

THE HERO'S JOURNEY IN MATTHEW VAUGHN'S MOVIE: KICK-ASS

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ABSTRACT

Kick-Ass is a superhero movie. The study aimed to find out about the main character hero's journey patterns and the characters archetype that occurs in this movie. The data of this study is from watching and analyzed the *Kick-Ass* movie. This study employed Hero's Journey from Joseph Campbell to find the patterns with the support from Christopher Vogler for the characters archetype. There are the differences between the hero's journey Campbell and *Kick-Ass* movie. In this Study the researcher find 9 stages; *The Call to Adventure*, *Supernatural Aid*, *The Crossing of the First Threshold*, *Refusal of the Call*, *The Meeting with the Goddess*, *Woman as the Temptress*, *The Belly of the Whale*, *Apotheosis* and *The Ultimate Boon*. As for the characters archetype that appearing in this movie are; *The Hero*, *Mentor*, *Ally*, *Threshold Guardian*, *Shape shifter*, *Trickster* and *Shadow*.

Keywords: *hero, archetypes, hero's journey, kick-ass film*

1. INTRODUCTION

A hero is someone who acts bravely out of concern for others even at their own personal risk. They are willing to sacrifice everything without getting a reward. This is the kind of hero that we need. To be a figure that important in this world we live in. To stand up and fights for the right things. It can be argued that the action or behavior ultimately stands as heroic or not in the absence of any social milieu (Howerth 1935; cited in Franco, Blau, & Zimbardo, 2011). A hero does not always the strongest or bravest person. Anyone can be a hero, like Civilians, Doctors, Religious figures, Teachers, etc.

Heroes are often depicted in movie. In the modern era, Movie plays an important part in our lives. Today we can watch movie easily not like in the past where we have to watch just in the theater. Now we can watch movie online and on the television. There's a lot of genre like comedy, horror, action, romance, fantasy, etc. The approach and methods for the motion picture, the script, and the structure the movie has are come to live, the way the director produces and express the meaning behind the movie to become such complex codes form magical art.

Superhero movie full pack of action, an individual who poses superhuman Strength, save people from the bad guy, do the right thing in the right time, a handsome man, a beautiful woman with tragic background then come back stronger to face the adversity their

struggle become motivate who watch it this kind of movie people love to watch, Stan Lee defines the superhero as “a person who does heroic deeds and has the ability to do them in a way that a normal person couldn’t. Without a doubt, this kind of movie dominates the world of entertainment.

Characters play an important part in the movie. Without character, a movie will be lame and boring. The important character is the story of the movie it helps the readers to guide and to understand the plot related to the story of the movie. There are characters that appear in the movie such a protagonist, antagonist, dynamic character and flat character.

In movie characters are portrayed in different archetypes. The term “archetype” comes from two Greek words *arche* – origin and *typos* – form, pattern. Archetype is a pattern from ancient time. Plato called archetypes as idea or forms, which he saw as pre-existing ideal templates or blueprints. Who later get popularized by the psychologist Carl Jung. According to Jung archetype are primordial image. The image is called *primordial* when it possesses an *archaic* character. Archetype can be character, story plot, symbols, myth based on same or similar patterns whether from movie or literature.

Kick-Ass is a 2010 superhero movie Based on the comic book of the same name by Mark Millar and John Romita, Jr. The movie was directed by Matthew Vaughn, who produced with Brad Pitt and co-wrote the screenplay with Jane Goldman. This movie is about an average teenager named Dave Lizewski performed by Aaron Taylor-Johnson who decides to become a superhero. Despite the fact he has no Superpowers or training of any kind. A bystander records the event of Dave fighting and dubbing himself as “Kick-Ass” that is where his hero name came from.

Based on the description above, this article wants to show and explain the hero’s journey that Dave experiencing in this movie and the character archetypes that appear in this movie.

To analyze the hero’s journey and the character archetypes, there are two problem statements in the study as follow:

1. How does the main character in Kick-Ass movie fit to the Joseph Campbell’s Hero’s Journey?
2. How are the archetypes of the characters including the main character reflected in Kick-Ass movie?

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theory applied in this article is hero's journey theory by Joseph Campbell (2004). Campbell (2004) according to him in his book that "A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man".

Campbell describe that a hero must undergoes 3 acts and 17 stages. The three acts are: Departure, initiation and Return. Departure where the hero start their journey; The Call to Adventure, Refusal of the Call, Supernatural Aid, Crossing the First Threshold, Belly of the Whale. Initiation where the hero face the obstacle to complete the quest; The Road of Trials, The Meeting with the Goddess, The Woman As Temptress, Atonement with the Father, Apotheosis, The Ultimate Boon. After completing the quest the hero will return; Refusal of the Return, The Magic Flight, Rescue from Without, The Crossing of the Return Threshold, Master of Two Worlds, Freedom to Live.

