Looking for a hero? Try a sandwich shop!

You won't find one in modern entertainment.

Having just reread a fantasy book of massive proportions (popularity and pages), in conjunction with the sum total of various movies that I've gone to this year, it has become clear that the definition of "hero" has been blurred so much as to not exist in popular fiction.

There has been a steady trend in mass entertainment to portray "anti-heroes" as the modern hero. Anti-heroes are the characters that seemingly achieve heroic deeds or ends through the practice of ignoble or illegal means. For example, a series of gruesome deaths by a "bad guy" might yield the term "serial killer". Those same deaths generated by a "good guy" would earn the title "hero". Ridiculous.

The modern pop-psychology theory is that the "old fashioned" hero of yesteryear was a naive, simple character; one who viewed the world as black and white, where evil is cleanly defined and thus easily defeated. "The world is not so simple!" cry the jaded members of today. "It's not black and white, it's gray!"

Here's a newsflash: the world isn't gray, it's millions of colors. Wake up and look around you! If you truly believe the world is gray then *you* are the one who is naive and

simple, for you are the one who believes the world is just black and white (or what do you think gray is?).

And if more people choose to look at the world as colorless, it's hardly surprising if their fictional champions are equally without color. Really, how much character does it take to slice, shoot or vaporize a man's head from his body? Is there any difference who plays the part or is written into the scene? Could you not just as easily stick a character from any current "hero" movie into the lead role of a different one with little to no impact?

Ironically, the supposed gray *real* world provides us all the heroic icons we need to base our exaggerated heroic imagery in literature or film. The police don't shoot "bad guys" immediately, mowing down hundreds on their way to their goal of upholding the law. Soldiers don't recklessly barrel through enemy territory with guns on both arms and blow up people and property on their way through. And in all cases, the real horror of killing another human has an impact on each of them.

"Get over yourself!" returns the masses. "It's just simple escapism." Cool beans, I say. Hey, I laughed through Commando and Pulp Fiction and the like. The Avengers and Batman movies wowed me. I like the special effects in the various alien and animated movies piling up in the past few years.   There is a visceral and vicarious pleasure in watching those explosions and fights and overcoming of impossible odds.

None of those had any heroes in them, though. Vigilantes, at best; criminals, by another name, at worst. If the idea is that it takes evil to fight evil, I feel certain the battle is well engaged. Like all things entertainment, this too will lose its popularity. It may be an evolution to something even worse or a return to true heroism. It will surely take some time, either way.

In the meantime, I think I'll go grab a sandwich.