

The Monomyth in James Cameron's *The Terminator*: Sarah as Monomythic Heroine

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ALREADY ABSTRACTED FROM NUMEROUS MYTHOLOGICAL, RELIGIOUS, and fantastic sources, the monomyth has also been repeatedly replicated since (as well as before) Joseph Campbell's articulate and spiritually insightful explication in 1949s *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. In addition to serving as the underlying plot structure in the initial *Star Wars* trilogy (Gordon, Mackay, Sherman, Tiffin), for which it is most popularly known, Campbell's interpretation of the monomyth likewise occurs in meticulous detail in some of the most highly regarded and artistically successful science fiction novels from the second half of the twentieth century—such as Alfred Bester's *The Stars My Destination*, Daniel Keyes' *Flowers for Algernon*, each of the six volumes in Frank Herbert's *Dune* series, and Gene Wolfe's four-volume *The Book of the New Sun* and its sequel, *The Urth of the New Sun*—as well as in numerous additional science-fiction films from this period, including *The Time Machine* (1960), *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Dune*, *Back to the Future*, *The Last Starfighter*, *Time after Time*, *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure* (Lundquist), *Logan's Run*, *Escape from New York*, *Dreamscape*, *Tron*, *The Matrix* (Kimball), all ten *Star Trek* films (Baker, Reid-Jeffrey, Roth), and *The Terminator*.¹ All but one of these works, as does Campbell's analysis, features the archetypal adventure of a male hero, yet *The Terminator* diverges significantly from nearly all of the great many myths, legends, and fables upon which Campbell bases his study, and is unique among the monomyth's many manifestations in twentieth-century science fiction novels and films, in that its protagonist is a woman, Sarah Connor, who becomes the heroine through sharing with

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Kyle Reese, her protector from the future, most of the monomythic hero's characteristics and nearly all of the incidents that comprise his adventure.

Campbell defines the monomyth as that single "consciously controlled" pattern most widely exhibited in the world's folk tales, myths, and religious fables (255–56). Its morphology is, in broad outline, that of the quest. The hero is called to an adventure, crosses the threshold to an unknown world to endure tests and trials, and usually returns with a boon that benefits his fellows (36–38). Although agreeing with Carl Jung that "the changes rung on the simple scale of the monomyth defy description" (246), Campbell's analysis fills in this outline with an anatomy of the archetypal hero and descriptions of those specific incidents likely to occur at each stage of his adventure. The product of a virgin or special birth (297–314), the hero may have been exiled or orphaned, may be seeking his father, and may triumph over pretenders as the true son (318–34). His mother may be assumed into heaven or crowned a queen (119–20). He possesses exceptional gifts, and the world he inhabits suffers symbolic deficiencies (37). He does not fear death, and he is destined to make the world spiritually significant and humankind comprehensible to itself (388). If a warrior, he will change the status quo (334–41). If a lover, his triumph may be symbolized by a woman and accomplishing the impossible task may lead him to the bridal bed (342–45). If a tyrant or ruler, his search for the father will lead to the invisible unknown from which he will return as a lawgiver (345–49). If a world-redeemer, he will learn that he and the father are one (349–54). If a saint or mystic, he will transcend life and myth to enter an inexpressible realm beyond forms (354–55).

The adventure's "separation" or "departure stage" entails up to five incidents: receiving a "Call to Adventure" in the guise of a blunder that reveals an unknown world or the appearance of a herald character from that world; refusing the call; receiving supernatural aid; crossing a magical threshold that leads to a sphere of rebirth; and being swallowed in "The Belly of the Whale," a descent into the unknown symbolizing death and resurrection that may involve an underground journey symbolic of a descent into hell (36). The "initiation stage" includes up to six incidents: numerous tests endured in "The Road of Trials," including the hero's assimilation of his opposite, shadow, or unsuspected self; meeting, and perhaps marrying, a mother-goddess, who may take the form of the "good mother," the "bad mother," or

"The Lady of the House of Sleep"; encountering a temptress; atonement with the father; apotheosis; and acquiring a boon (36, 110–11). The "return stage" also contains up to six incidents: refusing to return; magical flight from the unknown world; rescue from outside the unknown world; re-crossing the threshold; attaining the power to cross the threshold freely; and the hero's realization that he is the vehicle of the cosmic cycle of change (37).

