

# Stuck in a Labyrinth (or a Tower) with the Minotaur and trying to get out: Princess Aurora and Imperator Furiosa as the heroes of the Multimyth

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**Abstract:** In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* Joseph Campbell begins his thesis of the Monomyth with a recounting of the story of the Minotaur. His purpose is straightforward: the initiation and cycling of the hero's journey is predicated on an origin of evil narrative which the story of the Minotaur quintessentially is. It is interesting to note, however, that differently gendered expressions of narrative evil give rise to distinct and gendered vectors of protagonist action. In *Sleeping Beauty*, for example, Maleficent, a female/mother variant of the tyrant-monster, gives rise to a protagonist, Princess Aurora, who is never the conscious agent of the action she takes. On the other hand, in *Mad Max: Fury Road*, Furiosa literally drives the narrative action which is initiated by the tyrant-father, Immortan Joe. Though it's clear that Furiosa's journey adheres to a more manifest expression of empowered action than Princess Aurora's, this paper will argue that neither protagonist nor the implied origin of evil story setting each character's journey in motion suffices to define the heroine's journey. Rather, the fairytale princess and the female action-hero require a new interpretive model in order to describe both their conflicting and, surprisingly, common relationship to personal agency. Drawing on the methodology of Vladimir Propp, I intend to offer an alternative framework for understanding the attributes of the heroine's journey which circumvents completely the essentializing gesture that is necessarily made in positing an expression of the hero-task which would be unique to a female protagonist. Rather, I offer the Multimyth, an interpretive framework which 1) applies the model of the hero's journey to *Sleeping Beauty* and *Mad Max: Fury Road* in order to define, reveal, and interrogate the functioning of each film's narrative structure foregrounding the roles of Princess Aurora and Furiosa, respectively; and, then 2) uses the aggregate conclusions of the application of Campbell's model to each text to counter-interrogate the model itself. In doing so, I intend to expose the assumptions, omissions and limitations of the Monomyth as a narrative heuristic and at the same time elucidate the Multimyth as an interpretive model which honors Campbell's conception of the hero-task and proffers new methods for the application of the hero's journey which will result in a richer and more complex understanding of narrative structure.

**Key words:** Multimyth - Campbell - Minotaur.

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Disney's 1959 version of *Sleeping Beauty* features a framing narrative foregrounding the story of Princess Aurora within which is nested the narrative of Prince Phillip whose story events conform to the classic model of the hero's journey as delineated by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. The story of Aurora, or Briar-rose as she is known in the woodland realm, is relayed to Phillip a third of the way through the film when she walks over a tree bridge while singing. As she exists frame right, the camera descends towards the forest floor where it finds Phillip, riding his horse, Samson, frame left. Phillip stops the horse and says, "You hear that Samson?" (00:24:24). The voice of Briar-rose representing the *herald* in Campbell's hero model initiates Phillip's *call to adventure*. Phillip turns Samson in the direction of the voice, changing his vector of action, in response to the call and with this initiates his hero-task. Phillip urges Samson to gallop towards the disembodied voice but in his zeal ends up falling off Samson and getting soaked in a creek. Momentarily stalled and unsure of what to do next, Phillip is presently abetted by the woodland animals constituting *supernatural aid*. Through the intervention of these protective causal creatures, Phillip meets Briar-rose. In the dark forest, representing the narrative terrain of the *herald*, the unconscious libidino or "repressed instinctual fecundity" (Campbell 44), Briar-rose and Phillip dance and share their dreams in song. At the conclusion of this idyll, Phillip asks Briar-rose for her name to which she says, "Oh, no I can't" (00:32:42) and bids Phillip a hasty farewell. Phillip asks her when he will see her again and at first Briar-rose says "never" (00:32:47) and then says "this evening, at the cottage, in the glen." (00:32:59) Later, when Phillip arrives at the cottage under shroud of darkness, Briar-rose is gone and instead at this *crossing of the first threshold* Phillip encounters Maleficent who as a threshold guardian stands at the "veil of the known into the unknown" (Campbell 67) or "the zone of magnified power" (Campbell 64). Maleficent's goons subdue Phillip and usher him out of the cottage as her captive. Phillip's story is picked up later when the three fairies, Flora, Fauna and Merriweather discover that his Maleficent's prisoner. They travel to Maleficent's looming castle and there fly into it through the gaping jaws of a dragon implying Phillip's prior off-screen entry into *the belly of the whale* described by Campbell as a "swallowing" (Campbell 77) of the

