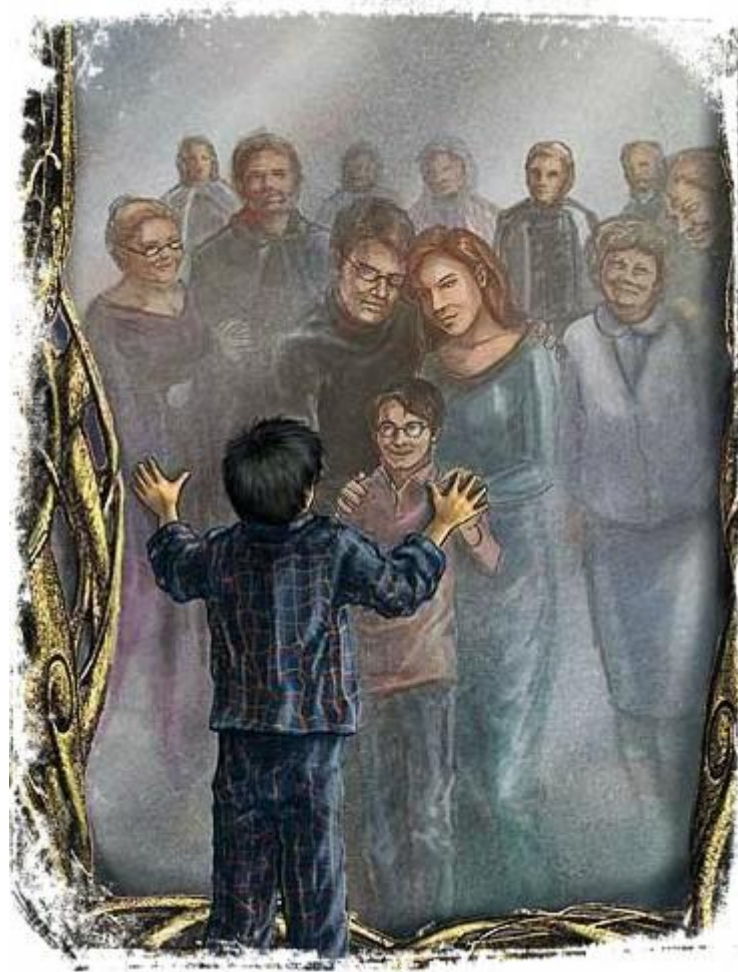IKER AULESTIA RENOBALES

GRADO EN ESTUDIOS INGLESES

2016/2017

The Classical Hero's Journey in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*

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Abstract

Although several academic studies have extensively analyzed J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, there might not be many studies examining the traits of the classical hero's journey in this specific novel. Hence, the aim of this essay is to identify the recurrent stages of a classical hero's journey in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. In order to accomplish this, this paper will first introduce some basic biographical information about J. K. Rowling as well as a section devoted to the characterization of Fantasy literature. Then, following a psychoanalytic approach, the paper will analyze the main stages that recurrently can be identified in the journey of a classical hero presented in Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, and subsequently, it will establish a correlation between such stages and J.K. Rowling's first published novel. Lastly, a conclusion will be presented enclosing all the information presented above and summarizing the key ideas defended throughout this essay.

Key words: hero's journey, Fantasy literature, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, J. K. Rowling, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*

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1. Introduction

In her book *A Guide to the Harry Potter Novels* (2002), Julia Eccleshare described J. K. Rowling's success in a statement which referred to the unprecedented achievements accomplished by the latter author.

> This overwhelming success has raised expectation of what can be achieved by other books and by other authors. [...] Rowling has become an international superstar, attracting the kind of media attention usually reserved for pop stars, film stars, footballers or supermodels. This shift has had an effect on the status of authors and their place in the social hierarchy. (109)

What we are going to analyze in this paper corresponds to a literary phenomenon that has become a game changer without precedent in the entire history of literature. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997), as the first publication accounting for J. K Rowling's success, has expanded the horizons of what a humble author is capable of doing by the mere use of a pen and some paper: the passions she is able to raise, the moral values she is able to promote and the soaring numbers of lives she is able to affect.

However, despite her achievements have no precedents in terms of success, as we have mentioned in the abstract, the aim of this paper is the analysis of a certain structural pattern known as the "hero's journey" which appears in a recurrent manner through most of the literature and mythology which features a classical hero as a protagonist. This paper will provide some basic biographical information about the author followed by a characterization of Fantasy literature. Next, we will delve into the main stages which can be identified recurrently in the journey of a classical hero. To accomplish such purpose, we will follow a psychoanalytic approach; first identifying these stages described in Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949) and, then, establishing a correlation between such stages and *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone.* Finally, a conclusion encompassing all the key ideas of the paper will be provided, together with some suggestions for further research.

This paper follows the MLA (Modern Language Association) style —eighth edition, 2016—.

2. Author

J. K. Rowling is an author who seems to write making use of magic. She has become a synonym of success and her name is widely known through the entire planet. According to the Guinness World Records in "First Billion-Dollar Author" (2004), through her Harry Potter series, she has become the first billion dollar author selling a total of 400 million copies and being published in 55 languages, including Latin and Ancient Greek (par. 1). In any case, who is the woman behind all this success?