Herbert's *Dune* is the work most comparable to *The Terminator* in even suggesting that the monomythic adventure might be shared between a male and female character. Yet while Jessica, his mother, accompanies Paul Atreides on his adventure, Paul himself possesses all the traits of the monomythic hero and experiences nearly all of the episodes in the adventure's three stages. Thus, while Jessica exhibits a few of the hero's attributes and her experiences recapitulate several of these episodes, her characterization and actions are not needed to complete the monomyth's pattern; Paul is a thorough monomythic hero in any case. But in *The Terminator* both Sarah and Reese are necessary to the completion of this pattern; the qualities and experiences of each fill in the many significant gaps in this pattern left by the other, so that neither, unlike Jessica, is superfluous in this respect. And Sarah is clearly the film's protagonist. She is the focus of all the action; Reese appears as her protector from the future, but Sarah ultimately saves herself; and she accomplishes this through transcending her initial self by changing dramatically from the beginning of the film to the end—due to Reese's intervention—while Reese's characterization can be, and is, static throughout.

One must strain to attribute any of the qualities of the hero to Sarah, yet Reese possesses most of them. However, Sarah alone experiences the "Call to Adventure" and the refusal of the call, while both (in different ways) experience elements of the departure stage's remaining episodes. Both also experience elements of "The Road of Trials," yet Reese's execution of this episode is far more elaborate. Reese alone undergoes the meeting with the mother-goddess and atonement with the father; as the film's combined hero/heroine, both jointly symbolize apotheosis; and the boon—which is of the highest order, revelation—is actually experienced by the audience. Finally, Sarah alone undergoes the entire return stage, as Reese dies before it occurs. Hence, while Reese seems to be a monomythic hero at the beginning of the film, Sarah has become its monomythic heroine by the conclusion. That the two "trade places"

is literally articulated near the beginning of the last vehicle chase—in a film that is essentially one extended chase scene—when Reese orders Sarah to “trade places” with him in the truck they have commandeered so that she can take over as driver and free him to hurl pipe bombs at the Terminator robot pursuing them on a motorcycle.

The one quality of the hero that Sarah comes closest to exhibiting is the possession of exceptional gifts; yet what is exceptional about her is her “destiny,” that she will be the mother of humanity’s savior, John Connor, and not any innate ability or any characteristic intrinsic to her personality. Her “destiny” entails becoming a warrior to effect a change in the status quo—humanity’s successful insurrection, led by John, against Skynet’s machine rule—yet she has not yet become a warrior, nor given birth to John, by the film’s conclusion. As she is not only John’s mother but also the “legend” that Reese “volunteered” to go back in time to have the “chance to meet,” she is somewhat like the hero’s mother who is assumed into heaven or crowned a queen; yet if Sarah’s status as a “legend” is interpreted in this way, then her son John (who never appears in the film) would exhibit this quality of the hero, not she.

Other qualities of the hero are similarly displaced. The “special birth” is neither Sarah’s nor Reese’s (about whose births we know nothing), but John’s, as his is made possible only via time travel: The revelation of the film’s last scene is that John had sent Reese back through time, not only to preserve Sarah’s life, but also to impregnate her and thus to sire himself (i.e., John). And not only is Reese’s role as John’s father, ultimately, even more crucial than his role as Sarah’s protector, it is also far more ironic; for Skynet thus makes the birth of its mortal enemy, John, possible—by devising and using the “time displacement equipment”—through its very attempt to prevent it, a desperate final effort to use time travel to thwart the already-successful insurrection. Moreover, while the hero can be the product of either a special or a virgin birth, it is not Sarah, John’s mother, but Reese, his father, who is the “virgin” parent: Reese confesses to Sarah that he has never made love; thus their coupling in the Tiki Motel immediately afterwards, which neither knows at the time will produce John, is Reese’s sole sexual experience.