hero or the “hero-dive through the jaws of the whale” (Campbell 77). The fairies find in Maleficent’s lair, the “umbilical point” (Campbell 32) of the *World Navel* where the “energies of eternity break into time” (Campbell 32), a celebration, or an ecstasy of Maleficent’s goon army, enacting the Bacchic Frenzy of Dionysos “that overturns reason and releases the forces of the destructive-creative dark” (Campbell 67). Maleficent, bored, descends to the dungeon where Phillip is being held. She taunts him, “Oh, come now, Prince Phillip, why so melancholy? A wondrous future lies before you. You, the destined hero of a charming fairytale come true.” (01:02:30) In the orb of her magical golden scepter Maleficent shows Phillip the specter of the erstwhile Briar-rose and now Princes Aurora, prone in an ageless sleep. It is in this vision that Phillip experiences the *meeting with the goddess*. However, shackled in chains, representing both Phillip’s suspension in time and space, Aurora is elusive as her beauty will never diminish while Phillip is shown a future vision of his own senescence, a free man, but without the vigor of his youth to complete the hero-task. In a second cycling of the first phase of the hero’s journey, *Departure*, Phillip, once again stalled and unable to take action, is abetted by *supernatural aid*, this time in the form of the three fairies who free him from his chains and bestow upon him an “enchanted shield of virtue and a “mighty sword of truth,” (01:05:15) “amulets against the dragon forces he is about to pass” (Campbell 57). Phillip escapes the castle and follows *the road of trials* back to the kingdom where he must pass “through the gates of metamorphosis” (Campbell 87) actualized in *Sleeping Beauty* as a perimeter of thorns which Maleficent conjures around the kingdom. Once Phillip successfully transgresses the thorn barrier, he readies himself for the ultimate encounter, *atonement with the father*, which Campbell describes as “the father’s ego-shattering initiation (110).” This final battle in which Phillip slays Maleficent represents the hero’s “at-one-ment” (Campbell 107) with the father presenting in *Sleeping Beauty* as Maleficent, a woman. Phillip becomes “divested of his mere humanity and is representative of an impersonal cosmic force. He is the twice-born: He has become himself the father” (Campbell 115-116). Endowed with the power to awaken the dead, Phillip ascends the tower and in the act of kissing Aurora, in the moment of their physical joining, the Prince realizes the hero-event, *apotheosis*. Aurora, awakened, represents the *ultimate boon*, “the life-transmuting trophy” (Campbell 167) whom Phillip brings back to the “kingdom of humanity” (Campbell 167) where she “may redound to the renewing of the community” (Campbell 167). As the fairies awaken the social body, Phillip descends the stairs with Aurora and *Sleeping Beauty* concludes with Phillip fulfilling the requirements of the hero-task; he is “the man of self-achieved submission (Campbell 11) who marries in order to secure the continuity of the kingdom through legitimate and lawful procreation. The hero’s journey is complete.

Aurora’s framing story also conforms to the hero’s journey, though, for *Sleeping Beauty’s* female protagonist, the modeling is partial. In the hero-event *refusal of the call* Campbell states, “Little Briar-rose (Sleeping Beauty) was put to sleep by a jealous hag (an unconscious evil-mother image)” (52). Earlier in the chapter Campbell explains, “refusal of the summons converts the adventure into its negative” (Campbell 49). Campbell’s psychoanalytic exegesis of the *refusal of the call* is sourced in his discussion in the first chapter, “The Monomyth,” in which he argues that the hero-task essentially involves a journey of maturation in which the hero crosses “difficult thresholds of transformation” (6) in

order to exit the “tragicomic triangle of the nursery” (3). Leaning heavily on Freud, it is Campbell’s position that every hero begins his journey as a budding Oedipus and only through the trials endured along the journey is he able to overcome his inappropriate infantile cathexes (115) and join the social body as a “rational being(s)” (4). The *refusal of the call*, thus, describes the hero-event in which spellbound, he, or in the present instance, a sleeping Arora, clings to her infantile fixations and remains in a state of arrested development unless she is saved. To be saved, or as Campbell calls the event, *rescue from without*, constitutes a second way in which Aurora’s framing narrative expresses the hero’s journey. Campbell states that the hero “may have to be brought back from his supernatural adventure by assistance from without” (178) because “the bliss of the deep abode is not lightly abandoned in favor of the self-scattering of the wakened state” (178). Phillip’s enacting of *apotheosis* in his journey constitutes *rescue from without* for Aurora in hers. Once she is awake, their hero-tasks join and together they perform *the crossing of the return threshold*, *master of the two worlds* and *freedom to live* which are the final three events in Campbell’s model of the hero-task.

The present inquiry is an attempt to define the *heroine’s journey* using Campbell’s exegesis of the hero’s journey in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. As Campbell suggests the *refusal of the call* is a negation of the will to advance the hero-task. It is a spiritual and emotional lingering and malingering in the womb and tomb of love for the idealized mother. *Rescue from without* also presupposes the same spiritual and emotional inertia from which the hero must shake his consort adventurer in order to rouse her to action. As a baseline for an inquiry into what the heroine’s journey might be, my inclination is to observe what is, rather than what, as a feminist and activist, I might wish for. That is, rather than define and describe the heroine’s journey in terms of an essentialized gendered narrative ideal, my goal is to catalogue and interpret what exists to observe and offer a definition of the heroine’s journey as encompassing of those observations. With that caveat, I offer the following contingent definition of the heroine’s journey: a story which features a female protagonist who advances the narrative and achieves the goal of exiting the “tragicomic triangle of the nursery” as described in Campbell’s hero-model. In the case of Sleeping Beauty Princess Aurora is cursed by Maleficent as an infant and she is sequestered by decree of her father-king. Before her encounter with Phillip in the forest, the three fairies send her out for berries. The day of her return to the kingdom is decided based on the calendar of Maleficent’s magic. Her ascent to the tower and the pricking of her finger on the spindle of the spinning wheel also occurs as a result of a spell engineered by Maleficent. Through the action of *Sleeping Beauty*, Aurora does not take a single *conscious* action to advance the narrative and yet, she fulfills the requirements of the heroine’s journey as defined above because, as I argue below: 1) though Arora’s role in advancing the narrative of *Sleeping Beauty* is *unconscious*, it is causal, nonetheless; and, 2) at the end of the story she does exit the romance of the nursery as Campbell’s ideal hero seeks to do.

