

The Heroic Journey of Steve Rogers in Alex Irvine's *Captain America: The First Avenger*

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ABSTRACT

This study is carried out with the aim of finding out how the modern heroic story that occurs in Alex Irvine's Captain America the First Avenger is still related to the theory of heroism which is based on old community stories in the form of myths, legends and folklore. This research uses Campbell's Hero's Journey theory (2020) or monomyth to analyze how the narrative in the novel follows the plot laid out in the hero's journey theory. This study takes the perspective of Steve Rogers as the main character who experienced many events according to the parts and stages mentioned in Joseph Campbell's theory. The data source in this study was Alex Irvine's literary work entitled Captain America the First Avenger, which is an adaptation of a film that was made into a novel and published in New York in 2014 by the Little Brown publisher. The data collection technique was carried out using reading and note-taking technique that allowed the researchers to scan the data in sources which were then classified according to what was required from the theory used. Analysis of this data showed that the narrative of the novel Captain America the First Avenger by Alex Irvine followed all stages in hero's journey theory proposed by Campbell (2020).

Keywords: hero, hero's journey, monomyth

INTRODUCTION

Science fiction (Sci-Fi) has become a prominent genre in literature, television, and film, focusing on themes involving scientific principles and advanced technology (Stockwell, 2000). The term "science fiction" was popularized in the 1920s by Hugo Gernsback, initially appearing mostly in prose before expanding into film. Technological advancements enabled visually impressive and futuristic effects, enhancing the genre's

appeal (Tjipto, 2015). The *Star Wars* series, debuting in 1977, exemplifies this impact, following Luke Skywalker's journey to become a Jedi, harness supernatural powers, and fight the oppressive empire. Set in a galaxy with spaceships, advanced technology, and extraordinary elements, the series captivated audiences worldwide, revolutionized Sci-Fi, and left a lasting mark on popular culture (Evnine, 2015).

The material object in this research is the novel *Captain America: The First Avenger* by Alex Irvine, released in 2014, which is based on the 2011 film of the same title. Film is considered a form of literature presented through video media with scenes, visual effects, and animation (Anggraeni et al., 2017). The process of adapting written works into films is called ecranization (Istadiyantha, 2017). However, Irvine's novel is a reverse adaptation: it transforms the film's screenplay into a written narrative, a process known as novelization (Parys, 2018). Unlike ecranization, this method preserves the story of the original film while providing literary depth, allowing readers to engage with the narrative in textual form. This study focuses on analyzing the novel as an adaptation of cinematic storytelling.

The novel *Captain America: The First Avenger* follows Steve Rogers, a young man who, despite being repeatedly rejected from military service due to his physical limitations, undergoes a dramatic transformation during World War II. His encounter with Dr. Erskine leads to his acceptance into the American army, where he is chosen for a special experiment that turns him into the powerful Captain America. Guided and supported by Dr. Erskine and later by Peggy Carter, who also becomes his romantic interest. Steve is assigned to stop the enemy organization led by the Red Skull, who wields advanced technology powered by the Tesseract, a mysterious cube from outer space. Steve ultimately defeats the Red Skull and becomes a national hero, but his victory results in him being stranded in ice and awakening 70 years later (Irvine, 2014). The narrative of Steve Rogers mirrors the broader pattern found in many hero-centered stories, in which the protagonist undergoes a transformative journey to uncover their potential and fulfill an important mission.

This study aims to examine how Steve Rogers's storyline in the novel *Captain America: The First Avenger* aligns with Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey, or Monomyth, as described in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Campbell defines a hero as one who departs from the ordinary world, enters a special world, faces trials, achieves a noble purpose, and ultimately returns (Campbell, 2020). Using this framework, the researchers argue that Steve's journey reflects the stages of departure, initiation, and return, as he overcomes early challenges, experiences growth, forms alliances, confronts powerful adversaries, and ultimately triumphs before symbolically returning. This study bridges gaps in previous research by applying Monomyth theory to postmodern science fiction, focusing specifically on Steve's development. It provides insights for the readers and researchers, enhancing understanding of heroic narratives and demonstrating the practical application of Campbell's theory. The analysis is limited to Steve's journey and the struggles he faces in becoming a hero, following all 17 stages of the Monomyth.

