Structural analysis of the Avengers film series

BACHELOR THESIS

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Declaration
I hereby declare that I am the sole author of the thesis entitled “Structural analysis of the Avengers film series”. I duly marked out all questions. The used literature and sources are stated in the attached list of references.

In Prague on 12th of December 2017

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Acknowledgment:

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Abstract:

The primary purpose of this bachelor thesis is to show what similar structures Avengers films have when it comes to storytelling. It is by explaining and then applying a concept called Hero's Journey as well as Archetypes that significantly influence audience's impression of the film. The theoretical part focuses on elaborating each stage of the Hero's Journey along with each Archetype and fundamentals of narratology. The practical section of the dissertation is dedicated to implementing the beforementioned concepts and methods to the Avengers film series to ascertain how much of a contributory factor to the success of the franchise virtually identical story structures are.

Key words

film analysis, storytelling, narratology, archetype, story structure
Abstrakt:

Hlavním cílem této bakalářské práce je ukázat, jak jsou podobné struktury Avengers filmů, co se týká příběhu. Je to přes vysvětlení a použití koncepce Hero's Journey a také Archetypů, které významně ovlivňují celkový dojem z filmu. Teoretická část se zaměřuje na rozpracování jednotlivých faz Hero's Journey společně s jednotlivými Archetypy a základy naratologie. Praktická část je věnována aplikování výše uvedených metod a koncepcí na to, aby se prokázalo, jak velkou roli v úspěchu franšízy hraje příběh se skoro podobnou strukturou.

Klíčová slova

filmová analýza, vyprávění příběhu, naratologie, archetyp, struktura příběhu
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Introduction

Filmmaking is an essential part of multimedia, the current field of studies. The industry is continuously gaining momentum, it seems. For the most part, thanks to blockbusters and pictures that cost hundreds of millions of dollars to produce, promote and get to the theatres worldwide. Movies based on comic books have become a cultural phenomenon. They appear to be topping the box offices around the globe and keep on not only coming every year but also retracing, following a supposed simple pattern.

Enough about the production values, the sole purpose of this dissertation is to prove that by far the majority of Marvel cinematic universe follows the same path storywise. In author's personal opinion, Hollywood's target audience for big-budgeted films are teenagers as in the pictures are made for a state of mental as well as emotional development that vigorously requests neither reflection nor in-depth analysis to understand, more importantly, enjoy the film. If one examines three or four superhero movies even from a distance, they are arguably light on plot twists and quite heavy on special effects. On the other hand, the people, who frequent the cinema to watch them, do not trick themselves into making the experience into something it is not.

The question to pose is precisely how similar these films are when it comes to their blueprints. Why is Marvel Cinematic Universe so auspicious and infectious? Is it due to the simplicity of the story or maybe because they rely on special effects while executing so splendidly? If so, is there any way or even point in changing that? Answering these questions and much more in this thesis while also applying Hero's Journey (Campbell, 2004) as the story structure to see whether there are features in common. Furthermore, analysing whether films with the same story structure affect their audiences differently. The author is to introduce and implement Archetypes (Vogler, 2007) into the study to ascertain how characters can influence the overall impression and help shape the story.
1. Concepts & Methods

People respond well to inspirational film pieces as well as fantasy features set in other dimensions. Ordinarily, everyday life of many individuals can leave too much to the imagination, meaning one may choose stability over thrill and excitement which is why the person would need an outlet for the spare capacity. There are numerous ways how to achieve the gratifying sensation of living a dream. Some look up at the big screen, not without reason. The film does provide its audience with stunningly beautiful visuals that are sometimes hard to come by in real life, especially if the case is an outer space adventure. The story invigorates the viewer and encourages him to follow the steps of the hero on-screen to subsequently change his life for the better.

One cannot help but notice those motion pictures do have something in common: global devastation, one savour (or a group) and a happy end - that is just the surface. In case someone were to dig dipper, scripts appear to have a similar structure. In layman's terms, the chosen one gets thrown out of his/her element, meets a mentor, studies and withstands tests, fights the enemy leader (or the whole army) and restores peace. All the mentioned above has a place in Hero's Journey (Campbell, 2004).

After the realisation hits, the person is bound to have questions. One can always embark on an intellectual expedition on his own, but if answering these questions requires the profound knowledge of various fields: from storytelling to filmmaking, that is when one turns to existing theories and notions. Given the fact, narrative dates back to thousands of years ago, to the origin of myths, there must have been as many experts to touch upon the subject (Campbell, 2004).

Surprisingly enough, Hero's Journey dates back not to the first ever film or even the first piece of modern literature but to the timeless tales (Campbell, 2004). That is the kind of creative writing where idioms like "once upon a time" (first recorded mentions in 1385, according to Oxford English Dictionary) originated. In addition to all that, myths from the Ancient Greece that still managed to reach us.

Joseph Campbell's infamous The Hero with a Thousand Faces (1949) is considered to be one of the most well-known and extensive researches on storytelling available today. Therefore it came to mind first. There are multiple methods and narrative structures such as the Milieu story which has a place everything revolves (society, world) around, it begins and ends with arrival and departure of a specific character. If anything, writers can also put an idea in the centre, and then it turns into the Idea story - discovery-driven tales through the eyes of various personalities. (Further information on alternative narrative structures are available at the Writer's Digest website at http://www.writersdigest.com.) The issue with those concepts is they consist of a one-dimensional storyline which feels superficial at best. Hero's Journey is universal, it
is oceanic. It encompasses the individual points of the beforementioned types of narrative. Vladimir Propp in his Morphology of the Folktale (2015) offers an excellent overlook of old Russian's fairytales. Instead of twelve stages in Vogler's (2004) version of the Hero's Journey, Propp's (2015) has thirty-one. Another distinction is in the field of research, in the material on which the concepts are based: global and strictly Russian (Slavic). The two are bound to have universal features like Odeals, Hero's Return (the Road Back, Return with the Elixir and so forth) and even archetypes (villains, allies et cetera). In the name of universal and comprehensible analysis, the author chooses to implement Campbell's theory.

According to Campbell's biography, a primary contributing fact to his worldview, which later translated into his work, was the conflict between the Irish Catholic heritage and his fascination with Native American culture when he was very young. It created a foundation for his future scientific discoveries. Further information on Campbell's life can be viewed at the on Joseph Campbell Foundation website at https://www.jcf.org.

Applicability of the Hero's Journey is vast. Some argue the only reason for its degree of incidence is its generality. That is how universal things become universal. They are general enough to cover multiple fields and precise enough to be made into a seizable concept. Another author partly responsible for the popularisation of the treatise nowadays merits mention - Christopher Vogler, who happened to use The Hero's Journey as the basis for his screenwriters' guide The Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure For Writers (2007). He had a simpler, more stripped down interpretation.

Documentarian Hanson Hosein, for one, explains that the Hero’s Journey is a monomyth:

"[It is] a universal pattern that transcends both culture and history … [It is] the story of when a seemingly ordinary person reluctantly accepts a call to action, leaves behind the status quo and embarks on a journey that entails trials and tribulations from which this hero learns valuable lessons. Ultimately he undergoes a transformation for better or for worse and returns home a changed person. Jesus, Moses, Mohammed, Harry Potter, Luke Skywalker, Frodo—these are all legendary personalities who have undertaken the hero’s journey."