Or, at least, she partially exits it which has as much to do with the inner architecture of the fairytale as it does with the hero’s journey. Aurora’s status as a nascent neurotic is established in the forest in the company of the woodland animals, many of whom come in pairs and presumably exist in happy heteronormative relationships. Here as Briar-rose, she sings, “I wonder, I wonder why each little bird has a someone to sing to, sweet things

to... ” (00:26:05) Later, she shares with the animals her dream of a prince who romances her. She states, “We walk together and talk together and just before we say good-bye, he takes me in his arms and then... I wake up.” (00:27:57) Campbell suggests in the opening chapter of *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* that “in the absence of an effective general mythology, each of us has his private, unrecognized, rudimentary, yet secretly potent pantheon of dream (2).” I will offer that the dream shared by Briar-rose with the woodland animals is suggestive of the infantile parental fixations discussed above. She wakes up at the moment her forbidden libidinal impulses towards her idealized mother rise from her dream state into consciousness. Listening to Briar-rose’s dream story the woodland animals who are suggestive of inanimate nursery toys come to life, materialize the omitted dream content. Upon discovering Phillip’s hat and cape, the owl, a couple of rabbits and two birds conjure a surrogate prince for Briar-rose to dance with. This transitional form of Briar-rose’s dream prince represents the object onto which the mapping of her infantile mother-fixation and projection of her unconscious desire occurs. Moments later Phillip sallies forth and the transitional form created by the woodland animals is traded in for a real prince who himself launches into song, serenading Briar-rose with, ‘I saw you once upon a dream...’ suggesting that he, too, is also still anchored in the romance of the nursery. I would argue that Briar-rose and Phillip, unknown to each other in their capacity as future sovereigns of the kingdom, become for each other in the present, the good “nourishing and protecting” (Campbell 4) idealized mother. That is, Briar-rose maps her good mother image onto Phillip and he, in turn, maps his good mother image onto Briar-rose and in so doing they discover “true love” which is the conscious and acceptable mapping onto a lover of the unconscious and repressed desire for the mother. Though Briar-rose/Aurora does not take any conscious action to advance the narrative of *Sleeping Beauty*, I will offer that at an unconscious level, Aurora’s forbidden libidinal impulses expressed in the vision of her dream prince functions as the primary mechanism of narrative causation in *Sleeping Beauty*.

That said, none of the events which aggregate to become Campbell’s hero-model name the infantile desire for the mother as a causal narrative force in the hero’s journey. Rather, in *the meeting with the goddess*, Campbell states about the idealized mother:

...she is the incarnation of the promise of perfection; the soul’s assurance that, at the conclusion of its exile in the world or organized inadequacies, the bliss that once was known will be known again’ the comforting, the nourishing, the ‘good mother’ – young and beautiful – who was known to us, and even tasted in the remotest past (Campbell 92).

To wit, the good mother, as opposed to the “bad” or absent mother” (Campbell 4) is the hero’s promise of reward for enduring the journey: a return to infantile beatitude in a socially sanctioned marriage with the “Queen Goddess of the World” (Campbell 91) which is exactly the dividend enjoyed by Phillip at end of end of his hero-task when he dances with Aurora, not as an unnamed “peasant girl” in the woods, but as his future queen. Instead, Campbell stirs the causal role of the unconscious and forbidden desire for the mother in the prologue to the hero’s journey in which he discusses the story of King Minos and the

Minotaur. King Minos, competing with his brothers for sovereignty of the kingdom prays to Poseidon to send him a sign of his divine right. Poseidon obliges and gives him a magic bull, instructing the King to sacrifice the bull on his altar. The King, beholding the majesty of the bull, decides to hide it in his own herd and sacrifice an ordinary bull in its stead. The hubris of the King angers Poseidon who inspires in Queen Pasiphaë, King Minos' wife, "an ungovernable passion for the bull" (Campbell 10). The King's craftsman, Daedalus, fashions for the Queen a wooden cow which enables her to copulate with the bull. The issue of their union is a monster, half-man, half-bull, the Minotaur who in time becomes a danger to the social body. So, the King asks Daedalus to build a labyrinth where the Minotaur is kept and is fed with a supply of youths and maidens captured from conquered nations.

If the hero, as Campbell states, is the "man of self-achieved submission" (11), then the Minotaur is the embodied expression of King Minos' failure to be the hero, to divest himself of his private and personal desire in order to completely acquiescence to his investiture as king which demands unequivocally that he sacrifice the divine bull on Poseidon's altar. The tyrant-monster is an expression of a deficit in the King's duty to the social order, manifestly reflecting his "uncontrollable impulses to acquisition within himself" (Campbell 11). The ordinary man, afflicted with the contagion of the king's trespass, separates himself from the social body and embarks on a journey with the goal of slaying the Minotaur who represents the King's transgressive narcissism. In completing the hero-task the hero purges himself of the king's primary sin and returns home, bringing the experience and consequential knowledge of his own restoration back to the social body so that it, too, can be reborn. It is in this way that the narcissistic excess of King Minos becomes the causal force for the hero's journey. As Campbell states, wherever the Minotaur "sets his hand there is a cry... a cry for the redeeming hero, the carrier of the shining blade, whose blow, whose touch, whose existence will liberate the land" (11). But, what of Pasiphaë and the sin she commits in copulating with bull? Is her sin suggestive of a transgressive hyper-sexual desire transmitted to the social body? Does it have causal narrative value for the hero? In undertaking the journey does he also expurgate himself of her sin? For, if the King's sin is described as his "uncontrollable impulses to acquisition within himself," wouldn't it follow that Pasiphaë's "ungovernable desire for the bull" constitutes a parallel transgressive impulse that violates her duty to the social body as Queen? Campbell fails to consciously describe the causal role of Pasiphaë's transgression and integrate it into his conception of the hero's journey. Rather, he relegates her act to a lesser violation in order to focus his attention on the king, "Society has blamed the queen greatly, but the king was not unconscious of his own share of guilt" (Campbell 9). In the ensuing discussion of the hero-task Pasiphaë nor her sin in copulating with the bull ever appears again. Following a summation of the hero's journey in the section "The Hero and the God," Campbell offers insight into narrative omission:

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 other implied—and the omission itself can speak volumes for the history and pathology of the example, as we shall presently see (Campbell 30).