Several studies have applied Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey theory to analyze literary works. Wahyuni (2018) examines Agatha Christie's *Murder on the Orient Express*, showing that Poirot's narrative follows all 17 Monomyth stages, classifying it as a heroic story. Noor (2020) analyzes Oliver Bowden's *Assassin's Creed Renaissance*, focusing on Ezio Auditore, whose development reflects the stages and challenges of the hero's journey. Damayanti and Munjid (2021) study Hermann Hesse's *Siddhartha*, revealing alignment

with 12 of the 17 stages, illustrating Siddhartha's transformation. Rosianah et al. (2018) explore Orson Scott Card's *Ender's Game*, finding Ender completes 13 stages and demonstrates 12 heroic traits. Wicaksono (2020) examines Ernest Cline's *Ready Player One*, showing Wade Watts completes nearly all Monomyth stages, except the Refusal of the Call, culminating in the final stage, Freedom to Live, after winning the contest and becoming CEO. These studies highlight the Monomyth's applicability across diverse narratives and characters.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research applied literary criticism which is a study that applies literary theory to analyze literary works in the form of novel (Trianton & Yulisetiani, 2017) to analyze a science fiction-themed novel, *Captain America the First Avenger* by Alex Irvine, using the Monomyth theory or Hero's Journey proposed by Joseph Campbell. The study investigated how the theory could be utilized to analyze the story of Steve Rogers in the novel. The data was collected through a reading and note-taking technique, where relevant quotes, dialogues, and sentence snippets were extracted from the novel to support the analysis. The analysis involved grouping and organizing the data according to the stages of the Hero's Journey theory. Lastly, the researchers discuss the findings and draws conclusions based on their interpretation of the data.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

The Hero's Journey Stages

Steve Rogers, a young man from Brooklyn, aspires to become a war hero during World War II. Despite facing multiple rejections due to his physical limitations, Steve's unwavering determination drives him to continue pursuing his dream. This research applies Joseph Campbell's Monomyth theory, also known as the Hero's Journey, to analyze Steve's journey to becoming a hero. The theory divides the journey into three main sections: departure, initiation, and return, each consisting of various stages that the hero must undergo to transform and achieve their goal.

Equilibrium

This section establishes the initial context, known as "equilibrium" in the hero's journey, representing a stable environment for the protagonist (Slattery, 2014). Steve Rogers begins as an ordinary individual in Brooklyn, New York, facing personal losses and physical limitations that prevent him from joining the military. Supported by his friend Bucky Barnes, Steve maintains a relatively normal life. This equilibrium sets the stage for his journey, which begins when an opportunity arises, propelling him into a transformative adventure, as shown in Datum 1.

Steve had never been a big guy. Growing up on the streets of Brooklyn, New York, he and his best friend, James "Bucky" Barnes, had gotten into their fair share of fights. But it was usually Bucky who managed to keep them safe. Steve was scrappy, but physically he wasn't anything to write home about. He was skinny and frail, and because of his asthma, he couldn't even do enough exercise to add some muscles. He also had other health problems. The list was so long doctors usually thought he was making some of them up. But that was the last thing in the world Steve Rogers was going to do. He would have done anything to be fit for the army. (Irvine, 2014. Chapter 1)

Departure

Call to Adventure

The hero's journey begins with the call to adventure, where the hero receives a summons to embark on a mission, sometimes feeling unprepared (Campbell, 2020). Steve Rogers, however, has been preparing for this moment. Despite repeated rejections due to his physical limitations, he answers the call with determination. In his story, the call arises during World War II when America seeks volunteers to fight. Steve's unwavering response marks the start of his transformative journey, as shown in Datum 2.

Steve Rogers stood nervously in line at the recruitment center in Bayonne, New Jersey. Ahead of him, men stepped up one by one. And one by one, they got approved to join the army. Steve sighed and waited for his turn, which seemed as if it would never come. Looking around, he noticed several newspaper headlines about a brutal attack on a small Norwegian town that had left civilians hurt and homeless. America was at war. Across the ocean, Europe was full of gunfire and explosions. Men, women, and children were losing their lives and their homes as enemy forces invaded country after country. It had been going on for two years before America got involved, but then Pearl Harbor had happened. Now soldiers from the United States were flooding Europe, hoping to help the good guys win. But it wasn't going to be an easy—or a short—fight. (Irvine, 2014, Chapter 1)

With wars raging across the globe, the American military is seeking additional personnel to strengthen its forces. In response, volunteer registrations are being conducted throughout America, including in New Jersey where Steve Rogers resides. Inspired by his deep patriotism and desire to fight for his country, Steve seizes the opportunity to join the military. However, despite his enthusiasm, Steve encounters repeated rejections due to his perceived inadequacy and unsuitability for military service. These rejections frustrate and exhaust him as he faces the continuous disappointment of not being accepted as a member of the military.

Refusal of The Call

After the call to adventure, heroes often experience the "Refusal of the Call," feeling hesitant or incapable due to unknown challenges (Campbell, 2020). In Steve Rogers' story, external rejections shape his self-doubt. Despite repeated attempts to enlist, he faces denial, including a doctor questioning his health and battlefield readiness. These rejections influence how Steve perceives himself, highlighting his initial struggle to embrace his heroic potential. This stage is illustrated in Datum 3.

