and is suckled by a female animal or by an humble woman. After he has grown up, he finds his distinguished parents, in a highly versatile fashion. He takes his revenge on his father, on the one hand, and is acknowledged, on the other. Finally he achieves rank and honors.

With little editing, Rank’s pattern for the myth of the birth of the hero can be understood according to the following stages:

1. Prophecy of the birth of the hero.
2. The birth of the hero to divine, noble or royal parentage.
3. He is abandoned, given away or set adrift in the water.
4. Rescue and adoption by surrogate parents.
5. Return to the land of his father, where the hero proves his worthiness.
6. The hero claims his royal birthright and is awarded with honors.

The first significant aspect of the hero myth is that the people who raise the child are not his real parents; rather, they are surrogate parents. Rank believed that this aspect of the myth is a universal daydream among children, in which the child fantasizes that his own ordinary parents are not really his mother and father; but rather, that he is the child of noble lineage. Within this fantasy, the child can imagine that he is superior to his natural parents, and that he is therefore destined for greater things. Instead of his ordinary biological parents, the child identifies himself with fantasy parents, who are ideal. The first stages of Rank’s pattern, therefore, offer a peculiar sense of wish fulfillment to child viewers, who identify with superheroes on the screen and, moreover, see themselves as superheroes in their own fantasies. The first step in creating a superhero self-fantasy is to disavow one’s own parents in favor of some elaborate backstory in which one’s real biological parents are noble or divine hence the existence of special, supernatural or super powers in one’s self. Nowhere is the theme of surrogate parenting more overt than in the film, Superman (1978), which will now be analyzed in reference to Rank’s model.

**Stages One-Three: Prophecy, Birth, Abandonment**

In the first act of Superman, the infant Kal-El is born to noble parents. He is the son of Jor-El (Marlon Brando), a senior statesman of the planet Krypton, and his wife Lara (Susannah York). Via an oracle, Jor-El can foresee the destruction of his home planet, so he sets his only son adrift into the sea of space in a sealed space-basket, where it floats across the galaxy to Earth. As the sole survivor of the Kryptonian race, Kal-El’s alien genes give him superpowers on the Earth, making him more of a god than a man. Hence, his arrival on Earth also fulfills a universal messianic prophecy; that one day, a divine being will come to us who will rid the world of all its evils.
Stages Four-Six: Rescue, Return, Royal Birthright

The baby Kal-el is discovered, rescued and adopted by loving surrogate parents. Though young Kal-El, now Clark Kent (Jeff East), loves his adoptive parents, the Kents (Glenn Ford and Phyllis Thaxter), he senses that there is something out of place. He does not understand why he has superpowers, and what his true purpose in life may be. The death of his adoptive father results in a deep sense of guilt and confusion for Clark. He is beginning to realize that his great powers also burden him with great responsibilities. He journeys to the icy barrens of the North Pole, where a green crystal from Krypton creates his new home—\textit{a fortress of solitude}—which is not exactly the land of his father, but rather, a simulation of Krypton, complete with recorded images of his parents and all of the knowledge he needs in order to claim his birthright and accept his true identity as a semi-divine superhero, with the power to rid the planet of evil. This return to Krypton marks the end of the first act, which is entirely dedicated to backstory. The rest of the film, acts two and three, revolve around the more trivial details of Superman's journey, in which he battles evil, faces incredible odds, and saves the world.

