Emily Hamner

Mrs. Rutan

AP Literature and Composition

30 March 2016

Tragic Heroes Travel Through the Galaxies Too

 Along with majestic myths, tragedies have cataclysmic heroes. The heroes “typically... is [are] the orphaned son[s] or royalty” (Gordon). Naturally advanced students and authors of scholarly articles will agree that The Three Theban Plays, *Antigone, Oedipus the King,* and *Oedipus at Colonus,* fill the role of a tragic hero. How is it that these tragedies and myths are still around centuries later? The modern myth space saga, *Star Wars* utilizes the same element, a tragic hero, just as Sophocles did over 2,000 years ago.

 Even though “it would be hard to find a definition of myth that would be acceptable to all scholars…” (*In Search of Cupid) Star Wars*, according to Gordon, is a myth for our time. It occurs in a galaxy far, far away, with alien-like characters, human characters, and above all The Force; the energy that connects all. We always hear about how myths are supposed to be “seized by the sacred…” (Gordon), but that isn’t the case in *Star Wars*. But getting back to the main topic, what about a hero? That’s obvious to even someone who has never seen the movie, it is Luke, but who is the hero that parallels with Greek Mythology. Luke Skywalker may be the go-to hero in George Lucas’ film, *Star Wars*, but there is also a pairing match for Greek Myths -- a tragic hero.

**What is it that we are looking at?**

Sophocles’ famous play, *Oedipus the King*, is familiar with this ever so common idea behind a tragic hero, Oedipus Rex, he was born as a noble, son of King Laius, and he’s more or less a good person, making for a flawed, but also very relatable character. A flaw that happens to be very tragic, or better described as a lethal mistake. A flaw cannot be a stand out, in your face, sort of thing, or else it wouldn’t provoke any sympathy or admiration from the reader’s viewpoint. Rather, the flaw needs to slowly invoke the character, become a part of human nature and cause things to go amiss or go insane.

**Oedipus lacks knowledge. Knowledge of his prophecy:**

***“The child should be his father's murderer, or the dread terror find accomplishment and Laius be slain by his own son” (Sophocles, 719-722).***

Granted he had no idea that his actions and those of the people around him would cause his downfall, like his parents departure to let him die and him leaving from Thebes in order to avoid his murder, which was symbolic of humans incapability to escape their own fate. **“Take me away, far, far from Thebes, quickly, cast me away, my friends-- this great murderous ruin, this man cursed to heaven, the man the deathless gods hate most of all!” (Sophocles, 1477-1480)**  Fate was a common theme within ancient Greek mythology, which is ironic because most fates weren’t sealed before the mission/plot began.

George Lucas’ film, *Star Wars: Episode IV A New Hope,* main protagonist: Anakin Skywalker manifests the same qualities. He is also of noble character, helpful from youth, by creating droids, but also noble by birth. He was deemed by Obi-Wan Padme to bring an even balance to “The Force.” Anakin’s tragedy comes from his fear, one all humans can easily identify with. He feared those in his family and for those that were underneath his command.

The next step in becoming a tragic hero is having a turnabout fortune. Anakin’s experience is reminiscent of Oedipus’. As a prominent leader within the military force, Anakin’s fear leads him to become scared and angry about the deaths of his companions and his love. These were events that caused Anakin’s turn from good to evil. Oedipus also had a tragic downfall when the final news was delivered about his parents.

Both of these characters soon realized that they had an inescapable fate, shortly preceding their death. Anakin, who is now known as “Darth,” fulfilled his destiny by saving his son, Luke Skywalker, while Oedipus killed his father and married his mother, just as the prophecy stated. This led to their final redemption. Oedipus purified his emotions through several lengthy monologues, finally hollowing out his eyeballs symbolic of his lack of knowledge and blindness to his situation.

Anakin rather handled his problems a little bit differently, he modeled his heroism after his redemption of being “good.” Luke Skywalker, son of Anakin, had known his father previous to his transformation to the Dark Side at the end of Episode III. Anakin/Darth saved his son, Luke, with the knowledge that it would result in his own death. Anakin then reached his redemption through his son. Through the death of Palpatine and the saving of his son, Darth completed his mission of balancing the force in their galactic world.

**What’s the final outcome?**

When George Lucas adapted the *Star Wars* series, he wrote it with the knowledge that tragic heroes are easily relatable, therefore the audience would have a better connection and feel what the characters were feeling. Fate was known to be a common theme within Greek myths, but as these two character had an inescapable fate their destiny was predetermined to become tragic heros. Oedipus and Anakin weren’t necessarily “bad” characters, they were relatable, forcing the reader/movie viewer to side with them and feel their reactions.

Works Cited

Gordon, Andrew. "Star Wars: A Myth for Our Time." *Star Wars: A Myth for Our Time*. N.p., n.d.

Web. 30 Mar. 2016. <[http://users.clas.ufl.edu/agordon/starwars.ht](http://users.clas.ufl.edu/agordon/starwars.htm)ml>.

"In Search of Cupid and Psyche: Chapter Two." *In Search of Cupid and Psyche: Chapter Two*.

N.p., n.d. Web. 30 Mar. 2016. <http://comminfo.rutgers.edu/~mjoseph/eliade.html>.

Sophocles, Robert Fagles, and Bernard MacGregor Walker Knox. *The Three Theban Plays*

*Antigone .Oedipus the King Oedipus at Colonus*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984. Print.

*Star Wars*. Dir. George Lucas. Twentieth-Century Fox Corp., 1977. DVD.