Since every journey needs a purpose, this thesis is no exception. The very reason why it has come to life is the eagerness to deepen the knowledge of what individual motion pictures, for instance, Marvel's Avengers films have in common. If one considers the matter, multiple universal features may come to mind. Numerous comic book adaptations have superheroes who forsake ingressation into a new realm, hence Refusal of the Call (Campbell, 2004). There is always a massive threat in the form of a monster or a destructive robot that can only be stopped by the superhero, aka Ordeal, Death, Rebirth (Campbell, 2004) so on and so forth.
This research is going to prove whether big studios blatantly follow the pattern, aka Hero's Journey, or do it mindfully with expected deviations.

It is evident that author's general fondness for film fuels this inquiry. Nonetheless, for the sake of science, shall be put aside and influence the final result as little as possible. It would not take much to sense and subsequently draw a conclusion of the films (the genre) being somewhat identical when it comes to the plot.

The completed beforehand research comes from countless hours spent at the cinema, reading up articles online, entering discussions with, including, but not limited to, film critics as well as filmmakers. The preceding has profoundly impacted the methodology:

- familiarising oneself with the Hero's Journey, the Archetypes
- analysing the storyline and finding the majority or all of the core stages of the Hero's Journey (Ordinary World, Call to Adventure, Crossing the Threshold),
- taking a closer look at the main characters and detecting presented archetypes in the film/animated feature,
- inspecting deviations from the structure mentioned above
- applying the method to motion pictures from other cinematic universes (for instance, Harry Potter, Lord of the Rings), aka scaling it up to prove whether superhero/fantasy features are virtually the same or quite similar,
- answering the question: why on earth do people prefer one story to another if it is practically the same or very similar?

2. Hero’s Journey

Considering, this particular part of the dissertation can be called theoretical and is devoted to the system of principles of the Hero's Journey (Campbell, 2004) that serves as one of the pillars of the thesis. To avoid acting prematurely, one should familiarise oneself with the matter at hand, only after which permission to dive into the analysis is granted. The Hero is meant both male and female, just like in the Vogler's Writer's Journey (2007). On a side note, the concept itself is no way obligatory, and it first and foremost reflects a general manner of thought across the centuries. Any creator, writer or director has the power, the ability to convey what he/she purports to share with the audience. Were it to have fallen into the beforementioned pattern, Hero's Journey, it only suggests there is a paved the way for people to take in, grasp information faster and connect with a story on a whole new level.

Vogler (2007) offers a bit more compact structure, which is based on the Campbell's body of work and his own experience as a writer: the so-called
Travelling Map which consists of more than ten stages hero goes through to reach final destination named Return with the Elixir. The author intends to explain each of the phases for a better understanding of the notion. Here are all twelve of them:

- Ordinary World
- Call to Adventure
- Refusal of the Call
- Meeting the Mentor
- Crossing the Threshold
- Tests, Allies, Enemies
- Approach to the Inmost Cave
- Ordeal, Death & Rebirth
- Reward/ Seizing the Sword
- The Road Back
- Resurrection
- Return with the Elixir

Figure 1 Hero’s Journey Map
2.1. Ordinary World

The Hero is introduced to us in his/her, everyday life. More often than not, the world looked bleak and filled with mind-numbingly boring routines, of which the Hero wants to dispose. Why is it portrayed that way? So we, as viewers, saw an absolute contrast between what has been going on and what might be on the horizon. Vogler (2007, p.63) uses 'fish out of water' phrasing when mentioning such films as The Wizard of Oz (1939, Dir. Victor Flaming, MGM) and 48 Hours (1982, Dir. Walter Hill, Paramount Pictures).

The latest film adaptation of Stephen King's The Dark Tower book series (2017, Dir. Nikolaj Arcel, Columbia) showcases a teenage boy whose talents go beyond the world inhabited by people and whom adults perceive as a person with a mental health condition in desperate need of psychiatrical help. In most scenarios, the next transition is clear as day.

Who would want to stay there? Who would wish to continue? Precisely! No one, as the majority of people seeks ways to escape reality (personal observation).

2.2. The Call to Adventure

The Hero faces a rather profound problem which makes him/her restless. He or she enters a situation that calls to action. May require an immediate reform. The term "problem" could sound quite limiting, confining here. Variations like "challenge" and "adventure" are also plausible. Depending on the genre, the forms of that situation are countless, for instance, an appearance of that special someone in romantic comedies or an act of injustice in stories based on vengeance (Vogler, 2007, p. 66). Things that can be potentially disruptive cause a reaction and lead to change. The question of what is at stake is inevitable but fading compared to what is to come.

Moana in the film by the same title (2016, Dir. Ron Clements, John Musker, Walt Disney Animation Studios), looking for a way to save her village from famine, suggests going beyond (the key word here) the riff to her father. The call to adventure is one of the central themes in the film.

2.3. Refusal of the Call

When it becomes overwhelming, people tend to take a minute to regroup and reflect on things that have recently occurred, and it is entirely natural for our species. Even extraterrestrial beings are hesitant at times as shown in fantasy films and animated features.

Meanwhile, doubts are just waiting to join the choir. Staying may feel much more comforting than leaving the bubble. Therefore the Hero, no matter what decent, is first inclined to choose an available alternative, be that a loophole, a getaway or a sidetrack of some sort. The paralysing fear (not always realised by the Hero)
represents his/her unwillingness to rise above the occasion, leave old paradigms behind and enter the unknown (Campbell, 2004, p.95).

Bilbo Baggins from The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey (2012, Dir. Peter Jackson, Warner Bros. Pictures) states upfront the adventure, the dwarves are so passionate about, is careless and deadly and he is in no mood nor is he in the right state to carry it out.

2.4. Meeting the Mentor

According to Funders & Founders, the researchers calculated that a person interacts with approximately 80 thousand people in a lifetime. Nonetheless, there are people in everyone's life who stand out as real mentor figures. They emerge from nowhere, seamlessly, complete their mission and vanish. One way or another, one's life has a long learning curve that lasts all the way to one's death. The same goes for the Hero. For the beforementioned mentor to interact with the Hero, there is but one condition: he/she is to accept the Call (Campbell, 2004, p.107).

According to Campbell (2004), many beloved motion pictures have got a mentor: Obi-Wan giving Luke his lightsaber in Star Wars: Episode IV - A New Hope (1977, Dir. George Lucas, 20th Century Fox). Glinda, the Good Witch, provides the Ruby Shoes in the Wizard of Oz (1939, Dir. Victor Flaming, MGM). The list goes on and on showing an endless number of appearances and embodiments of those teachers.

The word is a person comes into this life alone and leaves it behind by himself/herself (Chanakya) which suggests Mentor accompanies our Hero for a period as the Hero must continue by him/herself from that point on.

2.5. Crossing the Threshold

Once mentoring has been completed and the two part ways, the Hero, is in front of a door/a threshold. Vogler (2007, p.93) emphasises absence of any doubts or hesitations for the Hero regarding the path; it is when the realisation hits: "it is time!". Moreover, off he/she goes, to the land of abundant new opportunities and adventures. From Campbell's (2004, p.119, p.126) perspective, the last barrier manifests in someone watching the Gates - a guard who becomes a true testament to Hero's psychological and mental confidence that chases all of the fears away. Some screenwriters take it literally by intertwining old myths and their vision, as broadcasted in an animated TV series created by Stephen Sommer, the Mummy (2001). There is an episode where the main character leads his group to another world in search of a weapon that could defeat the Mummy. A river, which inflames any ship whose captain is having doubts about his mission, separates the underworld from the boy's home by
To the best of one's recollection, Harry Potter in the respective films (2001-2011) had to run through a stone wall to find the platform for Hogwarts express. It took courage, belief and a little bit of luck to cross that particular threshold. After which there was no turning back. Worth mentioning, the infamous red pill from the Matrix (1999, Dir. the Wachowskis, Warner Bros. Pictures) that served the same purpose: the point of no return.