\textbf{Lord Raglan: The Ritual of the Hero}

Lord Raglan's book, \textit{The Hero: A Study in Tradition, Myth and Drama} (1956), presents a very similar pattern, which he summarized as follows:

\textbullet The hero's mother is a royal virgin; his father is a king, and often a near relative of his mother, but the circumstance of his conception are unusual, and he is also reputed to be the son of a god. At birth, an attempt is made, usually by his father or his maternal grandfather, to kill him, but he is spirited away, and reared by foster-parents in a far country. We are told nothing of his childhood, but on reaching manhood he returns or goes to his future kingdom. After a victory over the king and/or a giant, dragon, or wild beast, he marries a princess, often the daughter of his predecessor, and becomes king. For a time he reigns uneventfully, and prescribes laws, but later he loses favour with the gods and/or his subjects, and is driven from the throne and city, after which he meets with a mysterious death, often at the top of a hill. His children, if any, do not succeed him. His body is not buried, but nevertheless he has one or more holy sepulchers.\textbullet

Once again, with minimal editing, Raglan's model can be formulated according to the following stages:
1. The situation of the hero’s birth are quite unusual and/or traumatic.
2. The father unsuccessfully tries to do away with the infant hero.
3. The child is raised by surrogate parents, but upon maturing, he returns to the land of his father.
4. The hero battles his father and is victorious.
5. He marries a princess.
6. After many years of heroic acts, the hero dies a mysterious death.

Though he is not succeeded by an heir, he is remembered in legends.

As in Rank’s pattern, Raglan’s formula focuses primarily on the hostile, antagonistic relationship between the hero and his father. Though the story of Hulk (2003) is a rather untraditional superhero saga, the father-son relationship within the film provides an excellent example of Raglan’s hero structure.

**Stages One-Three: Unusual birth, Attempted Murder, Return**

Bruce Banner (Eric Bana) is born under the most unusual circumstances. His father David (Nick Nolte), a genetic researcher, experiments on himself and his son, and a genetic mutation is passed down to Bruce. Realizing this, David tries to kill his son to spare him a life as a genetic mutant but in the melee of the act, David tragically kills Bruce’s mother instead. Bruce is raised by surrogate parents, but eventually dedicates his life to scientific research returning to the intellectual land of his father.

**Stages Four - Six: Battling the Father, Marrying the Princess, Mysterious Death**

Though Banner’s love interest, Betty Ross (Jennifer Connelly), is not exactly a princess, she is the daughter of a powerful army general (Sam Elliot), who also happens to be the man who imprisoned Banner’s father. When Banner claims his birthright as a super-strong genetic mutant, General Ross imprisons him, and eventually decides to destroy him. The third act is a showplace for Banner’s superpowers and incredible strength, as he battles two symbolic kings: General Ross, the king of the normal human forces, and Banner’s father, the king of genetic mutations. In his final momentous battle with his mutant father, Banner is victorious saving the planet from his father’s evil plans for world domination. Since Hulk is a Hollywood movie, a real death of the hero in the end was not possible, as audiences love happy endings, and also because sequels are big moneymakers.
Nevertheless, there is a **mysterious death**, in a lake **on top of a hill**, although we learn that, unbeknownst to the rest of the world, Banner did not actually die. He lives on in secrecy, using his Hulk powers to commit heroic acts in faraway places.

**Joseph Campbell: The Hero’s Journey**

Campbell’s model of the mythological hero, from his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), is by far the most influential, especially in the field of screenwriting, for several reasons. First, Campbell himself delineated clear stages of the hero’s journey, providing a distinct structure for screenwriters to follow when devising their plots and character development. Secondly, Campbell’s model is the most eclectic of the major studies, integrating Freudian, Rankian, Jungian and Frazerian theory into a cohesive pattern of heroic elements. And finally, Campbell arranged his model in three broad units, (the nuclear unit of the monomyth), which corresponds quite nicely with the three-act structure that most screenplays follow.

Campbell’s term monomyth is a reference to a term originally created by James Joyce in *Finnegan’s Wake* (1939). It refers to the basic elements of myth, the archetypal qualities of all legends and heroes, that transcend individual cultures and specific periods of time. The monomyth is universal and timeless. Hence, the hero that Campbell explains is not one particular hero from one particular myth, but the universal qualities of all heroes from all myths—the hero with a thousand faces. The monomyth is universal and timeless because its basic form fulfills a psychological function for both the mythmakers and their audiences. Campbell explained it as follows:

- 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.