*"Just give me a chance," Steve said.
"Sorry, son," the doctor said, looking up at him. "You'd be ineligible on your asthma alone."
He didn't say it, but Steve knew what he was thinking. "You're a fool, kid. The war is for for strong men. Not for guys like you. Not for guys who can't even breathe right."
"You can't do anything?" Steve asked anyway, hope in his voice.
"I'm doing it," the doctor answered. "I'm saving your life."
Then, as Steve watched, the doctor pulled out the dreaded stamp. With a resounding thunk, he pressed it down on the file, marking it with a big black 4F."
Steve had failed - again. (Irvine, 2014, Chapter 1)*

Despite multiple attempts and pleas, Steve Rogers continues to face rejection from the military enlistment counter due to his perceived inadequacy. His physical appearance

and capabilities fall short of the expected criteria for a soldier, leading many to underestimate him. However, Steve possesses a strong and unyielding spirit.

Supernatural Aid

In the "Supernatural Aid" stage, the hero receives help from a higher figure who provides guidance or tools (Campbell, 2020). Steve Rogers experiences this when he approaches an abandoned military enlistment counter during a technology conference. Despite it being his last night with Bucky, Steve focuses on enlisting. With the unexpected assistance of a mentor-like figure, he successfully completes the registration process. This aid allows Steve to bypass obstacles and demonstrates the start of his active pursuit of the heroic journey, as shown in Datum 4.

Datum 4

Turning to say something to Steve, Bucky noticed that his friend was no longer by his side. Even Steve's date didn't know where he had gone. Sighing, Bucky went to look for him. He found Steve standing in front of the one nonfuturistic pavilion in the entire fair, the US Army recruitment booth. It looked empty. No one wanted to think about the war now, not when they could think about all the amazing things the future held. No one but Steve Rogers. He stood staring at the tent, enraptured.

"You're really going to do this now?" Bucky asked, walking over to stand next to him.

"I'm going to try my luck," Steve said, nodding. (Irvine, 2014, Chapter 2)

Steve's unwavering determination to enlist in the military leads him to a fortuitous encounter with a mentor who plays a crucial role in helping him through the registration process. Despite his friend Bucky's suggestions, Steve remains steadfast in pursuing his dream and answering the call of his destiny. It is within the pavilion that Steve finally meets Dr. Erskine, who serves as his mentor and assists him in successfully completing the military registration. Steve's persistence in facing his doubts and staying firm in his convictions ultimately pays off, as depicted in Datum 5.

The man made his way slowly over to Steve. "So. You want to go overseas? Be a hero?" he asked in a German accent. Steve just looked at him. He wasn't sure what to say. Was this some kind of test?

"Dr. Abraham Erskine," the man said, introducing himself. "Strategic Scientific Reserve, US Army." ...

"Where are you from?" he asked, to draw the doctor's attention away from the file.

"Queens," Erskine said. He paused, then added, "Before that, Germany. This bothers you?"

Steve was momentarily taken aback. Was this place legit? He hadn't expected a German national to be inside a US Army recruitment center.

...

"I can offer you a chance," Dr. Erskine said. "Only a chance."

Then, as Steve watched with growing excitement, the man pressed the stamp down on the file. Holding up the file, Steve saw a big 1A.

He couldn't believe it. After all this time, he was actually in the army. His luck had changed. Just like he told Bucky it would. (Irvine, 2014, Chapter 2)

Steve meets Dr. Erskine, his mentor who supports his military journey. Initially wary because Erskine is German, Steve learns he has joined the American SSR to develop advanced weapons, including the Super Soldier serum. Erskine left Hydra after realizing

Schmidt would misuse the serum for world domination. Seeking someone with a good heart, Erskine observes Steve's courage and kindness, especially when he protects him from an intruder. Convinced of his qualities, Erskine selects Steve as the ideal candidate for the Super Soldier program.

The Crossing of The First Threshold

This stage marks the hero's transition from the Ordinary World to the Special World, an unfamiliar and dangerous realm. In this world, the hero encounters the Threshold Guardian, which tests their strength and worthiness. Guardians can be people, creatures, or challenging situations that determine whether the hero can progress. In *Captain America: The First Avenger*, Crossing the First Threshold occurs in two parts, with the first part illustrated in Datum 6, where Steve begins facing trials that push him beyond his ordinary limits.

Phillips immediately countered Erskine's argument.

"You don't win wars with niceness, Doctor. You win them with guts."

And to prove his point, Phillips picked up a grenade and hurled it into the middle of the course, right near Steve. As Hodge and the other recruits panicked and fled, Steve ran right at the grenade.

"Everybody, down!" he shouted as he flung himself on top of the explosive device.

There was a moment of silence as everyone waited for the inevitable. One second passed. Two seconds. Three. Finally, Steve gingerly eased himself up and off the grenade.

Looking over to where Phillips, Peggy, and Erskine stood, he cocked his head and asked, "Is this a test?"