2.6. Tests, Allies, Enemies

The audience follows the Hero into the new world full of thrills and challenges. He/she steps into a swarm of new characters, some of whom to befriend and undertake difficult tasks with, grow wiser together, some - to be reckoned with, allies and enemies respectively (Vogler, 2007, p.95). The place where those exceptional personalities reside is up to creator's imagination. For instance, the Harry Potter film series (2001-2011) throws the boy who lived onto Hogwarts Express. The very first day provides a glimpse into who is going to make trouble, be a bully and who is going to make friends for life (an extension of it is the dinner with the teaching staff at Hogwarts).

In Avatar: The Last Airbender (Michael Dante DiMartino, Bryan Konietzko, 2005-2008, Nickelodeon), Aang, Katara and Sokka discover each other during the first episode, right after each of them crosses the threshold from different realms to start their journey together.

2.7. Approach to the Inmost Cave

To use gaming shortened language, that is where the Boss hides. Vogler (2007, p.97) mentions the fact that "in many myths, the Hero has to descend into hell to retrieve a loved one, or into a cave to fight a dragon and gain a treasure".

Harry Potter invades the prohibited areas of the school including the Forbidden Forest, Chamber of Secrets and many, many more in the respective films (2001-2011). All of which symbolised the beginning of the final battle. Joseph Campbell (2004, p.136) in his book connects the whole process to rebirth: the Hero makes that step, jumps off a cliff, walks into a temple - all to transform into, rise as a higher being. The dwarves in The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey (2012, Dir. Peter Jackson, Warner Bros. Pictures) are nearing the path inside the mountains where Gollum meets Bilbo with rock giants battling on the way there.

2.8. Ordeal, Death & Rebirth

This phase is arguably the lowest point of the story. Only because the Hero faces the possibility of death, brought to the brink in a fight with a mythical beast and, for us, the audience standing outside the cave waiting for the victor to
emerge, it is a black moment (Vogler, 2007, p.98). Even though this research revolves around the Marvel movies, this precise moment is exhibited in almost every story and comprehended by the masses as the darkest moment, the rock bottom which signifies resurrection: the old Hero perishes whereas the new manifestation thrives, saves the day and sends the viewers into hysteria. People rejoice.

From author's personal experience, it was the Green Lantern (2011, Dir. Martin Campbell, Warner Bros. Pictures) when reciting the famous lines: "In brightest day, in blackest night, No evil shall escape my sight. Let all who worship evil's might, Beware my power, Green Lantern's light!". Avatar: The Last Airbender (Michael Dante DiMartino, Bryan Konietzko, 2005-2008, Nickelodeon) shows the central figure, Aang, backed into a corner by Lord Ozai and almost defeated, Aang's light fades when suddenly he resurrects after painfully (physically and mentally) reconnecting with the Avatar inside him, goes on a rampage to crash the enemy.

2.9. Reward/Seizing the Sword
Death has walked past the Hero; it is time for ripening phase. According to Vogler (2007, p.103), the highest rewards involve treasure, elixirs to heal the lands, the heart of the loved ones and a better understanding of the opposite sex if it is a romantic comedy or even having gone through awful ordeals, a more becoming, handsome appearance.

The first thing that comes to mind is the animated feature called Shrek (2001, Dir. Andrew Adamson, Dreamworks Pictures) where Fiona does not turn into the beautiful princess she once was. Instead, Fiona transforms into an ogre to be with the one she loves, Shrek (a clever twist on relationship stereotypes as well as fairytales). In the Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl (2003, Dir. Gore Verbinski, Walt Disney Pictures), Jack Sparrow not only grabs as many treasures as he can assuming he is free now.

2.10. The Road Back
One would wonder whether this was it, after having slain the dragon or murdered the demon, and the one can rightfully do so. Some stories may skip this part or make it such a swift step that the audience would be under the impression it is one battle. On the contrary, the escape from the dungeons and temples where the Boss gets slaughtered makes an enjoyable and exciting watch. Due to the sheer fact that the break represents the final jump, the last chance for the dark forces to bury the Hero alongside the demonic creature he killed (Campbell, 2004, p.275).
The catalogue is enormous with the escape/chase scenes at the end where the Hero retrieves the loot. Now, all the only thing left to execute is getting out alive: the Indiana Jones franchise is full of those. It is primarily the essence (1981-1989, 2008). Pirates of the Caribbean on Stranger Tides offers the crumbling Fountain of Youth temple with Jack and the crew fleeing that place (2011, Dir. Rob Marshall, Walt Disney Pictures).

There are, though, instances where the Hero is soon to return to the ordinary world (Vogler, 2007, p.104). For example in the Chronicles of Narnia film series (2005-2010), in which the children were to come back home after each adventure, or the summer every student of Hogwarts had to spend with their families in Muggles world in the Harry Potter movies (2001-2011).

2.11. Resurrection
In author's personal opinion, this part might be uncalled for as it serves a do-over in a way for the Ordeal, Death&Rebirth stage. The Hero is put through hell one last time for the sake of a safe return to the ordinary world, the previous transformation before making it back safe and sound (Vogler, 2007, p.105). In ancient times, people saw it as a cleansing ritual to wash away the blood from Hero's hands: another dive into the darkness to rise a higher being than before (Vogler, 2007, p.105).

In the comedy called Fool's Gold (2008, Warner Bros. Pictures), the plane crashes after the couple has been through gunfights, successful treasure hunt, to name a few. On top of all that, they do not have a soft landing, they shake death's hand but only to emerge victorious with the realisation that they still love each other. Jack Sparrow in the Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl (2003, Dir. Gore Verbinski, Walt Disney Pictures), despite having defeated Captain Barbossa, still faces execution. Thanks to his friends, escapes the perimeter and is reunited with the ship for which he longed. Coincidentally the much beloved Pearl symbolises freedom in the film.

2.12. Return with the Elixir
This stage has a more profound meaning than one might assume. Campbell (2004, p.305) offers questions that help comprehend the meaning of that moment, they all boil down to "why would anyone come back to ordinary, superficial world which seems so unfitting to the Hero now that he/she has withstood innumerable tests and gained so much knowledge and experience?", "why would one pass the knowledge to beings that are obsessed with their desires?". That is the decision the Hero has to make to cross the threshold back to reality. Occasionally, there is a token or the Elixir itself which serves as a reminder of the upcoming journey, it has a purpose, and the Elixir shall call to bring the worlds together (Campbell, 2004, p.318).
Harry Potter (2001-2011) returns to his uncle's family to spend the summer knowing he would visit Hogwarts over and over again, and it has become a part of him at that point. For example, Rise of the Guardians (2012, Dir. Peter Ramsey, Paramount Pictures) contributes a return of fantasy creatures, the Guardians, to their world, and the children whom they happened to have met along the way, to their dimension.

Also, to recap swiftly by Christopher Vogler himself in "A Practical Guide to Joseph Campbell’s The Hero with a Thousand Faces" (1985):

"The hero’s journey, once more: The hero is introduced in his ORDINARY WORLD where he receives the CALL TO ADVENTURE. He is RELUCTANT at first to CROSS THE FIRST THRESHOLD where he eventually encounters TESTS, ALLIES and ENEMIES. He reaches the INNERMOST CAVE where he endures the SUPREME ORDEAL. He SEIZES THE SWORD or the treasure and is pursued on the ROAD BACK to his world. He is RESURRECTED and transformed by his experience. He RETURNS to his ordinary world with a treasure, boon, or ELIXIR to benefit his world."