Pasiphaë's extirpation from Campbell's text constitutes exactly the kind of rhetorical exclusion that "can speak volumes for the history and pathology of the example." Though Campbell claims that the "hero, therefore, is the man or *woman* who has been able to battle past his personal and local historical limitations to the generally valid, normally human forms," (Campbell 14), his failure to account for the role of Pasiphaë's transgression in the hero's journey, to impart narrative causation to her "ungovernable passion for the bull" in exactly the way that he conceives of the king's "uncontrollable impulses to acquisition" in the birth of the Minotaur suggests a complete evacuation of Pasiphaë's transgression as a causal mechanism for the hero's narrative action. I will argue below that Campbell's disavowal of the Queen's role in the hero-task, this structural omission in his narrative, belies his topical assertion stated above that his hero can, in fact, be a woman and has consequences for his conception of a female protagonist seeking to make the hero's journey. Returning now to *Sleeping Beauty's* framing narrative, it is clear why Aurora's "journey" is relegated to the margins of the story, reduced to the two events in Campbell's model which essentially constitute a negation of the journey. Let me suggest that if a divine bull were to enter the woodland realm, Briar-rose might just consider having sex with it. She is, after all, the spiritual daughter of Maleficent who with her black crown shaped like bull horns is the Minotaur presenting as a woman. The mother-daughter connection is underscored visually in the film with repeated images of Maleficent and Aurora both carrying birds perched on their hands. Their gendered alignment is supported in Campbell's model in his articulation of the *atonement with the father* where he states that:

When the child outgrows the popular idyll of the mother breast and turns to face the world of specialized adult action... a new element of rivalry in the picture: the son against the father for the mastery of the universe, and the daughter against the mother to be the mastered world (Campbell 115).

Campbell's rhetorical gesture, bifurcating the goal of the hero's journey according to gender conceives of a relaying of forbidden libidinal impulses through the lineage of female desire. As the tyrant-mother, I would argue, that Maleficent mobilizes and disseminates Pasiphaë's hyper-sexual transgression through the narrative of *Sleeping Beauty* rather than King Minos's sin of uncontrollable acquisition. Maleficent engages in two spells both of which result in separating Aurora from the social body: the first spell, cast at Aurora's birth, marks her as the inheritor of Pasiphaë's hyper-sexuality and effects her displacement to the cottage in the woods where she lives, hidden from Maleficent, under the chaste supervision of the three fairies; the second, upon Aurora's return to the kingdom effects her displacement to the tower where she succumbs to the seduction of Malificent's orb and to the tomb of sleep. Together these sequestrations, the second constituting a reversal of the first, signal narrative action to first mitigate and then negate the potent threat of Aurora who as an archetype of Pasiphaë engages in an abstracted form of copulation with the bull in the pricking of her finger on the spindle of the spinning wheel. It is here that we understand Aurora's true status in the narrative of *Sleeping Beauty*, namely, as an autochthonous threat to the social body, her unconscious hyper-sexual libidinal impulses

conceived as a potential cause of the kingdom's disintegration and dissolution. Phillip, meanwhile, succumbs to his own version of King Minos' narcissistic transgression after he tells his father-king that he is going to marry a "peasant girl." (00:45:18) He, then, gallops out of the kingdom to the prior agreed-upon tryst with Briar-rose only to encounter Maleficent at the woodland cottage in her stead. I would argue that Phillip's narcissism fuels a transgression anchored in identity, in a conflict of common versus royal; it is not a transgression of sex. In undertaking the journey and in the slaying of the tyrant-monster, Maleficent, he is able to purge himself of his transgressive narcissism. Aurora, however, is not given the same agency – one which would enable her to expurgate herself of her hyper-sexual inheritance through her own adventure. Rather, she is neutralized as a causal force in the narrative until Phillip is able to complete his hero-task at which point Aurora is purged of Pasiphaë's transgressive sexuality with a socially sanctioned kiss by him. The fragments of Campbell's model which constitute Aurora's abridged version of the journey sourced in the archetype of the hyper-sexual female are essential to *Sleeping Beauty* insofar as together, *refusal of the call* and *rescue from without*, create the conditions for the classic and complete iteration of the hero's journey, enacted by Prince Phillip, the male protagonist, to both initiate and resolve.

The final scene in *Sleeping Beauty* finds the social body, awakened, reborn and re-assembled in the kingdom's great hall, watching Prince Phillip and Princess Aurora appear on the stairs as the guardians of public duty and the progenitors of kingship. Their forbidden Oedipal love activated in the woodland realm at the perimeter of consciousness is, by virtue of the hero's journey according to Campbell's model, safely mapped onto the Prince and Princess' investiture as the future king and queen. In *atonement of the father*, describing the hero's maturation, Campbell betrays himself again with regard to the potential of a female hero when he states that the child "passes, spiritually, into the sphere of the father—who becomes, for his son, the sign of the future task, and for his daughter, of the future husband" (115). For the heroine, the female protagonist, the journey of her self-actualization ends in marriage. Though Campbell states repeatedly in his articulation of the journey that the hero-task results in the hero's departure from the romance of the nursery, I would argue that Prince Phillip and Princess Aurora preserve their infantile mappings even as they inhabit their socially destined joining as the keepers of the kingdom, and that further, it is precisely in this seamless alignment of the interdicted and the dictated at the resolution of *Sleeping Beauty* that we find the fairytale defined.