Although she is widely known as J. K. Rowling, her real name is Joanne Rowling. According to her own web page in "About J. K. Rowling" (2016), this name was modified by her publisher, who believed that "an obviously female author might not appeal to the target audience of young boys" (par. 14). Hence, her publisher asked Rowling to introduce the name "Kathleen" which was her paternal grandmother's name. Nevertheless, as revealed in the video interview "J. K. Rowling on how to pronounce her name" (2012) for The Guardian, Rowling truly likes the idea of having a distinction between her real name and her pen name because this has been very helpful in order to establish a clear division between her career as a writer and her family life, which she firmly desires to preserve in privacy.

However, this is not the only name under which she has published her works. She also created the pseudonym of "Robert Galbraith" for another series of books known as *The Cormoran Strike Novels* (2013-2015). The purpose of having a pseudonym for this series of novels was motivated by the desire of being able to return to anonymity, and thus, to be able to gather non-biased feedback from both publishers and readers. According to Rowling's website, also created under the pseudonym of Robert Galbraith, in "About Robert Galbraith", the reason for adopting a male pseudonym relies on the fact that she wanted to distance her real identity from the pseudonym as much as possible (par. 3).

Joanne Rowling was born in Yate[1], England on the 31st of July, 1965. Although she grew up in a family with modest economic resources, she attended St Michael's Primary School in Winterbourne, Wyedean School and College, and finally graduated

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[1]The Harry Potter series are located in England, including many references and allusions to authentic cities and places. Not surprisingly, some of them take place just next to Yate, such as when Hagrid mentions that Harry fell asleep just when they were flying above Bristol.

from the University of Exeter. Rowling grew surrounded by books and, from the early stages of her youth, she manifested a clear desire to become a writer. By the early age of six, she had already written her first book, *Rabbit,* and by the age of eleven, she wrote her first novel which revolved around seven cursed diamonds and their owners.

After graduating, Rowling moved to London where she went through several different jobs, including one as a researcher for Amnesty International. This job got Rowling to deal with several atrocities carried out by totalitarian regimes against people who were trying to denounce such regimes. In her own words, "my small participation in that process was one of the most humbling and inspiring experiences of my life" ("About J. K. Rowling" par. 8).

In 1990, while she was traveling in a delayed train that went from Manchester to London, out of the blue, Rowling got the idea of writing about Harry Potter. Through the following five years, she scribbled several notes about the seven books that account for the entire series of Harry Potter, many of which were written on scraps of paper. In October 1992, Rowling married Jorge Arantes in Portugal, with whom, one year later, she had her daughter Jessica. The marriage ended the same year their daughter was born, which made Rowling return to Edinburgh with Jessica as well as with a suitcase containing the first three chapters of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone.*

These were difficult times for Rowling who had to struggle as a single mother. As the web site biography.com indicates in "Biography of J. K. Rowling", no matter how, she always fought for herself, her daughter and her dream of becoming a writer. "I was set free because my greatest fear had been realized and I still had a daughter that I adored, and I had an old typewriter and a big idea. And so rock bottom became a solid foundation on which I rebuilt my life" ("About J. K. Rowling" par. 6).

Hence, back in Edinburgh, Rowling made her living as a teacher and devoted every spare moment to writing. As a result, she was able to finish a manuscript for *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and send copies of the first three chapters to several literary agents, one of whom replied a letter wanting to know more about this story.

This manuscript became a published book in June 1997. The enormous success of this first publication led Rowling to publish the remaining six novels that account for

the entire Harry Potter series, each of which has achieved a record-breaking success. But Rowling did not stop at this point. As mentioned previously, she has also published adult novels such as *The Casual Vacancy* (2012) and a series of crime novels known as *The Cormoran Strike Novels*. Likewise, all of the books of the Harry Potter series have been adapted to cinema by Warner Bros resulting in equally successful films. Unlike the series of novels which made a total of seven books, the film adaptations have reached the number of eight as the last book of the series has been split into two films. More recently, in 2016, Rowling made her debut as a screenwriter with *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them,* a film that extends the same magical world of Harry Potter but which takes place several years before the series of novels. This film is also intended to be the first part of a series of four more films that will follow it ("About J. K. Rowling" par. 24).

Aside from all of her literary production, we can find in her web that Rowling has also devoted special attention to many different charities including her own charity, Volant, which tries to alleviate social deprivation, especially focusing on women, children and young people at risk. By the same token, in 2009 she also founded the Anne Rowling Regenerative Neurology Clinic. Moreover, Rowling has also made remarkable contributions to the Multiple Sclerosis Society in Scotland, the Maggie's Centres for Cancer Care, Médecins Sans Frontières, Lumos, Gingerbread, and Comic Relief (pars. 28-32).

Since December 2001, Rowling has been married to Dr. Neil Murray, with whom in 2003 she had a son named David, and in 2005 a daughter named Mackenzie. They all live together in Edinburgh (par. 25).

3. Context: Fantasy literature

The genre of Fantasy literature encompasses a broad diversity of characteristics and traits that make it difficult to define it succinctly. For this purpose, we will focus on some of the critical approaches that have attempted to characterize and define the genre, which will facilitate the grasping of such a broad concept.