The formula of the monomyth is then summarized as follows:

- A hero ventures forth from the world of the 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.
And the specific actions within the three parts of the formula are explained as follows:

- The mythological hero, setting forth from his commonday hut or castle is lured to the threshold of adventure then the hero journeys through a world of unfamiliar yet strangely intimate forces, some of which severely threaten him (tests), some of which give magical aid (helpers). When he arrives at the nadir of his mythological round, he undergoes a supreme ordeal and gains his reward. The triumph may be represented as the hero’s sexual union with the goddess-mother of the world (sacred marriage), his recognition by the father-creator (father atonement), or his own divination (apotheosis). The final work is that of the return. At the return threshold the transcendental powers must remain behind; the hero re-emerges from the kingdom of dread. The boon he brings restores the world.

Campbell went even further in his account, breaking this three-part, (or three-act), formula down into seventeen specific stages, each of which he explains in detail. The stages of the hero’s journey are as follows:

Act One: Departure
- 1. The Call to Adventure
- 2. Refusal of the Call
- 3. Supernatural Aid
- 4. The Crossing of the First Threshold
- 5. The Belly of the Whale

Act Two: Initiation
- 6. The Road of Trials
- 7. The Meeting with the Goddess
- 8. Woman as the Temptress
- 9. Atonement with the Father
- 10. Apotheosis
- 11. The Ultimate Boon

Act III: Return
- 12. Refusal of the Return
- 13. The Magic Flight
A thorough explanation of each of these stages is beyond the scope of this article; however, by analyzing the film-stories of the most popular superhero at this time, *Spider-Man* (2002) and *Spider-Man 2* (2004), the essence of Campbell’s pattern should ring clear.

**Act I: Departure (Stages One – Five)**

As with nearly all heroes, especially of the superhero variety, Peter Parker (Tobey Maguire) is an orphan, raised by surrogate parents in this case, his aunt May (Rosemarie Harris) and uncle Ben (Cliff Robertson). In his commonday world, Peter is a geeky weakling, bullied by his classmates and ignored by his dream girl Mary Jane (Kirsten Dunst). But after being bitten by a genetically engineered mutant spider at a Columbia University lab, Peter gains superpowers. (In superhero movies, science fiction typically takes the place of divinity in bestowing supernatural aid to heroes, taking the form of superpowers). All of a sudden, Mary Jane notices Peter, and he is the one beating up the bullies. But Peter is not aware that his newfound powers have not only changed his abilities—they have changed his identity. Initially, he uses his powers selfishly.

Peter’s call to adventure comes when he has the opportunity to stop a thief, but doesn’t. His refusal of the call leads to an ironic tragedy, when the thief kills Peter’s uncle. In a sequence eerily reminiscent of the first act of Superman, Peter feels guilty that, for all of his superpowers, he could not save his own uncle. He is finally inspired to accept his call to adventure by his uncle’s last fateful words: *With great power comes great responsibility.* Peter crosses the first threshold into the realm of heroism, when he dons his Spider-Man costume and hunts down his uncle’s murderer. As Campbell would say, the hero is now immersed within the sphere of rebirth symbolized in the worldwide womb image of the belly of the whale.

**Act II: Initiation (Stages Six – Eleven)**

In the middle stages of his journey, the hero encounters and integrates all of the significant archetypes that aid him in achieving the mythic identity that he is destined for. First, Peter has a meeting with a goddess the wise and loving Aunt May, who gives him the last bit of inspiration he needs, telling him: *You were meant for great things.* He immediately embarks on his road of trials, fighting crime and foiling villains in New York City. Next, Peter has an encounter with a temptress, the beautiful Mary Jane. Like a siren, the danger of the temptress is her ability to lure the hero away from his road of trials. The hero would like nothing better than to settle down with a beautiful woman and lead a peaceful, quiet life of domestic
bliss. But, alas, the hero’s destiny is to live a solitary life of battle against dark forces, a life dedicated to others rather than to himself.