'Who killed the World?' is a good question and one that serves as focal point for the hero's journey in George Miller's 2015 film, *Mad Max: Fury Road*, the 4th installment in the Mad Max franchise. The movie opens with Max's voiceover stating, "As the world fell, each of us in our own way was broken." (00:00:57) With this, Max defines the parallel decline of himself, the social body and the world. In the chapter "The World Navel" Campbell offers a vision of the world which constitutes the exact inverse of *Mad Max: Fury Road's* post-apocalyptic setting as seen in the opening images of the film. Campbell describes a "flow of life into the body of the world" (32) where "this flow may be represented in physical terms as a circulation of food substance, dynamically as a streaming of energy, or spiritually as a manifestation of grace" (32). Campbell continues "grace, food substance, energy: these pour into the living world, and wherever they fail, life decomposes into death" (32). If the



“effect of the successful adventure of the hero is the unlocking and release of the flow of life into the body of the world” (Campbell 32), Max, standing on a precipice, surveying the wasteland that the world has become, is, indeed, a hero with a mission. However, unlike Prince Phillip, Max’s first hero-event is the *refusal of the call*. Much like the frog in the story of the princess who loses her golden ball in the spring which Campbell identifies as exemplary of the herald in his chapter “*Refusal of the Call*,” Max is called to action by a two-headed lizard seen in the opening image of the film. Both the frog and lizard represent “the counterpart of the underworld serpent” (Campbell 43) drawing the adventurer into its “unconscious deep” (Campbell 44). As the lizard turns in frame and skitters towards Max, the voices of those whom Max could not save, speak, “Hello?... Where are you?... Where are you, Max?... Help us, Max... You promised to help us.” (00:01:25-00:01:34) Max lifts his boot and crushes the lizard underfoot, silencing the voices who seek to initiate his *call to adventure* Max retrieves the lizard and eats it, his voiceover stating, “I tell myself they cannot touch me. They are long dead.” (00:01:44)

It’s interesting to note how the *refusal of the call* in *Mad Max: Fury Road* stacks up against the same in *Sleeping Beauty*. Though superficially, the topical narrative content could not be more different, structurally the hero-events in each film share striking similarities. Though the *refusal of the call* in *Sleeping Beauty* culminates in its full expression in Aurora’s eventual death-sleep, it begins with her initial sequestration when she is ushered from the kingdom to the woodland cottage by the three fairies. After Max eats the two-headed lizard, he gathers up his gear and throws it into his car with the intent of retreating from the voices attempting to initiate his *call to adventure* even further. Soon after, however, he is chased down and captured by War Boys, the agents of the tyrant-monster in *Mad Max: Fury Road*, Immortan Joe. Like the fairies, the War Boys engineer a displacement for Max which will eventually result in his responding to the call to adventure according to the classic version of the hero’s journey. It is important to note here, that unlike Aurora, Max is being brought by the War Boys towards the perversion of kingdom in the world of *Mad Max: Fury Road* known as the Citadel, whereas Aurora’s vector of action sees her being moved away from the kingdom for reasons already discussed above. I would argue that Max’s journey towards the Citadel predicts his role as the hero and that this vector of action anticipates a reversal of his *refusal of the call* later on in the film. Max’s displacement towards the Citadel is essential for his story because the hero’s journey requires that the hero become proximate to the tyrant-monster in order to fulfill the hero-task. In *Sleeping Beauty* Aurora’s return to the kingdom, once again a vector of action executed by the fairies, brings her into proximity with Maleficent, but unlike Max, her displacement and resulting encounter with Maleficent only results in an escalation of her *refusal of the call* when she falls asleep.

The Citadel, the temple-kingdom of Immortan Joe who is the Minotaur presenting as a man, represents the World Navel gone completely wrong and its wrongness signals what’s at stake if the hero does not fulfill the journey. Campbell’s description of the “figure of the tyrant-monster” (11) resonates: “he is the hoarder of the general benefit. He is the monster avid for the greedy rights of ‘my and mine’” (Campbell 11). In the case of *Mad Max: Fury Road* the “general benefit” is life-sustaining water which Immortan Joe withholds, or, at the very least, metes out parsimoniously, lest the social body becomes addicted to it. It is

in the well of the Citadel that we meet *Mad Max: Fury Road's* female protagonist, Imperator Furiosa, or, we see the back of her neck which is branded with a symbol representing Immortan Joe's spiritual and material dominion: a circle with a skull split at the teeth at its center. She walks towards the rig which she will drive for much of the film and anchors a steering wheel into the steering column with the same iconographic skull as the brand on her neck. As the rig is being assembled on the floor of the Citadel by the War Boys in preparation for its departure, Immortan Joe is similarly being assembled in the tower. The joining of his vest around his chest is edited to create a parallel with the connecting of the forward and rear trailers of the rig. The dressing of Immortan Joe is completed with the anchoring of an emblematic steering wheel at his crotch, signifying in a definitive way its phallic connotations. Furiosa begins the film firmly rooted within the apparatus of her tyrant-father's phallus, or, at least, we understand historically, that she has been. As the female protagonist of *Mad Max: Fury Road*, Furiosa advances the narrative at a conscious level with visible results for the story: she drives the rig out of the Citadel, and, instead of going straight to Gastown, she makes a left turn off-road catalyzing the story's action. Though her active role in precipitating the narrative events of *Mad Max: Fury Road* distinguishes her topically from Aurora's functioning in *Sleeping Beauty*, a closer look at the narrative dynamic between Furiosa and Max puts her status as a female protagonist enacting a classic version of the hero-task according to Campbell's model in doubt.