Peggy tried not to smile. It was a test of sorts, and not even Colonel Phillips could deny that Steve had passed. Erskine cocked an eyebrow at the colonel.

"He's still skinny," Phillips growled. But he didn't argue any more.

The SSR didn't need to look any further: Steve Rogers was going to be their first Super-Soldier. (Irvine, 2014, Chapter 3)

In this scene, Steve Rogers has officially become a recruit in the US military and is undergoing training alongside fellow rookies. A confrontation arises between Colonel Phillips, a high-ranking military figure, and Dr. Erskine regarding who is deserving of becoming a super soldier based on Erskine's research. Colonel Phillips values physical strength as a crucial characteristic for a super soldier to win the war, while Erskine emphasizes the importance of inner strength and willingness to protect others, criteria that Steve Rogers fulfills. Then, the second part of the Crossing of The First Threshold is like the following Datum 7.

"You did it, Doctor!" Stark shouted as he unstrapped Steve, who was momentarily weakened from the ordeal. "You really did it!"

As Stark helped Steve over to a chair, everyone rushed in, eager to see the results and congratulate one another. In the middle of the excitement, Steve sat, taking everything in. He felt different. He couldn't tell what he looked like, but from the reactions of those around him, he figured it was good. And from the reaction of Peggy, he figured it was very good.

"How do you feel?" she asked.

"Taller," he said, looking down at her as he smiled.

Peggy smiled back. At least his spirits hadn't changed. And then everything started to go downhill—fast. (Irvine, 2014, Chapter 4)

The second part of Steve's Threshold Guardian test involves Dr. Erskine, who now assesses Steve's resilience during the serum injection, assisted by Howard Stark. Despite technical difficulties, Steve insists he can endure it, and the procedure proceeds. This test, following Colonel Phillips' earlier evaluation of Steve's character, marks his successful passage through the fourth stage, Departure. By overcoming both challenges, Steve transitions from an ordinary recruit to the primary candidate for the Super Soldier program, crossing the first threshold and advancing his heroic journey.

The Belly of the Whale

The Belly of the Whale stage marks the end of the first part of the hero's journey. It is a stage where the hero enters an unfamiliar and dangerous realm, facing the first significant obstacle. Named after the analogy of being swallowed by a whale, this stage represents a point of no return (Campbell, 2020). Equipped with the knowledge and assistance gained in the previous stages, the hero must demonstrate their strength and courage to prove their heroism. For Steve Rogers, this stage occurs shortly after receiving the super serum injection. In the laboratory, an unexpected attack takes place as someone seeks to seize the remaining serum and disrupt the creation of future super soldiers. This incident poses a new challenge for Steve, as shown in Datum 8.

Later, back at the SSR HQ, Peggy sat down with Steve to brief him on the situation. He'd known it was bad because they'd lost Erskine, but after talking with Peggy for only a few minutes, Steve started to understand just how bad.

"All of Dr. Erskine's research and equipment is gone. Any hope of reproducing the project is locked away in your genetic code." She put her hand on Steve's shoulder. "At the moment, you're the only Super-Soldier there is," she said.

It was a strange feeling, to go from the skinny kid nobody wanted to the only survivor of some kind of crazy science-fiction experiment. What would happen next? (Irvine, 2014, Chapter 5)

The attack on the laboratory by the Hydra spy, Kruger, creates serious consequences for the American military and becomes Steve's first major challenge after gaining his superhuman abilities. Kruger's infiltration ends in failure but results in the death of Dr. Erskine, the only person who knew the formula for the super serum. Erskine's death deeply affects Steve because Erskine was the one who believed in him and helped him begin his journey; without him, Steve would still be the small boy from Brooklyn hoping to join the military. This loss marks Steve's entry into the "Belly of the Whale" stage, where there is no turning back and the real adventure begins. Even with his new powers, Steve realizes that strength alone does not guarantee success in stopping Kruger. His abilities symbolize a new life he cannot escape, and as he chases Kruger, he sees how much he has changed, the expectations now placed on him, and the impossibility of returning to his old self. The only direction left for Steve is to move forward.

Initiation

The Road of Trials

This stage marks the beginning of the Initiation phase in the hero's journey, where the hero enters a new world filled with tests, enemies, and allies. With the help gained from earlier stages, the hero must face various challenges (Campbell, 2020). Steve Rogers now reaches this point and begins encountering new obstacles. His ordeal, however, unfolds in

an unexpected way. He accidentally walks into a tense meeting between Colonel Phillips and Senator Brandt, where Phillips wants an entire army of super soldiers, while Brandt sees Steve as a perfect symbol to boost public support for the war. Since creating more super soldiers is impossible, Brandt decides to use Steve as propaganda by turning him into a theater attraction. Dressed in a patriotic costume representing America, Steve performs at public events to inspire citizens and promote the war effort. This moment is shown in Datum 9.