Though the superhero can never settle down with the temptress, she is a constant source of inspiration, as the superhero’s nemesis knows that he need only abduct the superhero’s love interest in order to find him. (In this sense, the temptress also plays the traditional feminine role of the maiden in distress). Mary Jane is abducted by the Green Goblin (Willem Dafoe), and Spider-Man must battle him in order to save her. Though we know nothing, (as yet), of Peter’s real father, Green Goblin plays the role of Peter’s dark, menacing father figure. Green Goblin is the father of Peter’s best friend, Harry Osborn (James Franco), who is like a brother to him. Peter undergoes his apotheosis, (his symbolic death and spiritual rebirth), in a tremendous battle scene with Green Goblin, in which he nearly dies. As with all hero myths, the core of Peter’s story is his relationship with his father. In this case, Peter must atone with his positive father figure, (Uncle Ben); and he must also destroy his negative father figure, (Green Goblin). He does both simultaneously, at the climax of the battle scene. When Green Goblin tells Spider-Man: I’ve been like a father to you, Spider-Man replies: I have a father. His name is Ben Parker. Green Goblin is then destroyed, ironically, by his own killing device.

In the final scene of Spider-Man, (the denouement), Peter experiences an epiphany, which is in essence what Campbell refers to as the ultimate boon. Even though Mary Jane tells Peter that she loves him, he knows that he must decline her love, because he has now fully accepted his identity as a superhero. His epiphany, his boon, is his realization that his powers, whether a gift or a curse, are meant to help the world, and that he must dedicate his life to this cause. For Spider-Man, the magic elixir or boon that restores the world, is himself.

Act III: Return (Stages Twelve & Seventeen)

The latter stages of Campbell’s model can be seen more clearly in the sequel film, Spider-Man 2 (2004). In stories of mortal heroes, the refusal of the return typically represents the hero’s reluctance to return from the land of adventure to his commonday world of ordinary people. However, since the superhero’s transformation from mortal to demi-god is permanent, Peter’s refusal represents a reluctance to return to his role as Spider-Man. Reasons for his reluctance are manifold. Peter’s duties as Spider-Man preclude him from studying at school, making enough money to live, and most importantly inhibit him from forming an intimate relationship with Mary Jane. There is even an interesting psychological twist, as Peter begins to lose his superpowers a psychosomatic symptom of his unconscious conflict with his super alter ego. Peter returns in his mind to the moment in which he initially accepted his call to adventure, remembering his fateful last conversation with Uncle Ben, and imagining himself refusing to take on the great responsibility that comes with great power. Now he can love Mary Jane and dedicate his passion to her. (This refusal theme is extremely reminiscent of Superman II (1980), in which Superman goes back to his fortress of solitude and gives up his superpowers to be with Lois Lane). But in due time, Peter accepts the inevitable and returns to
his role as superhero, his magic flight fueled by a resurgence of his superpowers, and a redoubled dedication to his cause, illustrated visually when Spider-Man flies triumphantly over the streets of Manhattan on his web vines.