It is now up to the author to apply the concept and ascertain how commonly used the systems are.

3. Archetypes

For the sake of a more profound and insightful thesis, characters in films are to be analysed. Stories, as well as personalities in them, are subjected to classifications, they can be more or less similar to each other. Furthermore, it may get to a point where the audience indicates repetitiveness as if it had already been seen before. One can argue, all that filmmakers can do is change the details, the outlook or the layers of a persona close to the surface, psychologically speaking, so it felt brand new and at least a tiny bit unpredictable. The author believes the essence of a character, what makes him who he is, is practically the same. The rest is a cleverly designed packaging. It is a thin vail one should look through to witness the very core of a hero. Some of them are stereotypical and match the profile of an archetype perfectly. Some have even become a collective noun like Superman - a synonym for a hero, a saviour. On the other side of the spectrum, some personages give the impression of a different origin. They may prepossess the audience by their originality and specific features that come across as unprecedented. It is plausible the reader may dissent which is perfectly acceptable. Vogler's (2004) archetype concept should support the notion.

There are three ways to look at the subject, according to Vogler (2004, p.115): the first one is archetypes as functions, the second one is archetypes as aspects of
personality and finally archetypes as character's effluence. All three are broken-down below. The author finds the term 'mask' very much fitting to the concept of archetypes.

Characters in films can be as flexible as human beings in real life which suggests archetypes serving as functions. In this case, they are more of a dynamic model than a strict pattern (Vogler, 2004, p.116). Even though one might speculate personalities have one permanent role throughout the film, they fulfil functions for a specific period and consequently move on to the next one (Vogler, 2004, p.117). For instance, stepped into the picture as Mentor, took on a role of Shapeshifter or Shadow (terms to be explained later). The second approach considers archetypes as personage's guises.

According to Vogler (2004, p.117), other characters represent opportunities, situations in which the Hero can either positively or negatively act. Meaning, every person has a chance to learn from those they encounter, anyone from Hero to Shadow given the circumstances by taking certain qualities in, absorbing them. The third way to examine is through hero's emanations - personified symbols for human attributes (Vogler, 2004, p.118). All combined, they embody one's many-sided personality. Each phase of the Hero's Journey requires unique sets of qualities and characters. In Crossing the Threshold, anyone would need to muster up the courage to leave the Ordinary World behind. In the darkest hour, Heroes would appreciate Trickster's devil-may-care point of view. Archetypes work in alliance with Hero's Journey convoking marvellous arrays of emotion and meaning.

Figure 2 Archetypes by Vogler (2007)
3.1. Hero

To the archetypes themselves, starting off with Hero that according to Vogler (2004, p.123) has numerous functions in the story, for instance, psychological one: Hero embodies striving for self-identity and integrity. The goal is to assemble separate elements of one's personality into a harmonious whole. The term, in general, pertains to self-sacrifice.

When it comes to dramatic capacities of the archetype, there is at least five. Vogler (2004, p.126) brings up "Identification of the audience", meaning that the primary task for the Hero here is to open up a window to the new exciting world and make each viewer identify with him/her. Thanks to the qualities which are not all universal (desire to find love, succeed, restore justice and so on) but laced with unusual and unique properties. If done right, the audience feels for the Hero throughout the tale. The inner conflict is what makes the Hero attractive and relatable. Otherwise, it would resemble a machine with which no one can connect. The archetype is a combination of all sorts of antipodes between which he/she is continuously choosing.

"Evolution" is the second role (Vogler, 2004, p.128) that is self-explanatory: Hero's hallmark is the biggest growth and development of knowledge. It is followed by "Action" (Vogler, 2004, p.129) suggesting Hero is the most active personage who is willing take all the risks and bare the ultimate responsibility. The author of the Writer's Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers adds two more functions, worth mentioning: self-sacrifice and facing death. They both serve as distinguishing features and correlate. The importance and the ability to sacrifice everything, including his/her own life, for the greater good, is really what makes one a real Hero.

3.2. Mentor: Worldly-wise being

A mentor is conventionally a positive character in the story that guides, defends and grants gifts to the Hero (Vogler, 2004, p.146). The author of this dissertation has noticed that the archetype is what proves the Gödel's incompleteness theorems: “Anything you can draw a circle around cannot explain itself without referring to something outside the circle.” In other words, sometimes a solution cannot be found unless a higher system is involved. In many myths and tales, the Hero is in a dead-end or faces a decision where either option is destructive. That is where Mentor or Trickster appears to provide a different perspective or a loophole, all destined to help him/her rise to a new level, usually in the form of magic. For example Dobbie in the Harry Potter series (2001-2011) and Gandalf in the films by Peter Jackson.
If a Hero represents "ego", Mentor is the divine spark, the noble aspirations nothing can silence, it is the voice in harmony with the rest of the world (Vogler, 2004, p.149). Vogler equates Mentor to a parent symbolically, especially when a Hero lost his/hers or they are unable to fulfil the entrusted responsibilities. The obvious example is the Fairy Godmother or the little Chameleon in Tangled (2010, Dir. Nathan Grano, Byron Howard, Walt Disney Animation Studios). The main tasks of a Mentor include cover guidance, gift giving and motivation (Vogler, 2004). Altogether, Mentor is a giver. He/she provides knowledge, rewards and magic bounties. Their input in the very beginning of each story is invaluable as they help chase the shadows and fears away. Mentors do shepherd and look after their Heroes all the way to the end, even though it may not seem so.

3.3. Guardian

A Guardian is necessarily one of the first barriers or challenges on the way as they test a Hero on whether he/she is worthy of crossing a certain threshold, whether the Hero is ready to continue on his path (Vogler, 2004, p.169). They do not have to be on the enemy's side, they can be neutral, interested in things remotely associated with the Hero's mission, yet they stand in as tentamen. Vogler (2004) emphasises the symbolic interrelation between the main antagonist and the Guardians. The former chooses the latter to deter unwanted visitors.

Psychologically speaking, Guardians in all shapes and forms (awful weather, bad luck, actual guardians, so-called inner demons and so on) serve a crucially important purpose: they want the Hero to realise if he/she is all set to make the next step (Vogler, 2004, p.171).

It is commonly known, society does not always embrace change. The archetype exists to signal an upcoming transformation which is going to result in Hero's surpass of the Guardian. Moreover, it emblematises new source of power (Vogler, 2004, p.174). Battles make warriors stronger, sturdier, wiser and more dexterous. If there is an obstacle on the way, one way to look at would be an opportunity to evolve further. Excellent examples are Heimdall from Thor (2011, Dir. Keneth Branagh, Paramount Pictures), who stands sentry the portal to worlds outside Asgard, and the biomechanical creatures underwater in Atlantis: The Lost Empire (2001, Dir. Gary Trousdale, Kirk Wise, Buena Vista Pictures).

3.4. Herald

According to Vogler (2004), Heralds are arrant omens of war, and they come as prophets of a storm. The primary purpose is to proclaim the forthcoming changes and show that they are vital and inevitable. Herald can take a form of a book or a film or a majestic creature that put a Hero off his/her stride and wake up the calling inside - their lives shall never be the same, ever again. (Vogler, 2004, 181). In a similar vein, it is time to embark on an adventure.
Birds and formal invitations, for instance, are various shapes of a Herald: letters from Hogwarts in the Harry Potter movies (2001-2011) and the Cinderella's call to the ball. One might recall the Silver Surfer in the Fantastic Four's sequel (2007, Dir. Tim Story, 20th Century Fox).