Furiosa's stated goal is to transport Immortan Joe's breeders to the "Green Land" where she herself wants to go because it's "home." The breeders are the Sirens of The Odyssey, beautiful women who also happen to produce Immortan Joe's progeny. They are mother-slaves, property and they want to be free. Like Prometheus stealing fire from the gods, Furiosa absconds with the breeders in the rig producing a lack in Immortan Joe. The tyrant-father's eldest son, Corpus Colusus, first perceives the lack while looking through the lens of a telescope: he sees Furiosa taking a detour with the rig. The tubular view through the telescope suggests visually the vaginal canal which is then repeated as a visual motif when Immortan Joe opens the door to a safe revealing a tubular passageway at the end of which is a large apartment where the breeders live. This lack, the sudden absence of the breeders, not only compels Immortan Joe to action, but also corrals Max who is being held in a cage, lingering still in the *refusal of the call*, into the narrative melee. I will observe that lack in *Sleeping Beauty* serves the same function as it does in *Mad Max: Fury Road* in that the unknown whereabouts of Aurora is what motivates Maleficent into sending first her goons and then Diablo in search of the missing Princess. Furiosa literally drives the action of the film through the sandstorm representing the *belly of the whale* until which point Max is still bound and immobile but moving, anchored as a hood ornament on the car of a War Boy. It is only after the completion of the first phase of the hero's journey, *Departure*, and during the transition to *Initiation*, that Max becomes active as a hero-in-the-making. Buried in the sands of the desert after the sandstorm, he rises, like the phoenix and casts off his bonds and bondage. Once free, he subdues Furiosa and they trade places. In the hierarchy of action which determines who advances the narrative in the world of *Mad Max: Fury Road*, the only action more potent than driving the rig is the wielding of a gun and starting with *the road of trials* Max does just that.

Following *road of Trials* the “good mother” surfaces as a story element in the hero-event, *the meeting with goddess*, except that in *Mad Max: Fury Road* there is no goddess to meet. Furiosa says to Max of the Green Place, ‘I was born there. I was taken as a child. Stolen.’ (01:15:46) For Furiosa, going to the Green Place is her attempt to locate the domain of the “Universal Mother” (Campbell 94) who “imputes to the cosmos the feminine attributes of the first, nourishing and protecting presence. The fantasy is primarily spontaneous” (Campbell 94). Aurora’s dream of a handsome prince in *Sleeping Beauty* expresses itself in *Mad Max: Fury Road* as Furiosa’s fantasy for an impossible return to a place that no longer exists. Her desire to retreat to the nursery, her longing for that unattainable comfort expressed in the vision of the Green Place, constitutes in Furiosa’s narrative her *refusal of the call*. Once it’s established that the Green Place has been wiped out, Furiosa makes the decision to retreat even further into her adventure-negation by riding 160 days across salt flats in the hope of finding the Universal Mother. She leaves Max behind who is returned to the opening image in the film, standing on a precipice looking at the horizon. The herald now embodied in the form of a vision of a young girl returns and beckons Max to the hero’s task and this time, he answers in the affirmative. He gets on his bike and chases Furiosa down. He explains to her that the only way for her to complete her hero-task is to appropriate the Citadel from Immortan Joe, to flip the locus of her annihilation to the locus of her empowerment. The implication is that Furiosa won’t find her mother but that she’ll find something better: self-actualization in completing the hero-quest. Though Furiosa makes an active decision to cross the salt flats, the question still remains whether or not this as an action makes a qualitative difference in the expression and experience of the *refusal of the call* as a narrative event when compared to its parallel in *Sleeping Beauty* in which a passive Arora succumbs to Maleficent’s spell and falls asleep. The fact remains, that like Aurora, Furiosa is drawn out of her infantile intransigence by the story’s male protagonist. Furiosa’s half-arm, a symbol of her castration as a branded extension of Immortan Joe, requires that she use a surrogate metallic limb in order to appear “whole.” Similarly, I would argue that Max’s affective intervention on the salt flats functions as a narrative appendage, pivoting Furiosa back in the direction of her own hero’s journey, something Max can only do after he has completed his own hero-task.

On the road back to the Citadel after Furiosa kills Immortan Joe, constituting her *atonement with the father* hero-event, she lays dying in the car of her dead tyrant-father, unable to breathe. Like Arora in *Sleeping Beauty* she is in need of Max to enact her *rescue from without*. Max obliges by first stabbing Furiosa with a knife, the literal penetration connotating intercourse metaphorically, at which point Furiosa orgasms momentarily back to life. She whispers in Max’s ear, “Home. Home.” (01:47:46) Max, recognizing that penetration has been inadequate as a means of liberating Furiosa from the fantasy of the good mother, escalates his intervention, and transfuses his blood into her which, indeed, does the trick. The hero-event that follows is a form of *apotheosis* which Campbell does not define at all in the sense that the word “apotheosis” appears nowhere in the chapter called “Apotheosis.” Rather, Campbell offers a discussion of the divinization of the hero expressed as a bisexual god, a model for being that exists prior to the “removal of the feminine into another form” (133). As an example, he cites a ritual action in which an incision is created on the under-

side of the penis creating a “penis womb” (133) or “symbolical male vagina” (133). At some point, Campbell states, the men who have undergone this ritual cutting:

Break open again the old wounds, and let it flow. It symbolizes at once the menstrual blood of the vagina and the semen of the male, as well as urine, water, and male milk. The flowing shows that the old men have the source of life and nourishment within themselves (133).