The archetypal plot element of being captured by an enemy, only to be aided by him, is seen in the third act. This theme, which Campbell named the rescue from without, is played out when Peter, on the one hand, is captured and delivered to Spider-Man’s sworn enemy, Harry Osborn, who despises Spider-Man for killing his father. The theme is fulfilled when Harry lets Peter go, and tells him where the current supervillain, Doc Ock (Alfred Molina), is holding Mary Jane captive. An excellent example of the crossing of the return threshold is also seen in the third act, when Spider-Man returns to his role as superhero and surrenders his own body to stop a runaway subway train. In this supreme act of suffering, Spider-Man is a willing sacrifice to the people of the city, his crucifixion pose a clear symbol of his role as a semi-divine hero. Subsequent to this nearly ritualistic act of sacrifice, Spider-Man is temporarily powerless thus fulfilling Campbell’s mandate that the transcendental powers must remain behind at the return crossing but more importantly, Spider-Man is unmasked, revealing his true identity as just a regular human boy. This unmasking, rather than weakening Spider-Man, only endears him more to his public, who accept him outright as their hero and savior. When he is unmasked once more in the climactic battle scene, his dual identity is revealed to Mary Jane, who now loves him doubly as both a courageous superhero and an intimate best friend. Hence, Peter/Spider-Man becomes master of the two worlds. He is a great and victorious superhero, finally appreciated and loved by his public. And he is also Peter Parker, finally free of the burden of a secret identity, and free to love the girl of his dreams. In the end, the freedom to live represents the freedom of the people of New York to live without the fear of terrorizing super-villains, (because Spider-Man will always be there to save them); and it also represents Peter’s freedom to love, the freedom to be with Mary Jane, and to have mortal happiness along with his heroic responsibilities.

Maureen Murdock: The Heroine’s Journey

In The Heroine’s Journey (1990), Maureen Murdock reconfigures Joseph Campbell’s traditionally androcentric structure of the male hero’s myth, creating a mythic structure for heroines that addresses the particular needs, struggles and desires of modern women in a modern age.

The heroine must become a spiritual warrior. This demands that she learn the art of balance and have the patience for the slow, subtle integration of the feminine and the masculine aspects of herself. She first hungers to lose her feminine self and to merge with the masculine, and once she has done this, she begins to realize that this is neither the answer nor the end. She must not discard nor give up what she has learned throughout her heroic quest, but learn to view her hard-earned skills and successes not so much as the goal but as one
part of the entire journey. She will then begin to use these skills to work toward the larger quest of bringing people together, rather than for her own individual gain. This is the sacred marriage of the feminine and masculine when a woman can truly serve not only the needs of others but can value and be responsive to her own needs as well.

Murdock's stages of the heroine's journey are as follows:

1. Separation from the feminine
2. Identification with the masculine
3. The Road of trials
4. The Illusory boon of success
5. Awakening to feelings of spiritual aridity
6. Initiation and descent to the goddess
7. Urgent yearning to reconnect with the feminine
8. Healing the mother/daughter split
9. Healing the wounded masculine
10. Integration of masculine and feminine

By applying Murdock's model to one of the few existent female superhero movie characters, Lara Croft (Angelina Jolie), we will see how Murdock's model is in some ways appropriate and in other ways inappropriate as a means of establishing the relatively new phenomenon of a female superhero archetype. To begin with, it should be made clear that the films, Lara Croft: Tomb Raider (2001) and its sequel Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life (2003), were chosen as subjects for analysis, not because they are particularly illustrative of Murdock's model, but because they represent the only serialized film version of a female superhero in existence. (The reason why this is so is a subject for a different article). Furthermore, the stories of these films are relatively plot light, representing Croft's genesis from the world of videogames rather than comic books, hence the focus on action rather than story and character. And finally, these films tend to focus more on the visual element of Croft's character, indulging in drawn out shower scenes, skimpy skintight outfits and revealing bikinis, rather than character development or backstory. Hence, the analysis is constricted by a lack of material, despite the fact that it is based on two feature length films.
Stages One Three: Separation, Identification and the Road of Trials

The heroine’s journey begins with a rejection of traditional feminine values. The feminine stereotypes of dependence, sensitivity and emotionality are perceived as being retrograde and demeaning, hence the superheroine experiences a separation from the feminine, represented in Croft’s backstory by an early death of her mother, with whom she has virtually no connection. After separating from the feminine, the superheroine must find a new mentor, typically a man, to guide her in the male dominated realm of adventure and world saving. Croft’s identification with the masculine also takes place in her backstory, when she completely identifies with her father (Jon Voigt) and follows in his footsteps by becoming a tomb raider. This identification is revisited in the first act of Tomb Raider, when Croft accepts a call to adventure, posthumously left to her by her deceased father. Once initiated into the realm of adventure, the superheroine embarks on a road of trials identical in theme to the male superhero’s.