For the next few months, Steve traveled all over the United States performing his Captain America show. At first, the crowds were small and Steve messed up—a lot. But slowly, things got better and the stages got bigger. (Irvine, 2014, Chapter 6)

A short while later, Steve sat in the empty bleachers, his head cradled in his hands. The soldiers had left, probably to go find real entertainment or talk about the real war and laugh at the man in the silly costume. Shame washed over Steve in huge waves. What had he been thinking? All this time he had fooled himself into believing he was a hero, a man of the people. But he was nothing but a joke. The men in the audience today were the real heroes. They had put their lives on the line time and time again, while all Steve had done was cheat his way to being a star. He hadn't even done anything with his superpowers since he had chased Kruger after the explosion. Had Erskine been wrong to think he was worthy? Had Phillips been right to doubt him? (Irvine, 2014, Chapter 7)

In this stage, Steve faces a different kind of trial. Instead of using his superhuman abilities in real combat, he is turned into an entertainer who travels from stage to stage, encouraging the public to stay calm during the ceasefire. His popularity grows, and crowded theaters soon give him the nickname Captain America. However, this fame creates an internal conflict, as Steve realizes he is drifting away from his true dream of fighting on the front lines. The turning point comes during a tour at a military camp, where soldiers who have experienced real battle reject his performance as a cheap show. This reaction forces Steve to question his purpose and the meaning of being a hero. He struggles with doubts, torn between Erskine's belief in his potential and Phillips' skepticism. Recognizing that he is no longer following his original mission, Steve becomes determined to be more than just a performer wearing the title of Captain America. This struggle defines his Road of Trials stage.

The Meeting with The Goddess

The stage of Meeting with the Goddess, the hero meets someone who guides and supports their journey (Campbell, 2020). For Steve Rogers, these figures are Peggy Carter and Howard Stark. Peggy trusts Steve's determination and becomes his romantic interest, helping him gain access to the area where captured soldiers are held. After Steve is belittled by returning troops, he turns to Peggy for help. Despite Colonel Phillips' refusal, Peggy uses her position and connections, including Howard Stark's resource, to fully support Steve's mission.

"I can do more than that," she said.

Steve grabbed one of the dancing girls' USA helmets—the one with the A on it—and dashed off. It was time for action. Captain America was about to go behind enemy lines to rescue captured American soldiers. Steve Rogers was finally going to war. (Irvine, 2014, Chapter 7)

And so, later that night, Steve found himself inside the belly of a giant silver jet. On the bench across from him, Peggy Carter sat going over details of his seemingly impossible mission. In the cockpit, Howard Stark checked dials and instrument readings as he flew the plane

farther and farther into enemy territory. He was the only pilot Peggy could find who was crazy enough to fly into enemy territory—and who didn't have to answer to Colonel Phillips. "The Hydra camp is in Krossberg," Stark was shouting over the sound of the engines. "It's up between these two mountain ranges. We should be able to drop you around the doorstep." (Irvine, 2014, Chapter 8)

After being belittled by returning soldiers, Steve asks Colonel Phillips about Bucky's unit but is rejected, pushing him to seek help from Peggy instead. Because of her military position and connections, Peggy offers even more support than Steve expected, including introducing him to Howard Stark, a skilled military inventor who has the freedom to assist Steve with weapons and transportation. Peggy already believes in Steve's abilities and later becomes his love interest, while Howard provides the tools he needs for battle. With their combined help, Steve goes on a mission to rescue Bucky and other captured soldiers, successfully infiltrates a Hydra base, and brings them home safely. This achievement leads Colonel Phillips to finally recognize Steve as a capable and trustworthy soldier.

Women as Temptress

In this stage, the hero meets the Woman as Temptress, a figure who represents distractions that can pull the hero away from their mission. This temptation is not always romantic, but it can also appear as fame, comfort, or other desires that test the hero's commitment (Campbell, 2020). For Steve, this temptation appears as Private Lorraine, whom he meets in Howard's office. She introduces herself as Howard's assistant and symbolizes a possible romantic distraction or moment of weakness that could divert Steve from his true purpose. Although their interaction is brief and unclear, Lorraine's presence reminds Steve that temptations exist along his path and could interfere with his mission, as shown in Datum 11.

"The women of America owe you their thanks," she said, getting up and walking over to Steve. "And seeing as they're not here..." Before Steve knew what was happening, Private Lorraine leaned in, and they were kissing. (Irvine, 2014, Chapter 10)

During this stage, Steve faces the temptation of women, specifically in the form of Lorraine. Lorraine considers Steve a hero and tries to express her gratitude by kissing him. However, Steve is unable to evade the situation as Peggy interrupts and calls out to him. This incident serves as a demonstration of the temptation Steve must navigate on his heroic journey, with Lorraine representing the allure of fame and the distractions it brings. Fortunately, Peggy's timely arrival prevents Steve from being consumed by these temptations and refocuses him on his mission.