According to Margaret Drabble in *The Oxford Companion to English Literature* (2000)*,* Fantasy fiction holds an utmost importance in English literature, ranging from its early origins, through the times of the greatest classics up to the present day.

> During the second half of the 20th century, fantasy fiction has become one of the most productive and commercially successful of literary genres in English. In one sense this is not surprising. Literature containing elements of the fantastic is as old as literature in English (or in any language), and includes such works as *Beowulf*, with its fire-spewing dragon and man-eating ogres, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, with its enchantresses and shape-shifting giant, or Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur*, Edmund Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, or Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Tempest*, with their respective complements of enchanted swords, elvish knights, fairies, and wizards. (350)

If we are to focus on a definition, Colin N. Manlove in his book *The Impulse of Fantasy Literature* (1983) defines "Fantasy" as "a fiction evoking wonder and containing a substantial and irreducible element of supernatural or impossible worlds, beings or objects with which the mortal characters in the story or the readers become on at least partly familiar terms" (1).

In this regard, Brian Stableford in his book *Historical Dictionary of Fantasy Literature* (2005) defines the term "Fantasy" as "the faculty by which simulacra of sensible objects can be reproduced in the mind: the process of imagination" (1) and he further appeals to the meaning that was related to "Fantasy literature" during the origins of modern English.

> Geoffrey Chaucer, the first writer known to us who worked in a language recognizably akin to modern English, uses the word *fantasye* to refer to strange and bizarre notions that have no basis in everyday experience, and this is the sense in which it is usually used today when one speaks of "fantasy literature". (1)

Due to the intrinsic nature of this genre which always revolves around supernatural, impossible and fictional worlds, Fantasy has become a genre which has often been stigmatized for being a promoter of reverie and escapism. According to Hunt and Lenz in their book *Alternative Worlds in Fantasy Fiction* (2001), this negative understanding of fantasy derives from a dual opposition.

> Fantasy literature is either taken seriously (and enthusiastically), or seriously rejected. It is the root of all literature, an area of advanced literary experimentation, and essential to our mental health; or it is regressive, and associated with self-indulgent catharsis on the part of the writers; or it is linked to a ritualistic, epic, dehumanized world of predetermination and out of tune with post-romantic sensitivity: or it symbolizes the random world of the postmodern. (2)

However, this worrisome and widespread pejorative conception of Fantasy has found several detractors that have highlighted many positive aspects with regard to this genre. In opposition to understanding fantasy as a negative literary genre, Pratchett and Briggs in their book *The Discworld Companion* (1997) provide a highly exemplifying statement concerning the importance of fantasy as a genre within the entire literature.

> There's certainly prejudice in some quarters against fantasy, but this tends to be from people who think it's all swords and dragons - which is as silly as saying that 'Booker books' are all about foul-mouthed Scots and lonely ladies taking tea on wet Thursdays. It seems to be suggested that fantasy is some kind of fairy icing when, from a historical point of view, it is the whole cake. (467)

In this sense, J.K. Rowling has suffered not only criticism but even serious attempts, particularly in the USA, of banning her novels for extolling and validating witchcraft. Some of this repression has even materialized in organized bonfires for people to carry their Harry Potter novels under the premise that they were satanic books.

On the contrary, some scholars, such as Pamela S. Gates, Susan B. Steffel, and Francis J. Molson have emphasized the didactic function of fantasy literature in their book *Fantasy Literature for Children and Young Adults* (2003): "Springing from the depths of mythology and the Greek *phantasiu* (making visible), fantasy literature represents our personal need and the universal quest for deeper realities and eternal truth" (1). They indeed go further by indicating how fantasy has played, and even

nowadays does play, a fundamental role in the human understanding of the constant struggle between good and evil.

> More specifically, fantasy literature, like all other forms of myth, springs from the human need to understand the struggle of good versus evil. All of ancient mythology reflects the give and take of this struggle; we still make and use myth, through fantasy literature, in order to deal with it. (2)

Moreover, we can also identify other scholars who agree on this idea, such as Ursula K. Le Guin, who in her book *The Language of the Night: Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction* (1992) stated that "Fantasy is the natural, the appropriate language for the recounting of the spiritual journey and the struggle of good and evil in the soul" (64).

At this point, a clear correspondence of the struggle between good versus evil can be noticed in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, which is clearly described by Lykke Guanio-Uluru in her book *Ethics and Form in Fantasy Literature: Tolkien, Rowling and Meyer* (2015). To explain this, she departs from the final dialogue between Harry and Professor Quirrell, through which Quirrell tries to persuade Harry to join his purposes "A foolish young man I was then, full of ridiculous ideas about good and evil. Lord Voldemort showed me how wrong I was. There is no good and evil, there is only power, and those too weak to seek it" (*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* 211). Hence, Guanio-Uluru argues how this opposition between good and evil is represented through the characters in the novel.