The esoteric form of apotheosis discussed by Campbell finds its ordinary expression in the scene in which Max saves Furiosa from death. Max, for a second time, redirects her towards her hero-task. I would suggest here that Campbell’s *apotheosis* is expressed in the image of Max and Furiosa in the car, their internal body systems joined via the exteriorized blood transfusion. Furiosa becomes part of Max and together they constitute the “bisexual god” Campbell describes. I will also offer that the more banal form of this hero-event is expressed in *Sleeping Beauty* when Phillip kisses Aurora and wakes her up. The moment of their lips joining is constitutive of an ordinary expression of *apotheosis*. It is important to note that in both *Sleeping Beauty* and *Mad Max*, it is the male protagonist who brings the female protagonist back to life. For all the ways in which Furiosa appears to be nothing like Aurora in terms of the topical action she takes in *Mad Max: Fury Road*, I would argue that Furiosa’s narrative as a female protagonist featuring the triad of hero-events, *refusal of the call-rescue from without-apotheosis*, is directly sourced in the story of her fairytale antecedent.

At the end of *Mad Max: Fury Road* Furiosa returns to the Citadel as a warrior and leader. Unlike *Aurora*, her hero-journey does not end in marriage. Furiosa fulfills the demands of the hero-task, bringing the boon of liberation to the people. In the spirit of Campbell’s ideal hero, she divests herself of her private, personal desire – to be forever meandering in the fantasy of her unattainable mother – and accepts her investiture, her public duty to the social body, which the death of Immortan Joe, her tyrant-father, requires. A final image of Max sees him looking up at Furiosa from a crowd, not as a member of the social body, but as loner, moving backwards against the tide, retreating from her as the people advance. Unlike Phillip and Arora, Max and Furiosa, in parting from each other at the story’s resolution, do exit completely the romance of the nursery. Furiosa’s journey ends with the restoration of “grace, food substance, energy” to the living world. But, what about Max? Is there an event in Campbell’s model which defines what is next for him? Beyond the finish line of the hero’s journey in which he or *she* returns home with the ability to restore the social body, there is a higher form of self-actualization which is expressed throughout Campbell’s text. It is exemplified in the story of the Buddha who in achieving enlightenment brings the boon of knowledge not just to the social body from which he comes but to the whole world. And, there is a suggestion in Campbell’s text that this hero who may have had a home at the inception of the journey, at its conclusion no longer does. The mechanics of rising to this level of the hero-task is articulated by Campbell (somewhat surprisingly) in *Refusal of the Call* when he states that:

Willed introversion, in fact, is one of the classic implements of creative genius and can be employed as a deliberate device. It drives the psychic energies into depth and activates the lost Continent of unconscious infantile and archetypal images. The result, of course, may be a disintegration of conscious more or less complete (neurosis, psychosis: the plight of spellbound Daphne); but on the other hand, if the personality is able to absorb and integrate the new forces, there will be experienced an almost super-human degree of self-consciousness and masterful control (53).

This is the method of the Buddha according to Campbell and one wonders if Max, in his return to the sand, to the dunes and to the desert, is destined to become such at the end of his hero-task. Max's final action in *Mad Max: Fury Road* also poses another essential question for the present study which is whether or not Max's hero-destiny could ever be Furiosa's. On this possibility, Campbell's text is tellingly mute.

In the foregoing analysis of *Sleeping Beauty* and *Mad Max*, it is clear that the *Monomyth* is more complex in its functioning than the conception of the 'constant story' in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces implies*. The danger of the *Monomyth* as a heuristic is that its interpretive model be applied to narrative without calling the model's structural assumptions into question. For example, the *Monomyth* 1) in no way accounts for nested and/or repeating narrative structures; 2) nor, does it posit a methodology for understanding the clustering of narrative fragments into partial expressions of the journey; and, 3) and, it does not account for biases implicit in the heuristic with regard to how gender functions in narrative. The problem with the conception of the "heroine's journey," however, is that it, too, contains an essentializing gesture. To define it as a unique expression of narrative progress based on gender invites all kinds of problematics involving the fundamental absence in the ascertaining of identity that has been the conundrum of post-modernism for the last 40 years. Rather, I would offer a new concept, the *Multimyth*, which describes a methodology for the application of the *Monomyth*, allowing for a more dynamic use of the heuristic per the discussion of *Sleeping Beauty* and *Mad Max: Fury Road* above. Specifically, the *Multimyth* involves a method of interpretation in which the narrative text is used to counter-interrogate Campbell's model in order to expose the entire spectrum of his priorities and bias informing the *Monomyth* so that an application of the hero-task to a text can be truly illuminating in terms what it reveals about narrative and narrative structure. In this way, the female protagonist who advances narrative, and, actually, any agent of narrative, their gender, race, sexuality, class or any other modifier of identity notwithstanding, can via the interpretive model of the *Multimyth* talk back to Campbell and show how they, too, can be heroes.

## Notes

1. "Vector of action" is a term I use to describe the direction a character is moving through narrative space. It does not necessarily coincide with screen direction.
2. In his groundbreaking work, *Morphology of a Folktale*, Vladimir Propp, would describe the event in which *Briar-rose* meets Philip as a *violation* in which an interdiction (the

fairies, Flora, Fauna and Merriweather, tell Briar-rose not to talk to strangers) is violated. Philip's question asking for Briar-rose's name gestures in the direction of what Campbell calls 'the phenomenal realm of names and forms' (73) and as a speech act also constitutes a vector of action threatening the integrity of the seam between unconscious desire (*violation*) and conscious repression (*interdiction*). Though I do not directly cite Propp in this study due to constraints of space, his methodology in my readings of the cinematic texts is paramount. This includes my conception of vector of action which I define both as the visible displacement of a character through space as well as directed displacements of conscious and unconscious story action which can be expressed in any cinematic element, not just through character motion.

3. Campbell conceives of the father as a "mystagogue (father or father-substitute) (115)" which suggests that the father is not gender specific.