In addition to being the virgin father, Reese is also an exile and an orphan who does not fear death. That he is an orphan is implicit in his testimony that he “grew up after [the nuclear Armageddon unleashed

by Skynet], in the ruins, starving, hiding from . . . hunter-killer . . . patrol machines . . . rounded up, put in camps for orderly disposal." He is an exile in 1984 because he has no way to return to the bleak world of 2029 from which he came; as he explains to police psychologist Silberman, since Skynet's time machine will be destroyed immediately after Reese uses it, "I can't [get back]. Nobody goes home. Nobody else comes through. It's just him [the Terminator robot, which ostensibly cannot be stopped] and me." Thus, the one-way trip to 1984 for which Reese "volunteered" is a suicide mission; he later tells Sarah, "I'd die for John Connor," and he does. Also, while Reese does not seek his father, he does become his surrogate father's father, and thus creates his "father," as Reese sees John, who is the appropriate age to be his biological father, as a father-figure: Reese appears to be in his mid-twenties, and, as John must be born in 1985, he would be 44 years old, a generation older, when he sends Reese back in time in 2029.

Reese's exceptional gift is his sacrificial love for a woman he has never met, Sarah, which prompts him to volunteer for this suicide mission. Immediately before they make love he tells her, "I came across time for you, Sarah. I love you. I always have." This is even more remarkable—or, perhaps, inevitable—in that such romantic love is the symbolic deficiency from which Reese's world of 2029 suffers. While this post-apocalyptic future is comprehensively deficient, all its monumental shortcomings are epitomized in the fact that it is so irredeemably bleak, and humanity so desperately focused on survival alone, that love is an unattainable (and perhaps unimaginable) luxury. When Sarah asks what the women of his time are like, Reese responds, "Good fighters." When he then reveals that he has "never" had "someone special . . . a girl," and observes in this context, "Pain can be controlled. You just disconnect it," Sarah replies, with an eloquent sadness that succinctly assesses Reese's emotional life as well, "So you feel nothing."

Reese is, and has the appropriate conditional qualities of, the warrior, the lover, and the world-redeemer. He is a warrior by occupation, "a soldier . . . with the 132nd under Perry from [20]21 to [20]27 . . . assigned to recon . . . the last two years [2028–29] under John Connor"; and he changes the status quo of 2029, not only by preserving Sarah's life in 1984, but also by siring John, who will lead the revolt that defeats Skynet forty-five years later. Thus, Reese is a world-redeemer by virtue of having sired another world-redeemer; and it is in their roles as world-redeemers that Reese and John, who is also Reese's

surrogate father as well as his son, are one. The triumph of man over machine in 2029, a triumph that is epitomized in Reese's and Sarah's successful struggle against the Terminator robot in 1984, is made possible only because Reese is Sarah's lover; and traveling through time to save her from this relentless, unstoppable machine is the impossible task that leads Reese to their "bridal bed" in the Tiki Motel. Reese had fallen in love with a photo of Sarah that John had given to him and that is destroyed before Reese travels back in time; and he tells Sarah that he "used to always wonder what [she was] thinking" when that photo was taken. Ironically, the film's final scene reveals that at that moment she is thinking of Reese and of their love, for she says into her tape recorder as the photo is being taken, "In the few hours that we had together, we loved a lifetime's worth."

The hero receives a "call to adventure" in the form of a "blunder" that "reveals an unsuspected world" or the appearance of a "herald" of, or from, that world—usually "a beast," some shadowy, veiled, mysterious figure, or someone "dark, loathly, or terrifying, judged evil by the world"—who may literally call the hero "to live . . . or . . . to die" (Campbell 51, 53). The blunder that reveals the unknown world of 2029, and her destiny, to Sarah is not only Skynet's mistake in creating the time machine that enables John's father Reese, as well as the Terminator, to travel back to 1984, but also the Terminator's "systematic" error in initially killing the two other Sarah Connors whose names precede Sarah's in the phone book—which alerts Sarah that her life is in danger when she hears the consequent news reports—because it does not know which Sarah Connor is its intended victim. The robot also kills Sarah's roommate Ginger, whom it thinks is Sarah, as she listens to the lyrics "It's a mistake, die, die, die" on her walkman.