> The ideological gap between Voldemort and those who oppose him is exposed: those opposing him fight for certain moral values, and one would expect them to be constrained by these same values, whereas Voldemort acknowledges no moral constraints and, therefore, cannot be appealed to on moral grounds. (109)

Another useful aspect of Fantasy, in opinion of Gates et al, is based on the fact that it allows individuals, and particularly children, to broaden their mindset, to consider a wider array of possibilities that could take place and, hence, to achieve a higher level of imagination and creativity. In this sense, Fantasy would act as a redeemer of several mental constraints because if individuals would lack the ability to perceive the invisible, they would certainly suffer from a severe mental limitation that could negatively affect the way in which they manage reality and interact with it.

In relation to this didactic function, some authors have also attempted to characterize fantasy literature departing from the notion of reality. Terry E. Apter in her book *Fantasy Literature: An Approach to Reality* (1982) argues how fantasy "must be understood not as an escape from reality but as an investigation of it" (2). She also defends that despite being dealing with supernatural elements, fantasy always requires a certain balance, logic, truthfulness, and plausibility in its themes. This balance, as she argues, derives from the attribution of certain traits to any character or literary element, which, to a great extent, delimit the resulting possibilities that can be expected to occur and which in the reader's mind generate an effect of anticipating a circumscribed number of possibilities that will take place.

But is there any mandatory requirement for a writing to be considered as Fantasy literature? Gates et al refer to two compulsory requirements to do so. First of all, they identify the presence of an unreal phenomenon that by no means could occur in our world and provide a list of examples that would account for this prerequisite.

> Talking dogs, cats, mice, and pigs; sand fairies or, for that matter, fairies of any kind; objects that inexplicably transport people through time or over great distances; stuffed animals and toys, wind-up and otherwise, that can talk and walk; talismans that when rubbed or commanded grant wishes; potions that enlarge or shrink whoever drinks them; human beings normal in all respects except for being miniature or gigantic in size. (6)

As a second condition, they also find essential that at least one of the characters is either a human or presents human-like traits. The purpose of this premise lays on the assumption that if the reader does not identify with the character, it would be impossible for the reader to become involved with the story. Hence, they even further specify that "regardless of how richly detailed and evocative it may be, an imaginary world invites boredom and eventual rejection unless a human or sufficiently human-like character is also present" (6).

There is no doubt that *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* meets these two requirements and, therefore, it conforms to the genre of Fantasy literature. First, the story is full of unreal phenomena such as a talking snake, unicorns, dragons, spells, potions, an invisibility cloak, ghosts, magic wands, centaurs, goblins, werewolves, a three-headed dog, a talking hat, a troll, a mirror that reflects the most desperate wishes

of the person standing in front of it, a wizard who hosts the weakened soul of another wizard in his own head, flying brooms, a witch that is able to transform into a cat, people who go through a wall and a large succession of impossible elements and actions that challenge the understanding of the world as we know it. Furthermore, the second requirement is also exceedingly met, as not only the protagonist but all of the most important characters in the novel are either humans or human-like creatures.

As a short summary of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, we can say that Rowling presents a fresh novel where an eleven-year-old orphan, named Harry Potter, lives with his aunt's family, the Dursleys, which systematically humiliate him and treat him as if he did not deserve any affection or respect. Stuck in this denigrating environment, out of the blue, Harry receives the visit of a surprisingly gigantic man named Hagrid, who delivers him a letter inviting Harry to join Hogwarts: a school of witchcraft and wizardry. Likewise, against all of the Dursleys' attempts to prevent it, Hagrid reveals Harry the truth about the death of his parents, which were murdered by Lord Voldemort, an extremely evil wizard. Harry learns that he is a famous wizard within the magical community as he is the only person known to have defeated Voldemort.

Hence, Harry embarks on a journey entering the magical world and joining the upcoming school year at Hogwarts. Here, he encounters continuous difficulties, obstacles, threats, and enemies. However, for the first time in his life, he also finds a sense of belonging, love, affection, friendship and some traits of connection with his dead parents. The most important quest Harry, together with his inseparable friends, Ron and Hermione, will have to face is related to the Philosopher's Stone. This stone, heavily secured somewhere at Hogwarts, is known for its ability to turn anything into gold and make humans immortal. As Harry and his friends will discover throughout the novel, the stone is at great risk of being stolen by Voldemort.

When Harry and his friends discover that the stone is about to be robbed, without hesitation, they decide to go after it, successfully managing to overcome each of the magical spells and trials that are protecting the stone. Making use of all of his courage and strength, Harry will manage to prevent Voldemort from reaching the stone, thereby, saving the entire world once again.

4. The classical hero's journey

The term "classical" can be somewhat confusing as according to the *English Oxford Living Dictionary* (2017), it may either be understood as "Relating to ancient Greek or Latin literature, art, or culture" or "Representing an exemplary standard within a traditional and long-established form or style" (par. 3). Henceforward, for the sake of clarity and brevity, this paper will consider the meaning of the second definition each time we refer to the term "classical" and it will imply the adjective "classical" when referring to "heroism" or addressing the character of the "hero".

Due to the vast diversity existing among different literary genres, cultures, traditions and historical periods, attempting to characterize the major traits of classical heroism appears to be a notoriously challenging task. However, according to Otto Rank's book *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero* (1914), "different nations even though widely separated by space and entirely independent of each other present a baffling similarity, or in part a literal correspondence" (1).