3.5. Shapeshifter

One thing to make entirely clear here is how elusive, nonetheless influential, Shapeshifters are. The designed metamorphosis is an inner process more often than not, which makes it only harder for an audience member to perceive it. Also, dominant forms in fantasy features are wizards, witches, to name a few (Vogler, 2004, p.188). The psychological function of a Shapeshifter, according to Vogler (2004, p.191), is interlinked with Jungian concepts of anima and animus, yin-yang, that drive people to project their subliminal desire on strangers even to amalgamate with the feminine and male. The Shapeshifter's most accurate forms are femme and hommes-fatal (Vogler, 2004, p.195) like Marylin Monroe's character in Some Like It Hot (1959, Dir. Billy Wilder, United Artists), Mystic from the X-Men or Zeus in Greek mythology.

When it comes archetypes as characteristics, anyone can wear a shapeshifter's mask (a remarkable trademark attribute) just as Professor McGonagall did in Harry Potter (2001-2011) and Merlin both of whom are mainly Mentors. Audiences may have troubles tracing the everchanging Shapeshifter.

3.6. Shadow

What shadow is, in fact, is suppressed emotions and motives, both positive and negative, as reported by many authors, including Vogler (2004, p.202) who defines the type as the embodiment of dark forces energy, unrealised aspects of some kind. The previous statement suggests Shadow's deep psychological roots as well as extensive range of use in different situations. Everything one may call "evil", or "bad" will most probably refer to Shadow which is showcased in film and literature as Heroes' equals, aka the villain. The provoking nature of a Shadow can manifest in one character or become a mask many try out from time to time (Vogler, 2004, p.204).

On a personal note, the author feels obligated to point out that what it comes down is intentions and the environment they are born. Personalities, formally known, as villains are laser-focused as Heroes but they merely and solely get enslaved by the "wrong" inclinations. That way Darth Vader acts on his subliminal fears and rage more than the next one. Voldemort from Harry Potter (2001-2011) is an exemplary illustration of the abovementioned. Even watered down Maleficent in the eponymous film (2014, Dir. Robert Stromberg, Walt Disney Pictures) is a severely hurt woman who seeks revenge on the man that broke her
heart. In that particular story, with the balance finally restored, there are so many out there which tend to colour the characters black and white.

If one assumes everything is rooted in psychology, the one begins to notice how Shadows, alleged villains, have got a similar core to the ones Heroes possess. They both are driven and concentrated, and it is just they lean towards the directions which are going to cause a collision between them.

On the other hand, there is an exception to it: when origins are loosely explained or presented as the essence of darkness. For instance, Sauron from Lord of the Rings (2001-2003) comes off as purely evil and dark through and through.

3.7. Ally

Even though one may embark upon a journey on his/her own, the traveller would surely need a confederate, a partner in crime to make it a little bit easier, more thrilling. Vogler (2004) reports, they help shape and unfold Hero's complex, multi-dimensional personality to the audience and on top of it, defuse tension by causing situations at which everyone can laugh.

There are many types of Allies (Vogler, 2004): sidekicks - someone who is always by your side, the ones that portrayed as animals or items (wolves, eagles, mirrors so forth). Furthermore, magical creatures resembling animals such as dragons and fairies, some get sent from above (Guardian Angels, Gods and so on). Also those from the world of the dead (spirits, ghosts etcetera) - all predestinate to shed light upon, free unrealised aspects of Hero's personality.

3.8. Trickster

Since the fundamental intention is to change, Trickster carries it out through humour, pranks to remind everyone not to take it seriously, to ease the tension like no other and bring everybody back down to earth by consistently denying the status quo (Vogler, 2004, p.227). Of course, there are lead characters who are blessed with qualities of a Trickster who is most often an epitome of going with the flow while behaving ridiculously and irrationally.

A few honorary mentions:
- Bugs Bunny (fictional character from Warner Brothers, Trickster through and through),
- Spiderman (despite personal antipathy, an utter example of a Trickster from Marvel with those jokes and chill attitude),
- Deadpool (2016, Dir. Tim Miller, 20th Century Fox/Marvel Productions),
- The Mask (1994, Charles Russel, New Line Cinema) who is unequivocally linked to Loki, the god of mischief, the ultimate prankster,
- Jack Sparrow from the Pirates of the Caribbean (2003-2017), beloved by both critics and audiences around the world, most probably, for his freedom, ingenious insights that originate in devil may care behaviour.

To sum it up, all archetypes and personalities are destined to stimulate transformation as well as evolution, one more than the other. They are translucent, meaning any character can accredit multiple roles throughout a film, a story. The masks are interchangeable and compatible. A shapeshifter at heart, so to speak, can lend the Shadow's cover and vice versa. It all contributes to creating a more poignant, heartfelt and sincere story.

Most significantly, archetypes are designed to render assistance as far as perceiving and understanding of individual characters go. They enable creating personalities with heart and soul, emotional depth, someone with whom we can relate. All archetypes are only pieces of what a human being is, yet they marvellously display certain aspects, areas of who we are and what we can become, so that it was, first of all, noticeable and comprehensible.

4. Narratology

Conducive to creating a multitudinary inquiry, essential elements of narratology are vital. It lets the author not merely exploit the concepts of the Journey and the Archetypes but also yield new insights to into storytelling as a whole.

Reportedly, two terms introduce the fundamental conceptions: narrator and change of state. Per Schmid (2010), the former has influence over the story being as how it is the narrator's prism the audience looks through. Whereas the latter amounts to an array of character's traits (internal state and processes) and the present posture of affairs (things surrounding the figure) (Schmid, 2010, p.17). Both notions conform to the Journey and the Archetypes in a way that everything is meant to inspire and galvanise dramatis personae into transformation. There is a kind of narrative texts which is called mimetic, where the story exists without a narrator (this channel is optional) (Schmid, 2010, p.27).

The study also distinguishes actual author, implied author and narrator. Supposedly, an author of a book is not the implied one who represents the mindset of the book, subject with ties to neither the personality of the writer nor any of the characters in the text (Schmid, 2010, p.88). In other words, the narrator tells a story written by an author and, somewhere in between, the consciousness of that particular piece of writing, named implied author, comes to life. Unsurprisingly, there is an implied reader on the other side of the communication which is a guise imagined by an actual author and a separate entity from a real reader (Schmid, 2010, p.117).
Schmid states (2010, p.142), a narrator can have two forms from the perspective of how to convey his/her presence: the first one is called explicit and based on self-representation (the narrator can use personal pronouns). The second one goes by the name of implicit, aka faceless, general (the foundation for expansion to the exact kind). If one is talking about a character in a film who happens to be narrating, he/she would be qualified as dihetic, a part of the universe, if it is an entity that recounts the story while existing outside that world, the word is non-diabetic (Schmid, 2010, p. 174). The narrator is an individual who can either have his/her point of view, titled narrative, or express him/herself through characters - personal point of view (Schmid, 2010, p.272). The author may elaborate further classifications as part of the functional analysis itself.

One can view each instance from different angles, and those compose perspective of a narrator that is dependent on the following five factors (Schmid, 2010):
- perception - the world is depicted through lenses of either the narrator or a character, the audience explores the world, situation,
- ideology - a reflective point of view massively affected by conceptual perception, i.e. thinking, the audience receives a reflection of either a character or the narrator,
- space - viewpoint adjacent to space (limited to an area if it is a personal narration),
- time - overview interconnected with time variable (again circumscribed if personal, via a personage),
- language - linguistic choices in general and when affected by narrative styles of established characters.