Reese, who she believes is stalking her, is the first herald from the year 2029 that Sarah notices, but she soon encounters a more mysterious, dark, loathly, terrifying, and evil herald when the Terminator first tries to kill her in *Tech Noir*. As it is a "cybernetic organism," not a true human being, the Terminator is also a species of "beast." And in Sarah's case, as the remainder of the film demonstrates, "The herald's summons may . . . mark . . . 'the awakening of the self'" and "rings up the curtain, always, on a mystery of transfiguration—a rite, or moment, of spiritual passage, which, when complete, amounts to a dying and a birth" (Campbell 51). Reese emphasizes that Sarah's call to adventure is a call "to live . . . or . . . to die" in telling her as he rescues her in *Tech*

Noir, "Come with me if you want to live." Later, after dressing his superficial bullet wound, Sarah announces that she would refuse the call, if she could, in telling Reese, "I didn't ask for this 'honor,' and I don't want it, any of it."

After receiving the Call, the monomythic hero acquires "supernatural aid" from an old man or crone, who provides a talisman in a setting suggesting a womblike sense of peace, or from a guide, teacher, wizard, ferryman, hermit, or smith who offers aid in a context of danger or temptation (Campbell 69–72). Reese, who teaches Sarah how to be a hero as well as how to fight and survive, is the teacher who offers to aid her against the mortal danger posed by the Terminator. Yet John Connor is, in turn, Reese's guide, teacher, and ferryman—in that he sends Reese back to 1984—as well as the older man who provides Reese with a talisman, the photo of Sarah, while Skynet fills the role of smith to Reese as hero by constructing the time machine.

The hero next crosses the threshold to an unknown world that leads to a sphere of rebirth and may be defended by a protective guardian and/or a destructive watchman (Campbell 77–89). Reese's crossing to 1984, an unknown world to him, is both implicitly and explicitly a symbolic rebirth. He materializes in a fetal position—naked and steaming, like a newborn animal—and later tells Sarah that traveling through time is like "white light . . . pain. It's like being born, maybe." The protective guardian who ushers him across this threshold in 2029 is John Connor, and the destructive watchmen are the Skynet defenses that John's forces must overcome to commandeer the time machine. (Sarah's threshold crossing occurs at the very end of the film, and is the counterpart to Reese's, as it is the re-crossing of the threshold that is an element of return stage—all of which she experiences in lieu of Reese after his death; Sarah finally drives into the gathering "storm" that symbolizes the apocalyptic future from which Reese had come, and that will eventually be a sphere of rebirth for humanity due to their son John's triumph over the machines. Still, her journey toward this future, which began with her Call to Adventure, also features a destructive watchman, the Terminator, whose sole objective is to kill her, and a protective guardian, Reese, whose explicit mission is to keep her alive.)

In the departure stage's final incident the hero is "swallowed" in "the belly of the whale," a journey to the World Womb or World Navel in which "the hero goes inward, to be born again" (Campbell 90–91). This is frequently either a literal or symbolic underground journey that

depicts a descent into a literal or figurative hell that often contains devils, flames, or *memento mori* in the form of bones or skeletons; the hero may enter a temple guarded by gargoyles; and he might literally or symbolically be mutilated, dismembered, or killed (92). The closest Sarah comes to an underground journey is her attempt to seek refuge in Tech Noir, the “underground” club in which the Terminator first assaults her. Somewhat displaced, the film’s symbolic hell is the bleak future from which Reese had come at its beginning and that Sarah is headed toward at its conclusion. The opening and subsequent scenes set in 2029 feature as a recurring image improbably vast beds of human skulls, *memento mori*, being crushed by tank-like machines. The film’s opening crawl, which informs the audience that “The machines rose from the ashes of the nuclear fire,” the flames, also suggests that this future is a symbolic hell; and Sarah later acknowledges that Reese’s “world is pretty terrifying.”

Sarah is symbolically killed, twice, when the Terminator executes her two namesakes; another waitress at the restaurant emphasizes this in telling her, as they watch news coverage of the first murder, “You’re dead, honey.” And Reese is literally killed in the explosion that dismembers the Terminator in the automated factory, while Sarah is crippled when a large hunk of shrapnel from the partially demolished robot then pierces her thigh. Moreover, the Terminator—which is meticulously portrayed as Reese’s shadow self—is systematically mutilated and entirely stripped of its initial human appearance throughout the course of the film. It is repeatedly shot by Reese and the police; it is immolated and loses its eyebrows and left eye in a car crash; and its organic epidermis is finally so traumatized that it begins to putrefy, at which point (often comically) it attracts flies, repels passersby, and is reputed to smell like “a dead cat.” The robot finally falls from a speeding motorcycle, is run over by an oil-transporting semi, is consumed in flames and reduced to a metal skeleton when the semi’s cargo explodes, and is then blown apart by the last of Reese’s pipe bombs before Sarah ultimately crushes what remains in a hydraulic press. (The only suggestion of a gargoyle is the pair of Gargoyle sunglasses the Terminator wears to disguise his missing eye.)