Therefore, if we decide to focus on the most general and recurrent traits, it is possible to establish an overall classification encompassing the most significant characteristics that traditionally have been attributed to the stories of classical heroes. For this purpose, we will examine the recurrent patterns and stages of the adventure undergone by the classical hero.

According to Joseph Campbell in his book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, all classical heroes undergo an adventure that can be summarized in three different stages: "Departure", "Initiation", and "Return". As mentioned previously, this study will follow a psychoanalytic approach, which will allow us delving into the narrative structure of classical literature and mythology and, subsequently, establishing connections with the novel *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone.* Although several academic studies extensively analyzing J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* can easily be found, none of these might have particularly focused on the analysis of the recurrent traits of the classical hero's journey in this specific novel. The reason for following Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* is entirely based on the fact that he is widely considered as one of the most important scholars of the 20th century dealing with comparative mythology, particularly focusing on the characterization of the classical hero and his archetypal journey. Proof of this is that

most of the academic studies revolving around the notion of the classical hero or his archetypal journey, either directly depart from Campbell's proposals or substantially reference his works.

4.1. Departure

Campbell presented the Departure as the first step in the hero's journey. It is initiated by a stage known as "The Call to Adventure". This first stage begins with some sort of blunder or any sudden mistake that alters the unfolding of the events, leading to the appearance of a herald that reveals a call to adventure and "the awakening of the self" (47). The awakening of the self indicates that the time for the hero to cross a certain threshold has arrived.

In many cases, the call to adventure may be refused by the hero, leaving the call unanswered or directly manifesting a strong rejection against anything that is connected with the call itself. This denying attitude dispossesses the hero of his heroic traits, turning him into an ordinary character who instead of a savior becomes someone to be saved (54). Hence, this stage is known as "Refusal of the Call". Nonetheless, it is to be clarified that this trait does not apply to all of the cases, as in some occasions the hero directly accepts the call to adventure.

Once the hero accepts the call to adventure, some kind of supernatural aid is presented to him, normally, in the form of a protective figure, such as an old character who provides the hero with an amulet. Thereby, this stage is named as "Supernatural Aid" (63). According to Michael Schneider in his article "Monomyth Structure in 'The Red Badge of Courage'" (1987): "The hero of the monomyth often benefits from 'Supernatural Aid' in the form of magic gifts or advice from the Gods or from nature" (49).

After having received some type of supernatural aid, the hero encounters the first threshold, consisting on an entrance to a zone of magnified power. Usually, this threshold is guarded by some entity or force, and beyond it, the hero will get immersed in the unknown, the darkness or some kind of danger. This stage is named as "The Crossing of the First Threshold" (71).

Although the hero has already passed the first threshold, this need not imply that his transformation process is culminated. Through a stage which Campbell classifies as "The Belly of the Whale", the hero is swallowed into the unknown, which represents the authentic commitment and will of the hero to undergo a metamorphosis in the recently entered new world. Therefore, it could be considered as a second type of threshold that is required to be passed for the hero to get immersed in the adventure (83).

4.2. Initiation

Once the hero has crossed the aforementioned thresholds, he will soon have to face several trials that will determine if he is apt for the adventure and if he is capable of surviving in the new world he has just entered. Through this stage known as "The Road of Trials", the hero may be supported by an amulet, a benign power that is constantly aiding him or secret agents of the previously met supernatural helper (89). Trials may adopt multiple forms, but in essence, they can be identified as any kind of tests the hero has to overcome. Normally, these trials do not consist in just a single trial, but they account for a long succession of them. Additionally, the succession of obstacles will be also alternated with small victories and moments of ecstatic celebrations (100).

Having succeeded in the initiation trials, the hero will enter the stage known as "The Meeting with the Goddess" through which he will meet a Queen or Goddess who rules over the supernatural world and who may appear as a paragon of perfection. As a result of this meeting, the hero will receive a blessing of unconditional love that will escort him during the entire adventure (101).

Subsequently, the hero is challenged by some type of temptation that may lead him astray or endanger the completion of the initial quest. In most of the cases, this idea of temptation will be incarnated by a feminine character of extreme beauty as well as extreme evilness. Thereby, Campbell named this stage as "Woman as the Temptress" (112).

Furthermore, through the stage known as "Atonement with the Father" the hero must also confront an almighty male figure, which may be his own father or even his own God. This stage of atonement with the hero's father usually depicts the paternal

figure as an angry God who somehow requires the hero to abandon his attachment to his ego. At this stage, the previously met Queen or Goddess may also inspire hope or assurance providing the hero with a feeling of protection in order to face the hardships he may be struggling with (120).

Eventually, the hero will reach a stage known as "Apotheosis" in which he will acquire a supreme knowledge or understanding by recognizing that the divine forces reside inside him and by releasing himself from any type of prejudices. Due to this divine awareness, he will be prepared to face the most challenging difficulty in the entire process of the adventure, even if this poses a serious threat of death to himself. Hence, this divine knowledge may be manifested in the form of an elevated state of love, bliss, compassion or understanding (138).

After the stage of "Apotheosis", the hero will enter the stage known as "The Ultimate Boon". This boon consists on a blessing bestowed by some kind of god or superior being for having succeeded over the final and most challenging trial. In many cases, the hero will receive some considerable rewarding for his effort and sacrifice (175).