4. Propp states that some "tales proceed from a certain situation of insufficiency or lack..." (34).

5. "Bisexual" connotes that the god possesses the genitalia of both sexes.

6. In Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of a Folktale* he observes repeated pairings of functions in his study of fairytales which supports the combination *refusal of the call-rescue from without-apotheosis* as a type of narrative grouping described by Propp.

## References

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**Resumen:** Joseph Campbell en su libro *El héroe de las mil caras: psicoanálisis del mito* describe su tesis del Mono-mito relatando la historia del Minotauro. Su propósito es claro: la iniciación y el carácter cíclico del periplo del héroe se basan en el origen de una narrativa que incluye una fuerza maléfica esencial en la historia del Minotauro. Es interesante observar, sin embargo, que expresiones de género divergentes sobre la narrativa del mal dan lugar, en relación al género, a distintas expresiones de acción protagónica. En la película *La Bella Durmiente* el personaje Maleficent, la variante femenina-madre del monstruo-tirano, es quien le da lugar a la protagonista, la princesa Aurora, la cual nunca es consciente de las acciones que ella misma realiza. Por otro lado, en *Mad Max: Furia en el camino*, la emperadora Furiosa literalmente lleva la acción narrativa iniciada por el padre-tirano, Immortan Joe. Aunque está claro que el viaje de Furiosa se adhiere a una clara expresión de acción y poder por parte de la princesa Aurora, en este artículo el argumento es que ni la protagonista ni el origen implícito de la narrativa del mal que establece el viaje de cada personaje, es determinante para definir el periplo de la heroína. Más bien, la princesa del cuento de hadas y la heroína de las películas de acción requieren un nuevo modelo interpretativo para poder describir su relación conflictiva, y a la vez esperada, con el libre albedrío.

Inspirada en la metodología de Vladimir Propp, mi intención es ofrecer un marco alternativo para comprender los atributos del periplo de la heroína que evade completamente el gesto esencializante que se realiza al postular una expresión de la tarea del héroe que sería exclusiva de una protagonista femenina. Ofrezco un marco interpretativo con el Mito-múltiple que: 1) aplico al modelo del viaje del héroe en *La Bella Durmiente* y *Mad Max: Furia en el camino* para definir, revelar e interrogar el funcionamiento de la estructura narrativa de cada película por medio de los personajes de la princesa Aurora y la emperadora Furiosa; y, luego, 2) utilizo la suma de conclusiones de la aplicación del modelo de Campbell a cada texto para contra-interrogar al propio modelo. Al hacerlo, mi intención es exponer las suposiciones, omisiones y limitaciones del Mono-mito como una narrativa heurística y, al mismo tiempo, dilucidar el Mito-múltiple como un modelo interpretativo que honra la concepción de Campbell de la tarea del héroe y ofrece nuevos métodos para la aplicación del viaje del héroe, que resultará en una comprensión más rica y compleja de la estructura narrativa.

**Palabras clave:** Mono-mito - Mito-múltiple - Campell - Minotauro - Propp

**Resumo:** Em O Herói com Mil Rostos, Joseph Campbell começa sua tese de Monomito com um relato da história do Minotauro. Sua finalidade é direta: a iniciação e o ciclo da jornada do herói são baseados em uma origem da narrativa do mal, da qual a história do Minotauro é um paradigma. É interessante notar, no entanto, que diferentes expressões de gênero da narrativa do mal dão origem a diferentes vetores da expressões de gênero da ação protagonista. Em “A Bela Adormecida” (original: *The Sleeping Beauty*), por exemplo, Malévola, uma variante mulher/mãe da figura de tirano/monstro, dá origem a uma protagonista, a princesa Aurora, que nunca é a agente consciente das ações que toma. Por outro lado, em *Mad Max: Estrada da Fúria* (original: *Mad Max: Fury Road*), Furiosa dirige, literalmente, a ação narrativa, que é iniciada pelo pai-tirano, Immortan Joe. Embora seja claro que a jornada de Furiosa adere à uma expressão mais empoderada de ação do que no caso da Princesa Aurora, este artigo visa argumentar que nem a protagonista nem a origem implícita do mal na história que coloca a narrativa de cada personagem em movimento é suficiente para definir a jornada da heroína. Ao invés disso, a princesa dos contos de fadas e a herói de ação feminino exigem um novo modelo interpretativo para descrever seu relacionamento conflitante e, surpreendentemente, comum com a agência pessoal. Com base na metodologia de Vladimir Propp, este artigo apresenta uma estrutura alternativa para a compreensão dos atributos da jornada da heroína, que evita completamente o gesto essencialização que é necessariamente feita por postular uma expressão da tarefa do herói que seria específico à uma mulher protagonista. Portanto, apresenta-se o Multimito, uma estrutura interpretativa que 1) aplica o modelo de jornada do herói em “A Bela Adormecida” e “Mad Max: Estrada da Fúria”, para definir, revelar e questionar o funcionamento da estrutura narrativa de cada filme, colocando em primeiro plano os personagens da Princesa Aurora e Furiosa, respectivamente; e então 2) usar as conclusões resumidas da aplicação do modelo de Campbell em cada texto para contra-interrogar o próprio modelo. Ao fazer isso, pretendo expor suposições, omissões e limitações do Monomito como uma narrativa heurística e, ao mesmo tempo, elucidar o Multimito como um modelo interpretativo que honra a concepção do tarefa do herói de

Campbell e fornece novos métodos para aplicar a jornada do herói que resultará em uma compreensão mais rica e complexa da estrutura narrativa.

**Palavras chave:** monomito - multimito - Campbell - Minotauro - Propp

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