

# Analysis of Hero Archetype in George Richard Raymond Martin's *A Game of Thrones*

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## Abstract

Fantasy is an imaginary story with a supernatural element. George Richard Raymond Martin's *A Game of Thrones* is an epic fantasy novel. The story revolves around several Noble families fighting for the Throne and the main characters going to fight against evil forces behind the wall. The novel contains plenty of conflict and adventures. This article deals with archetypes in epic fantasy novels of George R. R. Martin's *A Game of Thrones* from the series *A Song of Ice and Fire*. Specifically, it is focused on the archetypal analysis of Jon snow and Daenerys Targaryen.

The analysis is based on in the light of Joseph Campbell's concept of the Hero's Journey in fantasy literature. Campbell presents a sequence of steps to identify the hero archetype. The hero's journey can be described as 3 stages and 17 sub-stages. In the selected novel, *A Game of Thrones*, 6 sub-stages are evident. They are a call to adventure, The Supernatural Aid, crossing of the first Threshold, The Belly of the whale, The Meeting with God, and Meeting the Mentor. They are all analysed in this article.

**Key words:** Hero, Archetype, Hero's journey, Campbell, Jon Snow, Daenerys Targaryen, *A Game of Thrones*, *A Song of Ice and Fire*.

## Introduction

Fantasy is an imaginary story blended with magical and supernatural elements. It is one of the most popular literary genres. Fantasy literature is not only for children but also for adults. In the history of fantasy, there are many types of fantasy like heroic fantasy, epic fantasy, portal fantasy, secondary world, urban fantasy, folklore, dark fantasy, fairy tales, horror and science fiction; all these terms can be defined as fantasy. George Richard Raymond Martin's *A Game of Thrones* falls under epic fantasy novel. Martin uses more than 2000 characters in the *A Song of Ice and Fire* series. Martin's *A Game of Thrones* follows the familiar pattern of the quest for the hero, central to the mythological systems of numerous cultures. The story consists of 3 plot lines that are not arranged in chronological order but are connected around the war to acquire the throne of the Seven Kingdoms. The first plot is about the house of Stark, a noble house led by Eddard Stark. The second plot is about Daenerys Targaryen, a princess of an old royal family, and the third plot is about the illegitimate son of Eddard Stark, named Jon Snow, who dedicates his life to protecting the civilians of the Seven Kingdoms in a special military order called the Night's Watch. Martin developed characters from the king to the ordinary thief in a perfect manner through the archetypes. He deals with all social classes and their moral complexity, which makes characters familiar to readers. The characters are based on archetypes that are repeated through history. The secondary world created by Martin is familiar to the reader through his mythical archetypes common to many cultures, such as giants, children of the forest, and white walkers. By using these archetypal elements, Martin meets the reader's desire to be placed in an imaginable landscape.

## Archetype

Archetypes are primordial images, characters, or patterns of circumstances that recur throughout literature and are thought of consistently enough to be considered a universal concept or situation. Carl Gustav Jung was a swiss psychologist and father of archetypal psychology. He defined archetypes as

“essentially an unconscious content that is altered by becoming conscious and by being perceived, and it takes its colour from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear.” (C. G. Jung: 5)

which means that some ideas are fed in every person's deep conscious. This is the reason that characters repeated again and again in literature from myth to modern.

## Hero archetype

Hero archetype is the oldest and popular archetype in our society. The hero archetype is a literary character that is all around good. He or she will save people, do the right thing, and protect what is good. The hero should be strong in both physique and moral character. They must have special fighting or intellectual skills that allow them to function as a hero. There are six major hero archetypes in literature. They are the tragic hero, the epic hero, the classical hero, the everyman hero, the Byronic hero, and the Anti-hero archetype. A tragic hero is a hero who possesses a fatal flaw or makes an error in judgement that ultimately leads to their downfall. The best examples of tragic hero archetypes are Odysseus in *Odyssey*, Oedipus in *Oedipus*, *The King*, and Hamlet in *Hamlet*. Epic heroes usually come from noble backgrounds and are viewed as legendary due to their superhuman capabilities. The best examples of epic hero archetypes are Achilles in *Iliad* and Beowulf in *Beowulf*. The classical hero has some great skills and abilities that put him at the top of the list among contemporary heroes. These skills include the ability to fight and cleverness.