Once the final quest has been accomplished, the hero will have to return back to the world he initially belonged to. However, after all the bliss and enlightenment he experienced through the adventure, the hero may be doubtful or reluctant about having to return. Thereby, he will enter a stage known as "Refusal of the Return" (179).

4.3. Return

Having vanquished his feeling of refusing to return, the hero will initiate his way back to the world he originally came from through a stage known as "The Magic Flight". In this journey, the hero will carry the blessing he previously obtained with him and return by means of a magic flight which, despite being a journey back home, may also require overcoming some obstacles (182).

In some cases, particularly when the hero has been injured or weakened through the process of the adventure, he might need some type of external intervention to rescue him and to ensure that he returns home safe and sound. Usually, this external force that

assists the hero is presented in the form of some kind of divine intervention, but it is also possible to find it in the form of characters that previously in the story have abandoned the hero or characters the hero has not even heard about of. Therefore, this stage is referred to as "Rescue from Without" (192).

In any case, the hero eventually will have to cross back the returning threshold, named by Campbell as the stage of "The Crossing of the Return Threshold". Crossing this boundary will require him to confront some sort of final challenge in his adventure. Once he is able to overcome this last obstacle, he will have to integrate the knowledge he acquired in the supernatural world within his life in the ordinary world. This will also serve to present both worlds that initially seemed so distant to be part of a common realm in which the wisdom acquired by the hero may be partaken of with the rest of the inhabitants of the ordinary world (201).

Having succeeded in the quest of his adventure, the returned hero will initiate the stage known as "Master of the Two Worlds" through which he will be empowered to freely move from one world to the other one, adopting the role of a hero or a plain ordinary man. Moreover, the hero will also release all his personal ambitions for the sake of a greater purpose, which will lead him to live in anonymity accompanied by a supreme bliss (220).

Ultimately, the last stage accounting for the hero's journey is known as "Freedom to Live". Hence, the hero is depicted as being worthy of choosing in which manner he wishes to settle his new life. This may considerably differ from hero to hero as each of them may choose to get married, become a ruler, accept a position of authority or even decide to embark on a new adventure. Regardless of the decision he takes, what is relevant in this final stage is that the hero embraces life in that present moment and enjoys the freedom he has earned by redirecting his life in the direction he desires (221).

5. Analysis of the classical hero's journey in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*

Once the different stages of the classical hero's adventure have been identified, we will proceed to establish relations between such stages and the novel *Harry Potter and the Philosopher Stone*. For this purpose, we will follow the exact order of the stages described in the section above. Nevertheless, even though the order of the three main stages of "Departure", "Initiation" and "Return" will be faithfully preserved, some internal aspects within these main stages may not fully coincide or might present some occasional differences.

5.1. Departure in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*

In Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher Stone,* the stage of "Departure" is initiated by the sudden arrival of a mysterious letter which triggers "The Call to Adventure". Although Uncle Vernon by no means allows Harry to read this letter, the insistence for Harry to receive this letter constantly increases throughout the third chapter, which, as its title "The Letters from No One" suggests, is entirely devoted to delivering Harry the message of the call to adventure. However, this message is not explicitly revealed until Hagrid breaks into the little shack and personally reads it to Harry (42). Hence, Hagrid would be the herald that leads Harry to the awakening of the self by making him realize that he is an extraordinary wizard.

> 'Hagrid,' he said quietly, 'I think you must have made a mistake. I don't think I can be a wizard.'
> To his surprise, Hagrid chuckled. 'Not a wizard, eh? Never made things happen when you was scared, or angry?'
> [...] Harry looked back at Hagrid, smiling, and saw that Hagrid was positively beaming at him.
> 'See?' said Hagrid. 'Harry Potter, not a wizard – you wait, you'll be right famous at Hogwarts.' (47)

Even though the stage of "Refusal of the Call" is not clearly manifested as there is no instance in which Harry reveals any sign of willingness to reject the call to adventure, this stage could be identified in a very subtle manner. This can be noticed as for a

relatively brief period in the story even Hagrid does not assume that Harry will accept the call to adventure as if the herald would be avoiding acting in a pushy manner. Therefore, the refusal of the hero does not materialize but a slight doubt is cast regarding whether Harry will accept the call or not: "'If he wants ter go, a great Muggle like you won't stop him,' growled Hagrid" (47).

Once this doubt has been discarded, Hagrid takes Harry to the Leaky Cauldron which, according to Campbell's classification of the stages undergone by the classic hero, corresponds with the crossing of the first threshold. This tavern is full of witches and wizards and one of its back doors leads to a wall which, by means of tapping the correct bricks, opens itself to the Diagon Alley (57). Therefore, this corresponds to the stage of "The Crossing of the First Threshold".

Having entered the magical world, Harry receives the supernatural aid from Hagrid. Not only does Hagrid provide Harry with a great deal of information about Harry's past and the threats ongoing in the magical world, but he also takes Harry to Ollivanders, where they are able to purchase a magic wand for Harry (65). This magic wand will become a supernatural item essential for Harry to succeed within the magical world and it can likewise be considered as the element that accounts for the stage of "Supernatural Aid".