As for the archetype the theory is from Christopher Vogler (2007) to find and to understand the characters that appear in the story. According to Vogler (2007) the characters archetypes that often appear in the story are The Hero, Mentor, Ally, Threshold Guardian, Herald, Shapeshifter, Trickster and Shadow.

3. METHOD

This article use qualitative approach. The researcher uses movie's script as the data source. In collecting the data the researcher watch the movie, reading the script, understand the whole movie to know the details to get the information and to be used as study material to analyze and identify the main character hero's journey and the archetypes. The result of the findings will then be analyzed. The data is analyzed based on Campbell (2004).

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Hero's Journey

In this analysis the researcher found 9 stages the main character through. They are: The Call to Adventure, Supernatural Aid, Crossing the First Threshold, Refusal of the Call, The Meeting with the Goddess, The Woman As Temptress, Belly of the Whale, Apotheosis, The Ultimate Boon

4.1.1 The Call to Adventure

The start of the journey the fateful one .where he/she get called from the nature to act. It can be the beginning of the process of change. The hero might start from ordinary world

Dave : “Look at this asshole just watching. Come on, be honest with yourself. Would you do anything differently? We see someone in trouble and we wish we could help, but we don't. The world I lived in, heroes only existed in comic books.”

(08:25→08:52)

According to the above statement this is the beginning of change that happens to Dave. He feels he got called by the nature to become something like hero to change things. In the movie after Dave meeting the thugs he come back home and buy some scuba suit and a mask to change his appearance to become hero. An Ordinary boy who wants to live his dream gets chance to make it happen. This is where his journey to becoming hero begins.

4.1.2 Supernatural Aid

Depending on the story the aid it can be from the mentor, civilian, ally or from the nature that help the hero. Perhaps the hero cannot defeat the opponents. The savior or mentor gave the hero training, weapons or knowledge to overcome his difficulty.

Dave : “I came out just long to beg the medic not to tell anybody about the costume.”

(18:22→ 18:27)

Dave who lies on the ground after the fight and get hit by a car get some supernatural aid from paramedics. In this discussion paramedics is the symbol of supernatural aid). The paramedics become his savior who saves him at the difficult times and bring Dave to the hospital to cure him.

4.1.3 Crossing the first Threshold

Thresholds are often guarded by people, monsters or other difficulties which hero must overcome. After the meeting with the savior with new strength or knowledge the hero face his first trials to overcome his adversity.

Kick-Ass: I have a message for Rasul about Katie Deauxma.

Rasul: Katie?

Kick-Ass: You're Rasul? Okay. You gotta stay away from Katie now. It's over. So if you just leave her alone, everything will be fine.

Rasul: What? Yo, kid, who the hell are you? And what is this?

Kick-Ass: I'm Kick-Ass. Look me up. And this is me giving you a message. Leave Katie alone.

Rasul: Or what?

Kick-Ass: Or I'll come back and break your fucking legs.

(37:43→38:40)

According to the above conversation Kick-Ass warned Rasul not to bother Katie. Dave know that he must get rid of him or give him a lesson so he attack Rasul first with taser. But his plan to knock him out first failed leading him to get caught by Rasul man. They hold Dave and waiting for Rasul kill him. Later some ally come and help Dave to beat Rasul.

4.1.4 Refusal of the Call

The hero get a doubt, scared, anxious whether this is the right path the hero have to take. Usually there someone it can be from mentor, ally who convinces the hero to accept the call.

Dave: “Hit Girl and Big Daddy, they were the real deal. Me? I was just a stupid dick in a wetsuit.”
(43:17→ 43:28)

Above statement explains how Dave faces reality where he met the real superheroes. In this movie Dave get saved by other hero. The fighting, weapon, suit, it all beyond Dave imagination where all he can do just nothing. And he feels what real superhero is compared to him.

4.1.5 The Meeting with the Goddess

Goddess does not mean just for women character but it can be seen as power, place or something that test the hero to get the reward. Those who view the Goddess with fear, lust, or hesitation cannot progress further.

Dave: “I don't know if I was everything Katie had always dreamed her gay BFF would be, but I tried my best.”
(35:52→ 35:58)

That's what Dave thought. To be with his crush Dave willing to do anything even becomes gay in front of Katie. In the movie Katie has yet know who Dave really is. Later Katie confesses to Dave about emailing Kick-Ass to help her about some problem. To be able help Katie, Dave help Katie problem that lead Dave to meet with his one of his enemy lair.