These heroes appear normal on the surface until their powers begin to reveal themselves; for example, Harry Potter learns that he is a wizard with magical powers. Everyman hero are just ordinary people without any heroic qualities. These types of heroes

face normal circumstances. They do not have heroic qualities of courage or a warrior nature. For example, in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, Bilbo Baggins is a common hobbit without extraordinary abilities who finds himself on an adventure to obtain the treasure guarded by Smaug the dragon. The Byronic hero archetype is based on the qualities suggested by Lord Byron, a popular romantic poet. Such heroes are often sullen, inscrutable, and prickly. They are, however, rich in romantic feelings and passions. Some examples are Heathcliff from *Wuthering Heights* and Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*. Anti-hero archetype characters do not have heroic qualities like several other archetypes. They, rather, possess non-heroic or anti-heroic qualities such as immorality, dishonesty, treachery, and greed. Examples are Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*, Becky Sharp in *Vanity Fair*, and Satan in *Paradise Lost*. According to Joseph Campbell, hero can go beyond his personal limits as well as limits imposed upon him by his culture. The hero's goal is to understand the universal truth of mankind and when he returns, he must teach his people what he learned. Campbell defines

"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." (Joseph Campbell 28)

The hero's journey can be described as 17 stages of Joseph Campbell monomyth. The hero archetype falls on 2 character in Martin's work *A Game of Thrones*; they are Daenerys Targaryen and Jon Snow.

### Jon Snow as hero

The character of Jon Snow can be considered the protagonist. Jon Snow is a 14 years old illegitimate son of Eddard Stark of Winterfell. Like every hero from myth, Jon Snow's birth is a mystery, his father Eddard Stark never reveals his mother to anyone. Jon Snow asks Eddard Stark's brother Benjen to take him to the night watch. If he joins the Night's Watch, he can never leave it, he cannot father a child, he has to wear only black, and he has to serve all his life to the realm. Jon Snow departs from his normal life to a different one. The incident can be considered as Separation. The Supernatural Aid, Lord Commander and some Sworn Brothers went behind the Wall so Jon could make the vow, his wolf brought them a hand.

They soon found the dead bodies of missing rangers. The corpses had blue eyes. Lord Mormont ordered to bring them back to Castle Black so Maester Aemon can have a look. When the night came, the dead man woke up and wanted to kill the Lord Commander. Jon fought with the dead man. Jon was trying to kill the creature; the sword did not help. Jon finally killed the creature by fire. After saving Lord Mormont's life, Jon got a gift from him, a sword made from Valyrian steel. The incident in the godwood beyond the Wall makes Lord Mormont decide to go himself and search for the missing rangers beyond the Wall. He also decided to go with two hundred men from Castle Black and another hundred men from the Shadow Tower including Jon Snow. The incident can be considered a call to adventure. The crossing the threshold is the point where the hero leaves the known limits of the world and enters into a dangerous part of the world. Jon crosses the wall with Lord commander to a treacherous world of barbarians and white walkers.

### Daenerys Targaryen as Heroine

As a heroine she is a royal bloodline but due to the revolution, she flees for her life. Her motif is to acquire the throne again. According to Campbell, the first step in a hero's journey is the call to adventure. In Daenerys' case, this happens after she gets Khal Drogo to kill her cruel brother. This incident makes her to next in line to the throne of Westeros. In her journey, Daenerys also receives assistance from Jorah Mormont who fits the figure of what Campbell called "the Wise Old Man. The Supernatural aid, the first and most relevant aid received by Daenerys is the dragon eggs she got as a wedding gift from Magister Illyrio. The meeting with god, is the hero's experience of losing himself in unconditional love. At first, Daenerys suffers from Drogo's matrimonial lust but the situation changed a lot. She became Drogo's partner rather than his concubine. He became the greatest love in her life. The belly of the whale is the magical threshold of the hero where he may appear to die but in reality, reborn. After her husband's death, she became mad. She walked into her husband's funeral pyre with a dragon's egg. She emerges from the ashes with her baby dragons.

### Conclusion

The goal of this paper is to examine how Joseph Campbell's monomyth is applied to some of the characters, and in the cases of Jon Snow and Daenerys Targaryen. However, both hero archetype has not yet faced the final parts of the hero's journey facing their greatest enemy through a crisis in the selected novel. But it can be found in the other novel in the series *A Song of Ice and Fire*. This paper can be analysed through various literary theories like New Historicism, Feminism through the strong female character in the works, and Queer theory but I believe Archetypal is one of the better theories to analyse this work and it exhibits in the work give a wide range of knowledge to the readers.

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