

# Christopher Vogler- A Writer's Journey



STAGE TWELVE:  
RETURN WITH THE ELIXIR

# Return

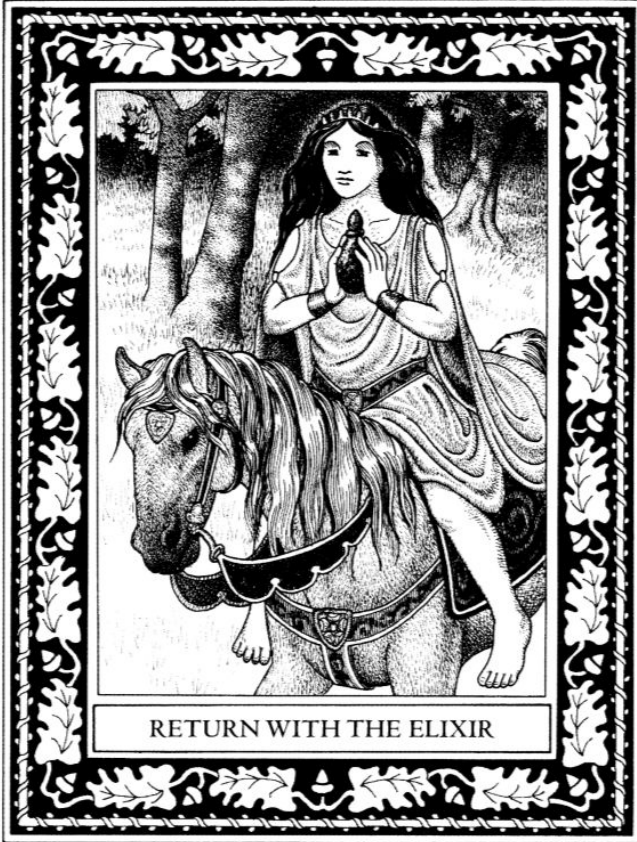
Having survived all the ordeals, having lived through death, heroes return to their starting place, go home, or continue the journey.

Returning with the Elixir means implementing change in your daily life and using the lessons of adventure to heal your wounds.

## Denouement:

A French word meaning "untying" or "unknotting."  
(noue means knot).

We speak of "tying up the loose ends" of a story in a denouement.



# TWO STORY FORMS

## The Circular Story Form

- Also known as closed form, the narrative returns to its starting point.
- Good way of tying up loose ends and making a story feel complete
- Having the Hero return to the starting point or remember how they started allows you to draw a comparison for the audience



*LOTR- The Fellowship of the Ring (2001)*



*The Chronicles of Narnia—The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (2005)*



*LOTR- The Return of the King (2003)*

# Achievement of Perfection

‘And they lived happily ever after’

The "happy endings" of Hollywood films link them with the world of fairy tales, which are often about the achievement of perfection.

Fairy tales bring the shattered family back into balance, back to completion.



Disney Beauty and the Beast (1991)



The Illusionist (2006)



Casablanca (1942)

Weddings, marriage or striking up the relationships can be seen as a perfect ending.

"Louie, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship." -Casablanca



# The Open Ended Story Form

- Once in a while, a few loose ends are desirable
- Storytelling continues when the story is over
- Poses new questions



The Thing - 1982



Inception - 2010

# Functions of the Return

- The Return is your last chance to touch the emotions of the audience
- The story must finish in a way that it provokes the audience as intended
- Bears special weight because of its position at the end of the work



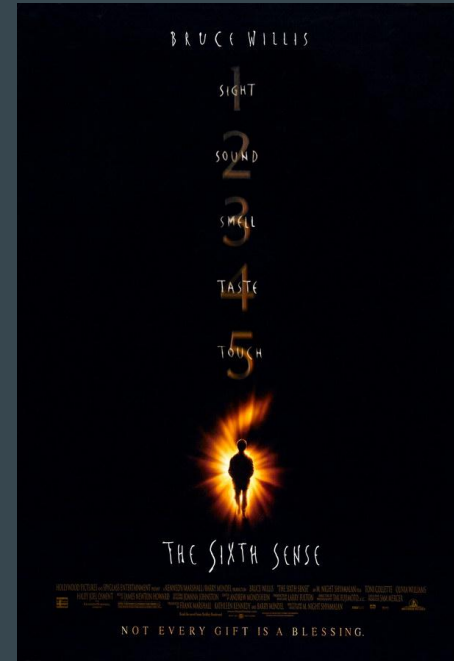
Return Home - Charco

# Surprise

- A Return can fall flat if everything is resolved too neatly or as expected
- Untie plot threads with a certain amount of Surprise
- May have a Twist



Saw - 2004



The Sixth Sense - 1999

# Reward and Punishment

- Part of restoring balance to the world and giving a sense of completion
- Villains should be punished. Punishments should fit the crime
- Rewards should be proportionate to sacrifices offered



The Legend of Zelda - Ocarina of Time 1998



The Legend of Zelda - Majora's Mask 2000



# The Elixir

- What the Hero brings back from their journey upon the Return
- Bringing back the Elixir is the hero's final test
- The Elixir may be any of the things that drive people to undertake adventure
- The best Elixirs are those that bring the hero and the audience greater awareness