The narrative itself is either characteristic, motivated by the narrator whose point view is dominant within the story, or ornamental, expresses a whole range of voices and masks without any references to an individual narrating instance (Schmid, 2010, p.419).

It has not escaped author's notice that plot, a sequence of events that make up a narrative, can predetermine audience's mental and emotional imprint from the picture. Commonly known techniques in regards to plot include backstory, flashback, flash-forward and foreshadowing (all according to study.com) which all affect the continuity of the film, for instance, reverse chronology. In general, techniques are adminicles, means of strengthening the narrative, delivering the message and providing insights.

The preceding is related to narratology. The author intends to touch upon the subject of visual narrative in film when analysing the outputs from the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Movement, rhythm, picture depth (usage of 3D technologies) contribute to controlling the story, creating the final product (Block, 2008, p.27).
PRACTICAL PART
5. Film analysis

As for the practical part of this dissertation, individual films from Marvel cinematic universe, Avengers, in particular, have been analysed and put to the test. Both the Hero's Journey (Cambell, 2004) and the Archetypes (Vogler, 2007) are instrumental in inspecting the framework of the Marvel film series, finding identical and unique elements in the storytelling techniques.

5.1. Iron Man

One of the most significant franchises in the world finally hit the theatres after years and years of preparation. It was Iron Man (2008, Dir. Jon Favreau, Paramount Pictures) who paved the way for the rest of the superheroes people are so familiar with today. There were previous attempts with Hulk in the year 2003 and even in 2008, but they both failed to spark the interest and did not achieve the crossover success judging solely from the available IMDb metrics and box office numbers.

The Iron Man film follows a multi-billionaire named Tony Stark on his quest to expand his ventures with the military which ends up being a near-death and simultaneously an eye-opening experience. In the process, Tony Stark played by Robert Downey Jr. builds a mechanical armour, later turned into a suit, which allows him to become the superhero and, most certainly, save lives of many people.

If anyone were to look closer at the story itself, compares to the Campbell's concept (2004), there are standard features. Ordinary world of the main character is presented oddly: through a flashback where viewers are getting to know Tony Stark before the events that change the course of his whole life. He is a womaniser, vastly wealthy and some may say obnoxious. His talents match his incredible ambitions. Everyone must have had an image of a billionaire leading a full life. That was his natural habitat, his comfort zone which is where the flashback ends.

The very first frames of the movie represent the Call to Adventure. He is taken a hostage on his way back from a military demonstration in Afganistan. Suffering from severe wounds, an imprisoned doctor saves his life by implementing an electromagnet into the chest. In short, his world has spun off its axis. To stay alive, Stark is ordered to cooperate with the aggresses, but he refuses, assuming he is not mentally ready to conform to the rules, for which he gets brutally punished. After having struggled, he obeys. Meeting the Mentor phase happens in the same period as Tony Stark recognises a mentor in the doctor whose intervention reanimates him, allows him to keep going. Quite a lot of jumpcuts are used to showcase the time length, his persistence, his endurance with shots of him burning midnight oil.
under surveillance, working non-stop when his newly found mentor almost gets killed in an attempt to blackmail, motivate the genius scientist to speed up.

Future Iron Man crosses the Threshold by escaping wearing the armour (which is the foundation for the Iron Man), risking his life once again. He is confident nonetheless, he knows what he is about to do is right. Upon Stark's return to the United States, the people see a different man. He has evolved, has got new priorities and appreciation of life. The following sequences help the viewership detect allies and potential foes: personal assistant Pepper Potts, military liaison Lieutenant Colonel James Rhodes on the light side and Obadiah Stane, who happens to be Tony's father's business partner, on the dark. Good and evil do seem like an oversimplification of what qualities a being can possess. It is much easier for a viewer to become integrated if he/she identifies the good and bad guys right from the very start. On the flip side, the viewers can observe two distinct parties evolve, grow stronger and then finally meet.

Approach to the Inmost Cave morphs into Ordeal, Death & Rebirth pretty seamlessly. As Iron Man decides to fly, save refugees, by happenstance, stumbles upon the same group of terrorists that kidnapped him. In the meantime, Pepper Potts acts on Stark's orders and obtains evidence from the office where Stane, the main villain in this movie, resides. A sequence of events depicts the Ordeal phase: Stane's capturing the source of energy from Stark's chest against his will, of course, practically leaving him to die a slow death, Tony coming out with life, after which destroying the enemy. The tempo is languid to emphasise influence and control in the wrong hands. Iron Man hazards his life. The camera shows that there are no signs of breath, nor is there the blue light in his little energy source. In the end, Tony Stark rises.

The viewers do not get a chance to witness the next stages of Reward/Seizing the Sword, the Road Back or Resurrection as Campbell (2004) and Vogler (2007) explain them. As the author has previously stated, Resurrection might be uncalled for as it is a repetition of the thrilling Ordeal, Death & Rebirth in a sense, especially for an untrained eye. The story loses in value, however. Some characters, including the Hero, have less time to open up, explore their inner-worlds and share what they wish to share with the audience. The producers perhaps found the omitted stages unnecessary, for which they are afraid to oversaturate the material with information that may demand profound mental action. In author's personal opinion, it did not contradict with the critical and public reception of the film. According to Metacritic and Rotten Tomatoes websites, Iron Man has the score of seventy-nine and ninety-four of positive reviews, respectively (more details available at metacritic.com and rottentomatoes.com). Directors and screenwriters are not obliged to follow every single step to conceive a compelling story. It is, after all, a creative choice. The theatregoers seemed to have relished the picture.
As for the remaining of the film, the main hero undergoes a swift recovery and returns to the public eye while admitting he is Iron Man. Since the source of energy and the technology was almost lost, in this specific case, Elixir is the electromagnetic engine, a little bit more than the powered suit that can ensure a brighter and safer future.

The audiences have witnessed the promised transformation, the way of storytelling made it possible. Another aspect of this is character design. Tony Stark is the Hero who manages to evolve drastically. He happens to be the most active personage. Even though he does not embody Trickster in the known capacity, he tends to use humour as his coping mechanism. As for the rest of the cast, Pepper is pluralistically Stark's love interest, "part-time" Mentor and trusted Ally. Obadiah Stane's portrayal has the resemblance of a Shadow and Shapeshifter in a sense that he was first a friend, but his malicious intentions become his driving force.

What is also important is how references to other pictures interlink all Avengers film, most often, in the form of after-credits short clips which provide the movie theatregoers with a glimpse into upcoming events, things they can look forward to in the following movies. Tony Stark meets Nick Fury and is made aware of the Avenger initiative.

5.2. Thor

Thor (Dir. Kanath Branagh, Paramount Pictures) arrives in theatres to woo people three years later. Worth mentioning that only comic book fans are aware of how Thor fits into the Avengers, for which there have been no direct connections with the previous movies. The Marvel universe is making its first steps as it is young and has got a lot to learn. The title superhero originates in North mythology suggesting the creators of the comic book borrowed the notion and adapted it to please the American crowd, mostly visually. According to north-mythology.org, Thor possessed inhuman power, unwavering bravery and sense of duty, while physically resembling the hero we know now: fair hair, muscular body and his excellent companion, the Hammer, in his hand. Superheroes are new age mythological creatures to whom people aspire. They are not gods, on the contrary, they happen to be far more relatable. That is the key word here - relatable because, for people to appreciate something, follow someone's story, the character must have human qualities, be that appearance or inner world.