Stages Four Eight: Awakening, the Goddess, Yearning and Healing

Since the hero archetype is traditionally masculine, when a female is cast as the superhero in a film, she is usually imbued with the masculine qualities of strength, determination and superpowers that are normally required of male heroes. Consequently, male love interests in female hero movies often take on the functions normally required of the maiden, and are typically rescued by superheroines, as seen when Croft goes back in time to rescue her love interest, Alex (Daniel Craig). In risking her mission and quest to save her love interest, Croft displays that the masculine goals of fighting and world saving must be complemented with the more feminine goals of love and devotion. In other words, merely saving the world is an illusory boon of success. In terms of the superheroine’s character development, this boon leads her to an awakening to feelings of spiritual aridity, as she discovers that her super-identity is empty without love and companionship.

Though subtle, Murdock’s central thesis of spiritual balance between the sexual archetypes, otherwise known as psychological androgyny, is seen in the climax of Croft’s story. After saving the world and her love interest, Croft ventures back into the belly of the beast, at great peril, to rescue a locket left to her by her father. The locket contains a picture of her mother, thus representing her connection to both her mother and father. In this sense, Croft’s return to rescue the locket symbolizes her initiation and descent to the goddess, (the goddess representing
the archetypal mother-goddess). As such, the act simultaneously indicates an urgent yearning to reconnect with the feminine, and an act of healing the mother/daughter split. Nevertheless, all of this symbolic imagery goes absolutely nowhere in the film, as the denouement directly following the climax shows Croft back in her castle, engaged in her ultra-masculine training with killer robots, with her love-interest and mother reintegration conspicuously absent from her character. Despite the locket, Croft is clearly just a sexy woman in a male superhero's role, without any recognition of the different needs and desires inherent to femininity that Murdock delineated.

Stages Nine Ten: Healing the Wounded Masculine and Integration

Though the sequel film focuses more intensely on the integration of a love interest, ultimately, The Cradle of Life does little to develop Croft's character. According to Jung, the mythological figure that represents psychological androgyny is the Hermaphrodite, a common figure in myth and dreams that represents a divine child, a complete human being, born of the sacred marriage of the masculine and feminine archetypes, (the hieros gamos or holy coupling). The first step for the superheroine is to overcome her aversion to the traditionally feminine traits of love, devotion and vulnerability, by allowing herself to become intimate with a man. Croft accomplishes this, to a degree, through her relationship with her former lover and current ally, Terry Sheridan (Gerard Butler). But at each moment of critical choice, she moves away from intimacy by mistrusting Terry and pushing him away.

For Croft, the healing of the wounded masculine does not take place, and she never accomplishes a complete integration of the masculine and feminine. In fact, in a complete renunciation of her feminine side, Croft winds up killing Terry in the end, proving that psychologically and spiritually she is one hundred percent masculine and zero percent feminine. Croft's role is so clearly a male hero in a female's costume, that she could not even integrate love into her character, a compromise towards psychological balance that even Spider-Man a male superhero could eventually undertake. Perhaps the writers of the series will allow Croft to get in touch with her feminine side in the next sequel. I won't hold my breath.

Conclusion
In the dreams of contemporary individuals and in the scenes of a modern Hollywood superhero movie, we can identify the ancient archetypes that were first expressed in the stories of our ancient ancestors. While science has replaced divinity and the superhero has replaced the demi-god in the expression of the hero myth, the basic archetypal structure of the hero pattern has not changed and probably will never change, as the hero character serves the same function today as he did thousands of years ago. Heroes are simply ourselves projected outwardly. Their stories are our stories, and their adventures are meaningful only to the degree that we can identify with the heroes struggles and anxieties.

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