As the reader might have noticed, one of the first slight differences with Campbell's classification is that in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* the hero crosses the first threshold before he receives the supernatural aid. However, this can be considered as a minor difference, as it only consists on a slight switch in the order between two initial stages.

The stage known as "The Belly of the Whale" for Harry consists in plunging himself into a wall between two platforms at King's Cross Station, which instead of resulting in a painful crash will lead Harry to the Hogwarts Express (71). The crossing of this second threshold reveals the authentic commitment of Harry to dive into the newly discovered magical world.

5.2. Initiation in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*

Initiation, for Harry, begins with the stage of "The Road of Trials" through which Harry will have to face a series of obstacles in order to prove that he is capable of coping with the new difficulties awaiting in the magical world. The first and most representative initiation trial corresponds to the Sorting ceremony in which all first-year students must be classified by the Sorting Hat. Although it might not seem like a great challenge, the result of this event will determine the entire life of each student and Harry's worries are twofold. On the one hand, Harry is worried about having no magical knowledge and the possibility of having to perform some sort of magic in front of the entire school. On the other hand, he is concerned about the possibility of being sorted into Slytherin, a house which is associated with corruption and talented witches and wizards who have ended up astray. This second possibility is very important in the formation of the image of the hero as Harry reveals a firm desire not to belong to Slytherin, even though the Sorting Hat seriously contemplates the possibility of making him a member of Slytherin."'Not Slytherin, eh?' said the small voice. 'Are you sure? You could be great, you know, it's all here in your head, and Slytherin will help you on the way to greatness, no doubt about that – no?'" (91).

The aforementioned succession of trials can be further divided into several obstacles, difficulties and situations of injustice Harry has to overcome. In some cases it is the unfairness of Professor Snape, Malfoy's continuous harassing, Professor Quirrell cursing his broom and letting a troll in the dungeons, becoming the youngest Seeker in the century and even the academic exams he has to pass. However, the main quest in Harry's call to adventure is to discover the mysteries revolving around the Philosopher's Stone and to prevent it from falling into the wrong hands, which we will analyze in more detail further on when we reach the stage of "The Ultimate Boon".

In relation to the stage of "Woman as the Temptress", there is also a switch in the order between *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and Campbell's classification. Hence, in the novel, temptation takes place before the initiation trials begin or, at the most, they both occur at the same time. This is due to the fact that from the first moment the students arrived at Hogwarts, Malfoy tried to impede that Harry became a friend of Ron: "'You'll soon find out some wizarding families are much better than others, Potter. You don't want to go making friends with the wrong sort. I can help

you there'" (81). To which Harry not only manifested a determined rejection once, but he also acted in the same manner when the Sorting Hat slightly enticed him about the possibility of becoming a Slytherin. Interestingly, the stage of "Woman as the Temptress" in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* does not present any relation associated with any female character, nevertheless, the importance of temptation is crucial to the novel's plot.

Once the temptation has been rejected, the stage of "The Meeting with the Goddess" will take place. In the case of this novel, this stage slightly differs from Campbell's description as the Goddess would correspond to Harry's mother, who obviously is not the person ruling over the magical world. However, she is certainly responsible for bestowing a blessing of love to Harry which saved his life as a child and protects him against the most life-threatening situations throughout the entire novel. Although Lily Potter is dead from the moment the novel begins and we cannot consider her as a Goddess, there is no doubt about the fact that she constitutes an extremely powerful character whose legacy of love was able to defeat Lord Voldemort.

> 'Your mother died to save you. If there is one thing Voldemort cannot understand, it is love. He didn't realise that love as powerful as your mother's for you leaves its own mark. Not a scar, no visible sign ... to have been loved so deeply, even though the person who loved us is gone, will give us some protection for ever. It is in your very skin. Quirrell, full of hatred, greed and ambition, sharing his soul with Voldemort, could not touch you for this reason.' (216)

Hence, the stage of "The Meeting with the Goddess" can be identified when Harry accidentally sneaks into a room where he encounters the Mirror of Erised. In this room, he loses track of time while, immersed in a deep state of melancholy, he contemplates the reflection of his dead parents who appear to be waving and smiling at him (153).

Notice that unlike the order described by Campbell, in the case of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone,* the stage of "Woman as the Temptress" precedes the one of "The Meeting with the Goddess". If the stage of "The Meeting with the Goddess" slightly differs from Campbell's description, this difference is even greater with the stage of "Atonement with the Father". This meeting takes place exactly in the same manner as described with Lily Potter due to the fact that James Potter is standing next to Lily in the Mirror of Erised. As described above, through the entire passage of meeting

his parents, Harry only experiences love and a melancholic feeling for not being able to hug his family, but by no means can we identify any trait of Harry having to face an angry paternal figure, as Campbell describes.

The next clearly identifiable stage corresponds to "Apotheosis". The key elements of this stage involve Harry becoming fully aware of the fact that the Philosopher's Stone is imminently going to be stolen. Moreover, this awareness comes just after Harry has undergone a period of strong rejection by his fellow Gryffindor students as he got in trouble by disobeying the school laws and lost a high number of points for the house. In spite of this, Harry gets released of all the social rejection and prejudices that are exerting an intense pressure against him and, revealing a strong determination, commits to preventing the Philosopher's Stone from being stolen, even if this implies exposing himself to a great likelihood of dying.