This specific feature opens almost identically to Iron Man's, meaning right after a critical point in the beginning when they encounter an alien, audiences observe a flashback that should provide a strong background story. What is a bit different this time around is the flashback sequence has a distinguished secondary diachetic narrator, Thor's father - Odin. Diachetic because he is a part of the world the hero resides in and secondary as Odin narrates not the whole tale but just a part of it.
(Schmid, 2010, p. 169). It does add a new dimension to the story, the feeling of continuity and guidance. The fact that there is a distinct narrator's voice on its own has an impact, for instance, attributes importance to Odin as a character in film (since he is the one telling the tale).

![Figure 3 Thor: Mythology vs Marvel](image)

In fact, flashbacks in both instances depicted Ordinary World which the director chooses to show after drastic changes in Hero's world had occurred. The viewer witnesses Thor's childhood in his dimension, Asgard, his ascension (capturing the Hammer) and troubles he gets himself into when grown-up. Thor appears hot-blooded, reckless. His Ordinary World is his playground given that he is vain, adored by the Asgardians as well as his family.

Out of the blue, nameless Herald tries to steal a source of power that once belonged to the enemy. Although there is no threat to the relic, nor is there a threat to the city, Thor is adamant about teaching the intruders a lesson, strike them with dismay. The scene symbolises the Call to Adventure. Peculiarly enough, the son of Odin has glaring need to launch the war, and it is the King of Asgard who forbids him by putting Thor into place for his irrational behaviour. Refusal of the Call remains reversed, one of the few significant deviations from the Hero's Journey concept.

While on the subject of divergence, there is one particular Mentor figure in Thor's life - his kinsman, his King, Odin. Furthermore, there is a moment in the film when Thor's mother states everything Odin does has a purpose, which corresponds to the Mentor's functions (overseeing and guiding). Meeting the Mentor stage has been skipped, instead morphed into a seamless process from the introduction to the city of Asgard. Quite apart from the fact that Mentor usually
enheartens the Hero to embark on the journey, answers the Call. Thor's younger brother, Loki is a crucial building block this time around. Shapeshifter by nature, he pushes his sibling to act on his frustration and bloodlust.

Thor and his loyal warriors get to cross a critical threshold (entering the next phase). Heimdall, the Gatekeeper of Bifrost - the portal to other realms, ascertains the intentions and lets them through as authentic Guardian does. There is no turning back. After the battle on the other side, Odin hounds out Thor for his disregard for and his people's fate and consequences of his actions. The pariah finds himself on Earth before long where he meets the new human allies, Jane Foster, Erik Selvig and Darcy Lewis. The most recent Tests, Allies, Enemies stage continues to unfold as Thor has lost his power along with the Hammer which refuses to recognise Thor as the owner. On a side note, Darcy's character is an exemplary Trickster who defuses tension with humour, elevates the whole mood. In the meantime, the audience discovers Loki's descent as well as the dark intentions he wishes to materialise. Being the Shapeshifter he is, it would be hard for anyone to say what is on his mind or which side he has picked this time.

Approach to the Inmost Cave does not take place from Thor's perspective. There is, however, something that resembles it awfully: Loki's agreement with the Frost Giants. Regarding Archetypes, the enemy is pure Shadow whose purpose to demolish, conquer or enslave. Each of the two films had an established villain from the beginning. Why would Marvel do that? The answer is easy: the producers are after enormous box office numbers and mediocre critics reception, what they see as a must is appealing to people around the globe, hence the oversimplification.

Off to Ordeal, Death & Rebirth, Thor and his team face a metal Herald Loki has arranged. Bear in mind, and he is practically human in this fight, nonetheless courageous and selfless as ever. The story follows the protocol perfectly when Thor falls, lets go of his past and raises up a god of thunder. The Sword is the Hammer, the transition between the phases is wholly organic, does not catch an eye.

The Road Back is word-for-word, very symbolic, with Thor parting ways with Jane, his love interest, returning to his home kingdom a different being and witnessing the horrid things for which Loki is accountable. The viewers can sense a distinct transformation in Thor. It is palpable the son has become wiser. Odin's sons enter the final fight in which Bifrost gets demolished, to save one of the realms. Although one might argue, there is no visual Resurrection, by sacrificing a chance to see the loved one and losing his only brother, Thor restores balance and peace by retrieving the Casket of Ancient Winters, the relic that was previously stolen (Return with the Elixir).
The majority of the film has the camera in motion even when it has no such purpose. It does feel more smooth and eloquent, yet the scenes blend in one after a while. Worth mentioning, the production team managed to visually differentiate two worlds: Asgard in warm, golden tones whereas Earth in cold, blue colours.

Both films have got a few deviations but nothing too drastic so far. It appears to be the producers follow a scenario of the Hero clashing with the forces of evil, almost getting murdered, rising and magically saving the world. From Ordeal, Death & Rebirth to Resurrection, it is one big mixture spiced up by complex computer-generated imagery.

Unlike Iron Man, Thor did not get the critical acclaim, nor was it accepted well by the audiences. According to Metacritic and Rotten Tomatoes services, it has lukewarm fifty-seven percent and seventy-seven percent, respectively. Fast forward to more recent Marvel productions, Doctor Strange (2016, Dir. Scott Derrickson, Walt Disney Studios) joins the Avengers. By taking a closer look at fresher releases, one can detect either progression when it comes to storytelling or the other way around, regression. The progression being in-depth character development, special effects serving as a compliment to the film, not as its bearing bar, to name a few. The regression being the exact opposite which is dull storytelling, relying on the knowledge of comic book fans excessively (the connection to other superheroes, their background, personalities) and covering it up with massive budgets spent on the technical part of the production. Instead, they could dedicate time to find more great minds to write the scripts.

5.3. Doctor Strange

On the brink of diving into the film's analysis, the author would wish to state outright that Doctor Strange has much more substance storywise. Essentially, by the tale hearkening back to Asian culture. One can take into account the costume design, the setting, including architecture, and naturally the austere lifestyle the monks in the movie promulgate. The above listed have been highly customised, geared towards American crowds. The writers drew inspiration from what looks like Buddhist monks (granted the main character travels to Nepal to find his Mentor) and their teachings, albeit the fact that any of those people have yet to confirm the speculations. Creating original content can be inconceivably tricky which is why
people turn to things delight them, to find a place to start. It is precisely what the public sometimes sees: the raw base or a thinly veiled cultural background, in Doctor Strange's case - Asia, Buddhism. The hieroglyphic symbols come across as Celtic. The resulting mixture is very much a bunch of stunningly beautiful visuals and references ninety percent of the audience is going to comprehend one way or another.

Now to the matter at hand, each of the three films features an opening sequence that is not related to Ordinary World phase of the Hero's Journey. It has been either a Herald that is an avatar of inevitable change (the attack on the convoy in the first Iron Man) or a parallel storyline in Thor. This motion picture is no exception, and it opens with an unmistakable Shadow figure intruding a temple. What the audience has a chance to observe next is Doctor Strange's Ordinary World where he happens to be a remarkably successful neurosurgeon by the name of Stephen Strange (there is a minor emphasis on his masterful hands, his trusted tool that is getting atrociously scared later on).

Stephen's world is turned upside down after a car crash, in which he is profoundly injured, unable to hold a pen straight. That is where the line gets blurry: Call to Adventure could be identified, yet it is not as bright as it usually is. The second Strange finds out there is an unorthodox way to heal his wounds, he jumps on the first flight to Nepal. Moreover, there is an absence of Refusal of the Call showcased by the immediate reaction from the Hero.