Atonement with The Father

At this stage, the hero confronts their ultimate enemy, known as the Atonement with the father (Campbell, 2020). It is a crucial moment that determines the resolution of the hero's mission. In *Captain America: The First Avenger*, Steve Rogers reaches this stage when he and his team go to the Alps, following a prisoner's information about Johann Schmidt, Hydra's leader. Steve allows himself to be captured to approach Schmidt and confront him. This stage represents the hero's pivotal challenge, requiring courage and determination, and marks the climax and transformation in their journey.

A few minutes later, Captain America found himself inside Johann Schmidt's office. It was dark and oppressive. On one wall, a large picture of Schmidt, with his red skull showing in all its hideous glory, was displayed. Steve didn't know whether it was supposed to serve as a warning to those who entered, or whether Schmidt was so crazy he just liked to look at his disfigured face.

The Red Skull circled him, with a sneer. "Arrogance may not be a uniquely American trait," he said, "but I must say you do it better than anyone. Still, there are limits to what even you can do, Captain. Or did Erskine tell you otherwise?" (Irvine, 2014, Chapter 13)

Steve Rogers confronts the main antagonist of the story, Johann Schmidt aka The Red Skull. Schmidt is the mastermind behind the ongoing war between America and Germany, and his goal is to create chaos and control everything. Steve's primary objective is to stop The Red Skull and put an end to the war. Although The Red Skull possesses enhanced powers similar to Steve's, Steve is determined to defeat him and restore peace. This stage represents a critical moment in Steve's journey where he must confront the ultimate challenge and work towards freeing himself from The Red Skull's influence.

Apotheosis

In this stage, Steve Rogers faces Johann Schmidt, aka The Red Skull, in a climactic battle, fulfilling his heroic destiny (Campbell, 2020). This moment marks the culmination of Steve's growth and challenges. The confrontation represents the peak of their conflict and the completion of Steve's mission to stop Schmidt's chaos. Steve must use all his strength, determination, and skills to defeat his enemy and restore peace. The outcome decides the fate of the world and confirms Steve's status as a true hero, as shown in Datum 13.

Right now, he was going to get into that cockpit. And then he was going to take Schmidt down. He would figure out what was in that box Schmidt held so dear and destroy it. And then he would take the plane—and all the bombs it carried—and destroy it, too.

A year ago, Steve Rogers was just an ordinary guy hoping to join the army. Now he was the courageous Captain America. People had given their lives to get him here, and he wouldn't let them down. Whatever the future held, he knew that he had to succeed. For Peggy and Bucky. For Erskine and Phillips. For the Howling Commandos. And most of all, for his country

With heart, strength, and grim determination, Steve Rogers set off in the direction of the cockpit. It was time for the final confrontation. It was time for him to stop Johann Schmidt once and for all, no matter what the cost. It was time for the Red Skull—and all of Hydra—to learn that evil would never prevail over justice. Not while Captain America was still around to stop them. (Irvine, 2014, Chapter 14)

In this moment of apotheosis, Steve Rogers reflects on his journey and the support he has received from those who have believed in him. He understands the weight of their expectations and the sacrifices made for him to become Captain America. With this newfound enlightenment, Steve is motivated to bring an end to Red Skull's reign of terror and fulfill his mission. He recognizes the importance of his actions in honoring the memory of those who have supported him. Steve's determination and commitment to justice drive him forward as he prepares to face his ultimate enemy and achieve victory.

The Ultimate Boon

In the Ultimate Boon stage, Steve Rogers achieves his goal and gains invaluable wisdom after his journey, marking the culmination of his hero's transformation (Campbell,

2020). He becomes a capable, wise figure ready for future challenges. The climax occurs in the jet cockpit, where Steve battles Red Skull. Using determination and skill, he counters Red Skull's attacks while focusing on destroying the iron tube containing the glowing cube, the source of his enemy's power. This act symbolizes Steve's mastery, fulfillment, and the ultimate test of his abilities, encapsulating the essence of his heroic journey, as shown in Datum 14.

Now he could see what was inside it. There was a cylinder holding a glowing blue cube. That was the energy source. Exposed to the open air, it was firing off strange waves of light. The air felt strange, like everything was being bent or stretched somehow. Steve looked up and couldn't believe what he saw. The roof of the Valkyrie wasn't there anymore. He was looking at deep space. He saw clusters of stars, brightly colored nebulae, even entire galaxies! How could that be? It was broad daylight outside.