The first incident in the monomyth’s initiation stage is “the road of trials,” a series of tests in which the hero is assisted by the advice or agents of those who had offered supernatural aid, by the talismans given him, or by a “benign power everywhere supporting him”; it may

also require that the hero “assimilates his opposite,” which may be “his own unsuspected self” or shadow, “either by swallowing it or by being swallowed” (Campbell 97, 108). Sarah’s “road of trials” entails surviving the Terminator’s assaults, ultimately destroying it, and accepting her destiny. Reese, her “supernatural” helper, aids her in accomplishing each of these objectives. And in finally crushing the robot she assimilates her opposite self—for she represents the forces of life throughout the film, especially in her destined role as John’s mother, while the Terminator, whose only purpose is to kill, clearly represents death, most pointedly in its final manifestation as the animated metal skeleton that Sarah destroys.

Reese’s “road of trials” is more elaborate. He must locate and save Sarah, identify and attempt to destroy the Terminator, and in the process repeatedly evade and escape from both the killer robot and the police. John, his “supernatural” helper, provides aid by defining Reese’s mission and giving him a talisman, the photo of Sarah, which affords Reese his only advantage over the Terminator by enabling him to know what Sarah looks like and thus to identify her first. While Reese is a human whose mission is to save Sarah, and the Terminator is a robot whose mission is to kill her, they are shadows rather than foils because, even though their differences are crucial, they have a far greater number of similarities.

Both use Skynet’s “time displacement equipment” to materialize in 1984 naked and in a nimbus of lightening; and both must then acquire clothing, firearms, and transportation as well as locate Sarah. The Terminator steals clothes from a street punk after killing his two companions, while Reese steals pants from a bum in an alley and a trench coat and sneakers from a closed department store into which he ducks to evade the police. He steals a shotgun from a police car, while the robot steals a shotgun, a forty-five with a laser sight, and an Uzi from the Alamo Sport Shop, and in the process kills the proprietor. Reese hotwires a car near a construction site, while the Terminator steals one by bashing in the window and dismantling the ignition. Both look up Sarah Connor’s address in the phone book and eventually pursue her to Tech Noir, where both draw their weapons almost simultaneously. Even though Reese complains, when Sarah bites his hand, “Cyborgs don’t feel pain; I do,” he later likens himself to the robot in telling her, “Pain can be controlled. You just disconnect it.” And Reese initially follows Sarah so that he can both identify the Terminator and save her

from its assault when it inevitably makes its first attempt on her life; thus, when she notices Reese following her, Sarah at first mistakes him for the Terminator—further reinforcing their depiction as shadows—in erroneously concluding that she is being stalked by the man who had already killed two other Sarah Connors. Each assimilates the other when Reese is killed while blowing the Terminator apart, enabling Sarah to evade and finally to destroy its still-animate torso.

The hero might also encounter a goddess, a temptress, or both. The goddess, with whom he might have a mystical marriage in a special location, may assume the guise of the “good mother,” who is bliss, perfection, and the combination of opposites; the “bad mother,” who is absent, unattainable, forbidding, punishing, or the locus of forbidden desire, and who may threaten castration; or “the Lady of the House of Sleep,” who is “the reply to all desire, the bliss-bestowing goal of every hero’s . . . quest” (Campbell 109–11). This episode applies only to Reese, who finds in Sarah the goddess with whom he has a mystical marriage, his sole sexual experience, in a droll inversion of a special location, the Tiki Motel. Sarah is both “the Lady of the House of Sleep” and the “good mother”: She is literally the goal of Reese’s quest, which is to sire her son as well as to preserve her life, in becoming the blissful reply to his only desire, which is to venerate and protect her, when they make love; she also personifies perfection, as Reese passionately avers that he is not “disappointed” in her, and she pointedly combines opposites in transforming herself throughout the course of the film from a ditsy, incompetent waitress who doesn’t have a date for Friday night into a “legend,” a determined survivalist who is completely dedicated to, and capable of, raising her unborn son to be humanity’s future savior.

