

The Forked Road Of Narrative In The Hero's Journey

Volume I: Cards for the Samurai (A Novel)

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is entitled, *The Forked Road of Narrative in the Hero's Journey*. The Exegesis accompanying the creative work, *Cards for the Samurai*, is entitled *The Hero At the Crossroads*. It discusses perceived changes and abridgements to the hero-quest in literature and cinema. The research questions I seek to answer in the Exegesis, and by execution in the creative work, are:

Has there has been a shift, or abridgement in the hero-quest narratives of cinema and literature?

Is the role of the 'monster'—as I term the narrative impediments that the hero must face—becoming more important than the narrative resolution?

Are writers of quest novels—like myself—making the jeopardy more important than the 'grail,' or prize the hero seeks? Is this a result of audience, or reader expectations?

Are such perceived changes being guided by writers and screenwriters seeking a more economical narrative to the plodding hero-quest of old?

In the Exegesis I investigate how these perceived changes, or abridgments to the hero-quest may have come about. I question if it is because of incremental changes to hero-quest narratives that began with the original Grail re-tellings. I then trace incremental changes in hero-quests back to classical texts like *The Odyssey*, and to modern classics such as *Moby-Dick*. Examples from thriller, horror, and crime genres, as well as an historical overview, are used to see if the age-old narrative where the hero has to first defeat the monster, before attaining the 'grail,' or 'prize', is becoming pruned.

For answers to these research questions, and speculations, I engage with the theoretical hero-quest models of Joseph Campbell, and Vladimir Propp.

In the latter part of the Exegesis I discuss how my creative work uses the hero-quest as a narrative device in the light of these theoretical models. I discuss how I negotiated my way through the perceived changes and narrative conflicts of hero-quest narratives.

Ultimately in the Exegesis I suggest that there may be an inherent division, or bifurcation in the uniform models of theorists such as Propp and Campbell, and that writers of quest narratives—like myself—consciously, or unconsciously try to bridge this division. Along with examples from literature and modern cinema, and my own creative work, I detail the difficulties this perceived division poses not only for writers but readers and audiences.

DECLARATION

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree, or diploma in any university, or tertiary institution, and to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published, or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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Signed

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