Hereupon a narrow-minded Stephen Strange meets his Mentor, the Ancient One. The sequence is graphic, unambiguous. The potential apprentice seeks enlightenment, which shatters his old paradigms to pieces with an out-of-this-world demonstration of what human beings are capable. Stephen gets thrown out of the temple to test his willpower and has to face despair before leaving his old self behind forever (Crossing the Threshold).
Having analysed several Marvel features, it looks like one of the most extended and action-packed phases are Tests, Allies, Enemies and Ordeal, Death & Rebirth. Most probably, since the learning process tends to take much time, it would potentially require more screen time. The fights with the villains are mesmerising which makes them the sequences audiences prefer. Stephen Strange makes new acquaintances while also finding out about his potential foes. By facing various tests, some from his physical inabilities, some from the Mentor, some from his stubbornness.

The Hero undergoes a physical transformation starting to resemble Doctor Strange the fans know so well. He is witty, showing off his Trickster side. Whenever there is a chosen one in the story, most notably in fantasy features, the Hero is always pushing all sorts of boundaries, discovering new levels of consciousness, never-before-seen realms and so forth. That exact behaviour drives Stephen Strange to unravel secrets hidden in the ancient texts and the forbidden artefacts.

Approaching the Inmost Cave begins with the Hero learning about the ultimate villain in the film, Dormammu, a mythical creature from dimensions where time does not exist. Pure Shadow, again, with no glimmers of hope and light within. Inhuman dark forces tend to be strictly evil, hence the oversimplification. Dark minions happen to be turned, meaning they were following the path of a Hero, uncovered the supposed truth and joined the ranks of Shadow. For instance, Kaecilius who conducts a raid on the temple and almost killing Doctor Strange.

In the thick of the action, Stephen meets his Ally, Cloak of Levitation, an artefact that is hard to impress which makes the whole bond even more extraordinary. Another of his Allies, Christine Palmer, brings Strange back to life on the operating table after he escapes from Kaecilius. It is, in fact, unorthodox to have the Hero resurrect at this stage but it only adds to the thrill.

Ordeal, Death & Rebirth follows shortly after when Strange and his partner get in the way of Kaecilius. Stunningly beautiful imagery is a vital part of the experience. It helps grasp the magnitude of all that is happening. The Ancient One dies. Darkness falls upon the planet. Doctor Strange has got a remarkable relic called Eye of Agamotto by now which enables him to bend time. Ironically enough, Stephen has to die and rise again countless time to talk sense into Dormammu and make him leave Earth.

Concerning Rewards/Seizing the Sword, it is once more world peace and a new level of excellence with the Eye of Agamotto. There is virtually no danger on the Road Back for the Hero as the enemies perish. Resurrection blends in with the Return with the Elixir when Doctor Strange puts back the relic in the temple. The superhero restores balance and saves the day, the world and everyone in it. Post-credit sequences show the link to the next Thor movie as well as who may be one
of the evildoers in the sequel. Doctor Strange received accolades from critics and audiences alike on a similar level as Iron Man, seventy-two and eighty-nine percent of positive reviews on Metacritic and Rotten Tomatoes, respectively.

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<td>Refusal of the Call</td>
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<td>Reversed in this case, the Hero answers the call immediately</td>
<td>Reversed in this case, the Hero answers the call immediately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting the Mentor</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+ (in a sense)</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossing the Threshold</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+ (in a sense)</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tests, Allies, Enemies</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approaching the Inmost Cave</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordeal, Death &amp; Rebirth</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward/Seizing the Sword</td>
<td>The stages are practically skipped in the film</td>
<td>+ (in a sense)</td>
<td>+ (in a sense)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Road Back</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>The stages are practically skipped in the film</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resurrection</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Return with the Elixir</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+ (in a sense)</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 6 Overview of the 3 Avengers films*

The table above unmistakably demonstrates how the production teams had their input, be that reversed phases (Refuse of the Call) or a fusion of at least two (The Road Back, Resurrection, Reward/Seizing the Sword). Hero's Journey does not force one into following all the rules to write a story. Originality suggests deviations and going beyond what one knows. Some stages can be, in fact, they are, metaphorical, sometimes even elusive like Reward/Seizing the Sword in Thor and Doctor Strange. The omitted phases at the end did hurt the films by not providing space and time for characters to evolve more. From producers' perspective, it made the plot lighter and more comfortable to digest which is their ultimate goal. The author could not help but wonder how people would react to the tales shot as films if they were turned into a book before becoming a motion picture. It most certainly loses in value due to the fact the visualisation is up to the reader, and there is not much they can do with the storyline to generate the same amount of success as they did with the franchise. It is one thing when something like Harry Potter comes to the theatres, but Marvel has a comic book foundation which relies heavily on imagery, excitement, colour. Hence the dull dialogues in the films that are covered by Oscar-worthy special effects.
Conclusion

Overall, Marvel managed to incorporate various things to ensure the success of the franchise. First and foremost, the material they work with, despite being make-belief, is incredibly relatable in a sense that all people at least once wondered what it would be like to possess magical abilities, hence the massive fanbase. Second of all, the producers decided to hire worldwide renowned actors because viewers respond better to familiar faces. Third of all, the executives brought in iconic composers to score the movies. Fundamentally, they did bend every effort to collect the elements that make up a hit: famous actors, great soundtrack, accomplished director and so forth. It is imaginable how efficacious the brand would be, had it not neglected the power of narrative the way it did. Without a shadow of a doubt, there are compelling pieces of writing or talented writers for that matter. Either or both can act as the stepping stone for Marvel.

The storytelling in the movie series is a contributory factor in a sense that the narrative strand feels conventional, very familiar. Strangely enough, the plotline is conducive to securing the mainstream outreach and embracement. Marvel Cinematic Universe has yet to claim to be educational or philosophical. That, in particular, corresponds to the kind of entertainment they have been providing for so many years and the tools they have selected. The product has been evolving in the visual representation remaining the same story-wise. It is not that the studios forbid adjusting the superhero sagas. One could assume the studios demand grand box offices at the end of the day. It is author's understanding that the target audience for the Marvel movies is young people, teenagers even, which allows the company to produce pictures that do not require much deciphering during the show and after. Two-dimensional products: image and sound are present but not the depth, profound meaning. The movies are fast-paced which is not necessarily a negative thing. It is just that feeble tales need it to cover the weak spots.

The sole purpose of this dissertation was to prove whether Hero's Journey and Archetypes could be applied to the Avengers film series along with its role in the success of the franchise. Based on the conducted research, it is safe to say Hero's Journey is traceable in these instances. Notwithstanding, not in in the original form. Archetypes are forefront, affiliable. Those humongous companies are notorious for their money-come-first policies, and they have been doing marvellously. With that in mind, Marvel has won everyone’s spur by delivering light versions of various issues and can achieve even more, should it invest more in the very essence of the film, the story and its characters.
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Appendix

Hero's Journey

1. Limited awareness of problem
2. Increased awareness of need for change
3. Fear, resistance to change
4. Overcoming fear
5. Committing to change
6. Experiencing with new conditions
7. Preparing for major change
8. Attempting big change (feeling of life or death)
9. Consequences of attempt; acceptance of new life
10. New challenge and redeployment
11. Final attempts; last-minute danger
12. Mastery of problem

Return with Elixir
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Preparation for life change
Resurrection
Road Back
Reward (Seizing the Sword)
Ordeal, Death, & Rebirth

Higher Self
Mentor
Shapeshifter
Threshold Guardian
Herald
Allies
Trickster
Shadow

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Stages of the journey

Outer Journey
Inner Journey