After encountering a goddess or temptress the hero may experience atonement with the father or a father figure, who is “the initiating priest through whom the young being passes on into the larger world”; but “Atonement (at-one-ment) . . . requires an abandonment of the attachment to ego itself” (Campbell 136, 130). John Connor, already Reese’s father figure, acts as just such an “initiating priest” in sending Reese through Skynet’s time machine to 1984. Reese demonstrates his abandonment of the attachment to ego in the selfless act of volunteering for this suicide mission. And he achieves “at-one-ment” with John—not, as is customary, through a face-to-face reconciliation involving mutual recognition—but, more literally, through siring him,

so that each is father to the other, and in doing so becoming, like John, another world-redeemer.

The penultimate incident in the initiation stage is the hero's apotheosis, which is symbolized by an annihilation of consciousness that entails the merging of time and eternity and is characterized by a symbolic transcendence of duality—representing a return to the lost unity that preceded creation—signaled by the unification of such opposites as time and eternity, good and evil, male and female, or birth and death (Campbell 149–71). Reese merges or unifies time (the Western perception that only the transient, present moment exists) and eternity (the Eastern notion that all moments exist and persist equally, and that our moment-by-moment perception of time is only an illusion) through the very act of traveling through time *per se*—which, as he perceives it as “white light,” is also as close as he comes to experiencing an annihilation of consciousness. Apotheosis is literally a transcendence of one's humanity to become godlike; thus, there is at least the suggestion of apotheosis in the transformation of Sarah manifested in the film's last scene, as this is the transcendent Sarah who will become a “legend” by the year 2029. And the film collapses the male/female polarity through its unique interpretation of the monomyth itself, by presenting Reese and Sarah jointly as its variation on the monomythic hero—as neither experiences all of the hero's adventure alone, but share it between them—as well as by uniting them biologically in their crucial, mutual conception of John.

Receiving the boon, which represents “the means for the regeneration of [the hero's] society as a whole” (Campbell 38), is the initiation stage's final incident. The boon's highest form is transcendent revelation, but the hero usually seeks such lesser gifts as immortality or extended life or, in the boon's lowest form, power or wealth (189). In 2029 John Connor, the product of the film's unification of the male/female polarity, is literally the means for humanity's regeneration; and the fact that his leadership alone preserves the human race, which Reese notes was “that close to going out, forever,” constitutes a gifting of humanity, of his species as a whole, with immortality or extended life. Yet revelation, the highest boon, is finally reserved for the audience, which is gifted in viewing the film's last scene with a startling, elegantly multi-layered revelation: first, that Reese is John's father; then, on reflection, that John must have knowingly sent Reese back in time primarily to orchestrate his own conception as well as to preserve his

mother's life (which the audience now realizes is a secondary objective masking the primary objective); and finally, on further reflection, that John's birth and entire existence is made possible only through Skynet's desperate attempt to use time travel to prevent his birth and erase his existence by assassinating his mother before he is born—that Skynet orchestrates its own defeat in trying to circumvent it. (This monumental irony is compounded in *Terminator II: Judgment Day*, which reveals that the technology that evolves into Skynet is developed through analysis of the remains of the Terminator's innovative circuitry. Thus, Skynet enables its own conception—as well as John Connor's—by sending the robot back in time; it both creates and destroys itself in the same attempt to prevent its enemy's birth.)

Just as the encounter with a goddess and atonement with the father involve only Reese, so too does the return stage, like the Call to Adventure and refusal of the call, involve only Sarah—as it, too, is compressed into this final scene, which occurs after Reese's death. And Sarah can return to the future in Reese's stead precisely because they share the adventure of the hero between them, are in this sense female and male manifestations of the same character. Several incidents may occur in the return stage; but some are mutually exclusive, and only several—rather than most or all, as in the earlier stages—are likely to appear in any given narrative. The hero could refuse to return or to give the boon to humanity. Her return could involve a “magic flight” that might be opposed or furthered by “magic” means; during this flight the hero might toss delaying objects behind her to impede or facilitate it, her attempt to return could end in failure, or she could be rescued from outside the unknown world. In crossing the return threshold the hero might convey new wisdom to the known world, accept the known world, experience a dilation of time, encounter dangers in returning to the known world that require her to insulate herself, or return with a talisman of her quest. On returning, the hero may become the “master of the two worlds,” which involves acquiring the ability to pass freely between them, or she might attain the “freedom to live,” to work in the known world without anxiety and/or as a conscious vehicle of the cosmic cycle of change. (Campbell 193–243)