"What have you done?" screamed the Red Skull. He pulled himself to his feet next to the broken cylinder and touched the cube. Sparks and lines of energy ran up and down his fingers. He picked the cube up and held it in the palm of his hand. (Irvine, 2014, Chapter 15)

"No!" Schmidt howled. The light from the cube washed through his hand, and he started to disintegrate, bit by bit. He turned into streaks of light that beamed away, up into the endless space where the Valkyrie's ceiling had been. Steve was amazed. It didn't look like Schmidt was in pain. He was just astonished, watching himself turn into a multicolored spray of energy. Then he was gone. (Irvine, 2014, Chapter 15)

Steve's journey shifts when he discovers the true power of the object inside the iron tube, leaving both him and Red Skull stunned. Quickly refocusing, Steve remembers his mission to stop Red Skull and the bomb threat. As Red Skull disappears, Steve neutralizes the immediate danger, completing his main mission. One final challenge remains: preventing the jet from crashing into New York City. He contacts Peggy at the Hydra base to coordinate his plan. This act ensures public safety and brings Steve's heroic journey to a close, highlighting his courage, quick thinking, and commitment to his duty.

Return

Refusal of The Return

After defeating Red Skull and preventing the bombing, Steve experiences doubt and hesitates to return to his ordinary world. His reluctance may stem from the comfort and familiarity of the new world he explored, or concerns about potential consequences upon returning. This resistance reflects a common theme in the hero's journey, highlighting the inner conflict and turmoil the hero must face before fully completing his quest (Campbell, 2020). Steve's hesitation illustrates the psychological struggle that precedes the final stage of reintegration, as shown in Datum 15.

Peggy's voice crackled back at him immediately. "Please! Don't do this. We have time...." Steve looked at the map display on the instrument console. He saw lots of ice and water. Glaciers, fjords. No cities, no towns. He figured Peggy was looking at a map, too, but she didn't know how badly the Valkyrie was damaged and he didn't have time to explain it to her. At his current airspeed, he was going to be within range of big cities in just a couple of minutes. "Right now I'm in the middle of nowhere. If I wait any longer, a lot of people are gonna die," he said. "Peggy, it's my choice." (Irvine, 2014, Chapter 15)

After defeating the Red Skull, Steve takes control of the damaged Valkyrie, which contains explosives and is on a collision course with New York. Despite the desire to return home, Steve realizes that landing the plane in a populated area would cause more harm than good. He refuses to go back to New York and instead focuses on finding a safe location to land and prevent further destruction. This refusal is a result of external factors and the understanding that prioritizing the lives of others is more important than his own return. Steve's refusal marks a significant point in the hero's journey, as he sacrifices personal desires for the greater good.

The Magic Flight

The hero must return to the ordinary world with his boon, facing final challenges (Campbell, 2020). Steve's damaged Valkyrie plane prevents his return, crash-landing in an unknown location. Awakening in an unfamiliar room, he navigates this obstacle, demonstrating perseverance and the final stage of his journey, as shown in Datum 16.

Steve woke up to the sound of the Dodgers on the radio. He sat up and looked around. He was in a room, maybe a hospital room? It was sunny, with a spring breeze coming in through an open window. He was wearing an SSR T-shirt, khakis, and boots. Why boots? He didn't remember putting them on. The last thing he remembered was putting the Valkyrie into a steep dive. He'd heard Peggy's voice over the radio and kept his eyes on her picture.

Then, nothing. (Irvine, 2014. Chapter 15)

He charged them and knocked them straight through the wall. It came apart more easily than it should have. Steve charged through after them. The room was a fake. It was built in the middle of a big, dark space like a warehouse. The light was strange, cold and blue. Steve looked right and left. He spotted a sign over one of the doors: EXIT.

He ran toward it and collided with another guard. Steve threw him out of the way. The guard hit the wall and went down. Steve ran on. A loudspeaker sounded an alarm. "All agents, Code Thirteen, Code Thirteen!" Steve shoved two more guards aside. He could see another large open room ahead. There was daylight there. (Irvine, 2014. Chapter 15)

After escaping the mysterious room, Steve finds himself in a new, unfamiliar New York City, futuristic and disorienting. Confused by the altered environment, he questions whether he has truly returned to his own time. Soldiers trick him, adding to his uncertainty. This situation challenges Steve to overcome confusion and navigate the strange surroundings, directly linked to the crash of the Valkyrie jet, testing his resourcefulness and ability to adapt in an unfamiliar world.

Rescue from Without

Steve, confused and weak in an unfamiliar environment, cannot navigate alone and requires external help. This rescue guides him back to his reality, marking a turning point in his journey. Receiving support enables Steve to continue his path and face upcoming challenges, reflecting a key stage in the hero's journey (Campbell, 2020, Datum 17).

Big black cars, like paddy wagons, squealed to a halt all around him, blocking traffic. Soldiers got out, wearing black uniforms Steve didn't recognize. They had eagles on their patches. From the nearest car, a bald black man with an eye patch approached Steve. He wasn't dressed like an officer, but he carried himself like one.