Healing Elixir - Skylanders



Youth Elixir

# The Elixir of Love

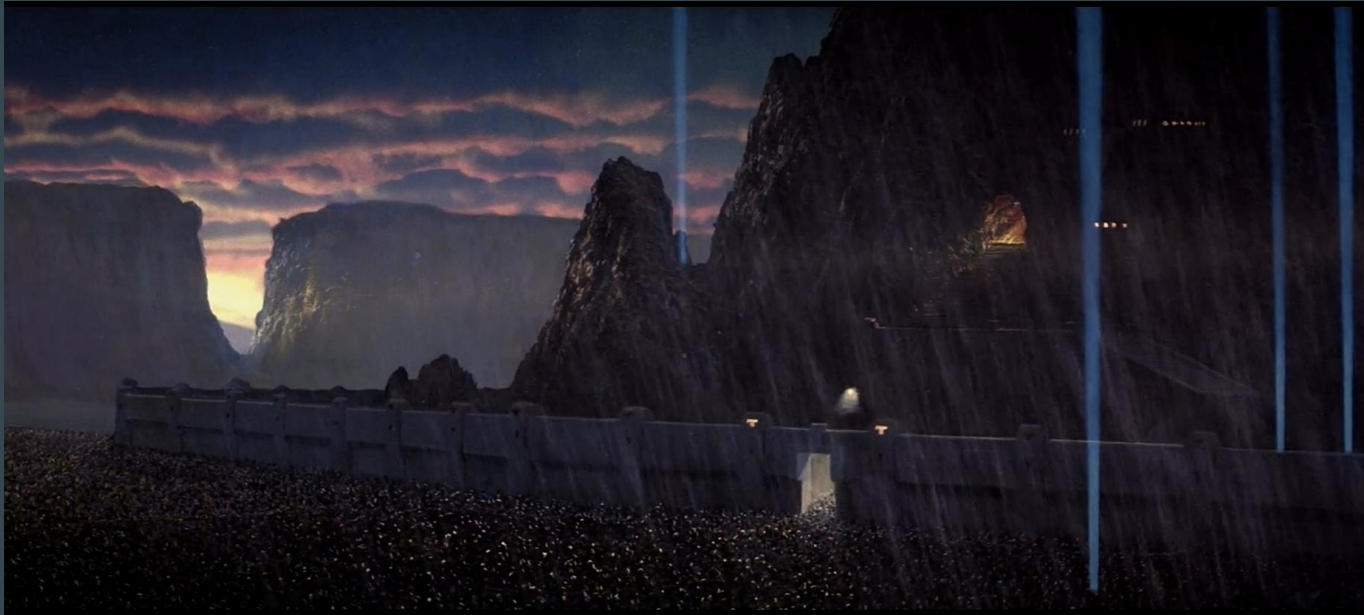
- A reward the hero doesn't win until after a final sacrifice



PK (2014) Directed by Rajkumar Hirani [Film]

# The World is Changed

- The wisdom which got back may be so powerful that it force change
- The whole world is altered and the consequences spread far



Dune (1984) Directed by David Lynch [Film]

# The Elixir of Responsibility

- Take wider responsibility at the Return
- Giving up their loner status for a place of leadership
- Character's center has moved from the ego to the Self



“With great power comes great responsibility”



# The Elixir of Tragedy

- Heroes die or are defeated brought down by their tragic flaws
- The audience learns through the errors made and the consequences of it



Braveheart (1995) Directed by Mel Gibson [Film]

# Sadder but Wiser

- Taking a rueful look back at their wrong turns on the path
- The elixir bear away is bitter medicine, but it may keep from making the same error again
- Warning to audience not to choose the same path



Click (2006) Directed by Frank Coraci [Film]

# Sadder but no Wiser

- Hero is acknowledging that he is been a fool
- The worse kind of fool is the one who doesn't get it
- The hero or someone else is doomed to repeat the ordeals until the lesson is learned



Seven (1995) Directed by David Fincher [Film]

# Epilogue

- The story ends, but life goes on
- How the characters turned out



The Hunger Games: Mockingjay - Part 2 (2015)



# Pitfalls of the Return

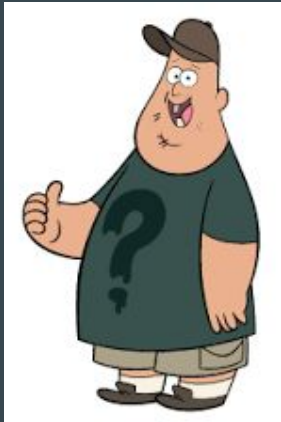
- Abrupt
- Unfocused
  - Starts out one way, finishes in another
- Unresolved subplots
  - Each character should get an Elixir
- Too many endings
  - KISS system



The Karate Kid (1984)

# Punctuation

- A story is like a sentence
  - Period
  - Exclamation point
  - Question mark
  - Ellipsis



Friday the 13th (1980)

**And so the Hero's Journey ends, or at least rests for a while, for the journey of life  
and the adventure of story never really end.**

**The Elixir can be- wisdom, experience, money, love, fame, or the thrill of a lifetime.**

**But a good story, like a good journey, leaves us with an Elixir  
that changes us, makes us more aware, more alive, more human, more whole, more a  
part of everything that is.**

**The circle of the Hero's Journey is complete.**

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