While Reese uses Skynet's time machine to go to the past, Sarah returns to the future in the same pedestrian way in which we all get there, by inexorably moving toward it along the arrow of time moment by moment. Death is the only way to prevent this return, and the

visibly pregnant Sarah has clearly chosen life, to accept her transcendence and embrace her destiny, and thus to give the boon to humanity, by the film's last scene. Her "magic flight" is her flight from the impending nuclear Armageddon into the remote mountains of Mexico, the haven she is driving toward at the film's conclusion; this flight is furthered by her knowledge of the future and of her role in it provided earlier by Reese, and is "magic" in that she acquires this knowledge as a result of time travel. The film concludes with Sarah symbolically crossing the return threshold in finally driving into "la tormenta," "the storm" on the horizon that symbolizes to her the coming apocalypse; in the last exchange of dialogue, the proprietor of the Mexican gas station tells her, "There's a storm coming," and she replies, "I know."

Sarah has accepted the world into which she is crossing. She has a dog, as Reese had told her that dogs can detect terminators, as well as a rifle in her jeep to provide protection—insulation—against the dangers this future may pose. While she stops at the gas station, a boy takes her photo and sells it to her; this is the talisman of her quest acquired at the return threshold, but the audience recognizes that it is also the photo John will later give to Reese. Elegantly and ironically, as this is a time travel film, the very same object that is the talisman Reese receives before his initial threshold crossing is also the talisman that Sarah, now his surrogate, receives—and that is created—as she crosses the return threshold in his stead. In dictating her memoirs into her tape recorder for her unborn son—as well as through her appearance, location, and accessories—Sarah indicates that she has accepted her destiny as, and has become, the "legend" who will teach her son how to fight and defeat the machine. Through transcending her former self and accepting her destiny she becomes conscious that she is the vehicle of cosmic change, and thus attains the freedom to live.

NOTE

1. Spinrad's "Emperor of Everything," which discusses the monomyth in the first three Dune novels and in *The Stars My Destination* at greater length, notes that this plot structure appears in *The Book of the New Sun* as well. Spinrad also asserts that such science fiction novels as "*Neuromancer* . . . most of Gordon Dickson's Dorsai cycle . . . *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldrich*, *Lord of Light*, *Nova*, *The Einstein Intersection*, Philip Jose Farmer's *Riverworld* books, [and] *Stranger in a Strange Land* . . . are brothers between the covers, at least in plot summary terms, to the Ur-action-adventure formula" explicated in "Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*" (151). Yet most of these other novels, while they do correspond to the more general

"Ur-action-adventure formula" that Spinrad discusses in broad terms, do not exhibit nearly as close a correspondence to the numerous specific details of Campbell's analysis of the monomyth as do those novels and films mentioned in this paragraph. Palumbo discusses the monomyth in all ten Star Trek films and the film *Back to the Future* and in Keyes' *Flowers for Algernon*, Bester's *The Stars My Destination*, Herbert's *Dune* series, and Wolfe's *The Book of the New Sun* and *The Urth of the New Sun*—in "The Monomyth in *Back to the Future*: SF Film Comedy as Adolescent Wish Fulfillment Fantasy," "The Monomyth in Daniel Keyes' *Flowers for Algernon*," "The Monomyth in Alfred Bester's *The Stars My Destination*," "The Monomyth as Fractal Pattern in Frank Herbert's *Dune* Novels," and "The Monomyth in Gene Wolfe's *The Book of the New Sun*." Palumbo's "The Monomyth in Time Travel Films," which discusses the monomyth in *The Time Machine* and *Star Trek IV* as well as *Back to the Future* and *The Terminator*, notes that this plot structure also appears in *Dune*, *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, the initial Star Wars Trilogy, and *2001*.

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