"At ease, soldier," he said. Steve just looked at him. There was no way to know where he was in the chain of command. Did Steve have to salute him? Was he real? What did he

know about all this? "Look, I'm sorry about that little show back there," he said. "But we thought it best to break it to you slowly."

"Break what?" Steve asked.

"You've been asleep, Cap," the officer said. Steve saw sympathy on his face. "For almost seventy years." (Irvine, 2014. Chapter 15)

Steve receives guidance from a blindfolded man, revealing that he has been asleep for nearly seventy years. Rescued by the man and his troops, Steve returns to a drastically changed world. With their help, he comes to terms with the changes, moves forward, and fulfills his mission. This "rescue from without" stage represents Steve's transformation, reintegration, and recovery from his weakest moments, allowing him to regain purpose and complete his heroic journey.

The Crossing of The Return Threshold

After being rescued and informed by the man in black, Steve enters the hero's return stage, realizing he has been separated from his ordinary world for nearly seventy years. He sees New York at peace and recognizes it as his home despite the changes. This stage marks his journey back from the special world (Campbell, 2020), completing his hero's journey and reintegrating into his ordinary world during a time of tranquility, as shown in Datum 18.

Seventy years? He remembered the fight with Schmidt on the Valkyrie like it had happened just a few hours ago. The date of that operation was May 4, 1945. So now, if it was almost seventy years later, this was...

He looked again at the screens on the buildings surrounding Times Square. The date and time scrolled across the bottom of one, below some kind of news report. It was April 17, 2012 (Irvine, 2014. Chapter 15).

The quotation above represents Steve's realization of what has lately occurred to him. Even though all of the events he had witnessed had occurred many years, even decades before, he still assumed it was just a few hours ago. At this moment, Steve managed to break through the psychological barrier that separated the special world from his ordinary world. The fact that Steve is aware of this incident suggests that he has successfully completed the crossing of the return threshold stage.

Master of Two Worlds

Steve enters the stage of the hero's return, where he reflects upon his experiences and learns to balance his newfound strength and wisdom in both worlds. He realizes that his trials and heroic actions have shaped him, allowing him to fulfill his mission and restore balance. Steve's awakening after being frozen on ice signifies the transformation of his ordinary world into a thriving and evolving city. He brings his power and experience back to his original world, creating a harmonious equilibrium in both realms (Campbell, 2020). It is depicted in the Datum 19 below:

I crashed Hydra's superweapon and saved New York, Steve thought. Then I woke up in the future. (Irvine, 2014. Chapter 15)

Steve's heroic act of saving New York, despite being put into prolonged sleep, establishes lasting peace during his absence. His exceptional strength allows him to endure the frozen state until awakening in the future, enabling his return to his original home. This demonstrates Steve's achievement in balancing power, harmonizing the special and ordinary worlds, and completing his journey, highlighting his enduring heroism and the lasting impact of his actions.

Freedom to Live

Steve's heroic act of saving New York, despite being put into prolonged sleep, establishes lasting peace during his absence. His exceptional strength allows him to endure the frozen state until awakening in the future, enabling his return to his original home. This demonstrates Steve's achievement in balancing power, harmonizing the special and ordinary worlds, and completing his journey, highlighting his enduring heroism and the lasting impact of his actions.

"You going to be okay?" the officer asked.

Steve thought he didn't have much choice. He had to be okay. Here he was. He was a soldier.

"Yeah," he said. "I'm just... I had a date." (Irvine, 2014. Chapter 15)

The quote above shows that Steve has now accepted his status as a soldier and accepted the situation that he is now in the future. He is okay with what happened to him and lives with it as he is. So that, in the end Steve succeeded in passing all the stages in the hero's journey theory because he had reached this Freedom to Live stage.

CONCLUSION & SUGGESTION

Based on the findings and discussions, the novel *Captain America: The First Avenger* by Alex Irvine, released in 2014, is a science fiction work adapted from the 2011 film in the Marvel Cinematic Universe. This research analyzed the main character, Steve Rogers, through the lens of Joseph Campbell's 17-stage Monomyth or hero's journey theory. Steve transforms from a weak, timid teenager into a courageous soldier, stepping out of his comfort zone to face extraordinary challenges. His journey begins with equilibrium, progresses through the call to adventure, separation, initiation, trials, and ultimately returns to a new equilibrium in a changed situation. Each stage, from departure to return, reflects the classic structure of Campbell's hero's journey, demonstrating that the novel's narrative aligns closely with the theory.

This study emphasizes that Campbell's theory, though derived from folklore, myths, and legends, remains relevant in analyzing modern heroism. Future research could explore the novel using contemporary theories that focus on character conflict or psychological development, allowing for different perspectives. Moreover, the Monomyth theory is particularly suitable for novels with complete endings, as all stages can be observed. Alternatively, the researchers could examine heroism using Christopher Vogler's adaptation of the hero's journey for comparison, further enriching literary analyses of modern narratives.

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