> 'SO WHAT?' Harry shouted. 'Don't you understand? If Snape gets hold of the Stone, Voldemort's coming back! Haven't you heard what it was like when he was trying to take over? There won't be any Hogwarts to get expelled from! He'll flatten it, or turn it into a school for the Dark Arts! Losing points doesn't matter any more, can't you see? D'you think he'll leave you and your families alone if Gryffindor wins the House Cup? If I get caught before I can get to the Stone, well, I'll have to go back to the Dursleys and wait for Voldemort to find me there. It's only dying a bit later than I would have done, because I'm never going over to the Dark Side! I'm going through that trapdoor tonight and nothing you two say is going to stop me!' (196)

Having manifested such a fervent desire to succeed in his mission, Harry will enter the stage known as "The Ultimate Boon". Through this stage Harry will achieve his main quest over which the entire novel revolves around, i.e. preventing Voldemort from obtaining the Philosopher's Stone. For this reason, Harry receives a fervent praise of Dumbledore who awards Harry, Ron, Hermione and Neville with the exact amount of points so as to make Gryffindor soar from the last position in the ranking of the House Cup up to the first position (221).

Another stage that seems to occur in a slightly different order according to Campbell's description is the stage of "Rescue from Without". Thereby, in this novel we find that Harry requires some final help from Dumbledore to fully defeat Quirrell and to be rescued from having lost consciousness, as Dumbledore explained to Harry

trying to soothe his eager desire of knowing about the details that took place after Harry fainted: "'I see you are not to be distracted. Very well, the Stone. Professor Quirrell did not manage to take it from you. I arrived in time to prevent that, although you were doing very well on your own, I must say'" (215). Moreover, Harry also requires some additional aid receiving treatment during three days at the hospital wing.

5.3. Return in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*

"Return" in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* is initiated by the stage known as "The Magic Flight". Instead of consisting on a true magical flight, this stage materializes in the form of a magical train, the Hogwarts Express, which takes all students from the magical world back to the Station of King's Cross in London (222).

Therefore, Harry will arrive at the same threshold he initially crossed, platform nine and three-quarters, with the only difference that in this occasion the threshold will be crossed in the opposite direction, as a gate towards the original place he departed from (222). By doing so, the stage of "The Crossing of the Return Threshold" will be attained.

Although the stage of "Refusal of the Return" should occur within the section of initiation according to Campbell's description, it is not until the last page of the novel in which we can identify this stage. In this sense, Harry does not express an explicitly overt refusal to return, however, he implicitly indicates that he is not very fond of going back with the Dursleys or that he is willing to escape from them as soon as possible. This idea can be understood through the dialogue in which Ron offers Hermione and Harry to stay with his family, to which Harry replies by saying: "'Thanks, I'll need something to look forward to'" (223).

This will lead Harry to the stage known as "Master of the two Worlds" through which he will integrate the knowledge acquired in the magical world and experience a metamorphosis that will lead him to change from fame to anonymity. This can be best identified through a dialogue between Harry and Ron: "'Still famous,' said Ron, grinning at him. 'Not where I'm going, I promise you,' said Harry" (223). Hence, Harry will conclude the novel as the famous hero who was able to defeat Voldemort twice, as well as the master of the non-magical world with his family, the Dudleys: "'They don't

know we're not allowed to use magic at home. I'm going to have a lot of fun with Dudley this summer...'" (223).

The final stage of "Freedom to Live" does not seem to occur as explicitly and extendedly as described by Campbell because *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* closes with the fragment of the dialogue quoted above and the reader does not receive any information about further events. However, through overcoming all the obstacles in his adventure, Harry has proven that he is worthy of continuing integrated within the magical community. Furthermore, by the way in which he bids farewell to his friends, at an implicit level, Harry is depicted as redirecting his life towards meeting his friends during summer and continuing his magical studies during next year at Hogwarts.

6. Conclusion

Through this dissertation it has been shown how *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* conforms to the genre of fantasy literature as well as how there are certain recurrent stages that follow a similar pattern in most of the literature and mythology which feature a classical hero as a protagonist, following Joseph Campbell's book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Although there are almost no cases in which the correlation between Campbell's description and *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* is entirely perfect down to the smallest detail, it has been proven that, overall, there is a clear correspondence between the stages described by Campbell and *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. These structural differences have been identified either in a subtler variation of the events, such as in "Refusal of the Call", "Woman as the Temptress", "Atonement with the Father" and "Freedom to Live" or in a switch in the order of the events, such as in the stages of "Woman as the Temptress", "Rescue from Without" and "Refusal of the Return". However, these differences are relatively minor considering all of the coincidences in content and order we have identified and analyzed, particularly considering the broadest structural image.

It could be interesting that further research considered analyzing the stages of the hero's journey in the following novels of the entire series, as well as carrying a contrastive analysis among the obtained results. This paper intended to shed some light and act as a base from where to departure in further researches examining structural aspects related to the classical hero's journey in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone,* or in any of the following novels of the entire series.

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