4.1.6 The Woman as Temptress

The hero may meet temptations that cause the hero fail the mission or goals, often in female form which providing short term pleasure. The temptress may represent material things or the physical form.

Dave: “Suddenly, I understood why superheroes only existed in comic books. I got why people didn't risk their lives for strangers. Because for the first time in my life, I had something worth living for, something to lose. Katie worried about me getting hurt, so I promised her my Kick-Ass days were over.”
(01:14:40→ 1:15:01)

From the above statement we know that how Dave view Katie as part of his life. He now doesn't want become Kick-Ass again because he risks not for the love his life. Only Katie he sees. He is done becoming hero. When he enjoying his love life with Katie, there is some urgent message from Red Mist that makes him on the road of hero again.

4.1.7 Belly of the Whale

After the hero become more confidences in fighting those obstacles after passing the threshold. The hero will enter to dangerous place he never knew. He gets swallowed by big monster and inside the monster belly is pitch dark.

Dave: “Even with my metal plates and my fucked up nerve endings, I've gotta tell ya, that hurt. the silent killer But not half as much as the idea of leaving everything behind. Katie, My dad, Todd and Marty And all the things I'd never do. Like learn to drive. Or see what me and Katie's kids would look like. Or find out what happened on Lost.”

(01:25:28→ 1:25:59)

For Dave this is the worst situation that he faces so far. How he get captured and tortured by the enemy. He lost himself in this agony where he gets surrounded by darkness in his mind. Later Dave got save by the Hit girl but Big Daddy died in the process because of the fire burned him. After they leaving the place Kick-Ass and Hit Girl making a plan to destroy Frank D'Amico lair.

4.1.8 Apotheosis

This is we're hero becoming a divine being. After being tested with lot of trial and experiencing life and death crisis. The hero must die to be reborn again. Leaving his former self become new again with new resolve.

Dave : “Had I ever been a real superhero? The most I'd ever had to offer the world was good intentions and a slightly elevated capacity to take a kicking. With no power comes no responsibility. Except that wasn't true.”

(01:37:35→01:37:55)

These happen during the final battle against Frank D'Amico the boss enemy. The statement states Dave understanding of becoming hero in this movie.

4.1.9 The Ultimate Boon

The result after fighting all the trials and overcoming adversity the hero achieve the reward. With a lot of knowledge's and experiences the hero continuing the journey.

Dave : “And my world is much safer with all the new superheroes. They said I was their inspiration But all I did was make a door into a world I dreamed

about, since I was little kid.”

(01:50:27→01:50:39)

From above statement the goal Dave wants to achieve is complete. Even though he did not get all the fancy things but he gets more than that. Dave becoming inspiration for others and he is the one who opened the world full of heroes.

4.2 Christopher Vogler Archetypes

4.2.1 The Hero

Dave Lizewski is the central character in this movie he became a superhero named Kick-Ass. At first he just ordinary boy who love to read comic books who later he dream of to become superhero. In most story the main character are weak, innocent, nobody, etc. Before something change his or her perspective.

4.2.2 Mentor

Big Daddy's real name is Damon Macready a former police officer and single parent for Hit Girl. He is the first hero in this movie before Kick-Ass came. Before he becomes hero he was police officer who gets framed by Frank D'Amico, and gets jailed and spent there for five years. After out from jail he swear to get revenge for Frank D'Amico and he train his daughter to become a killer.

4.2.3 Ally

Hit-Girl or Mindy Macready a young hero she was raised by her father Big Daddy, her mother being murdered when she is born. Big Daddy has been training Hit-Girl to kill, fighting alongside him killing many criminal that relate to Frank D'Amico. Because of her Father as her mentor she is become brutal and skilled fighter.

4.2.4 Threshold Guardian

Threshold Guardian exist to test the hero are they competent enough to continue the journey. In this movie Rasul play as the guardian Dave must face. His death plays important part in this movie, leading Dave to the world of underground. Even though Dave get help from Hit Girl to finish him. He is a drug dealer, he working for Frank D'Amico and he is Ex and the abuser of Katie. Before meeting with Dave Rasul is Katie boyfriend.

4.2.5 Trickster & Shapeshifter

The combination between trickster and shapeshifter in a movie is deadly. How the trickster the one that confuses and questions the hero, the mischief trait the trickster has while the shapeshifter is aware of his self where his set his goal from the beginning. Christopher D'Amico he is the only son of Frank D'Amico the drugs leader in this movie. He is so rich

because of his father wealth. He even had a bodyguard that protects him. He does not have any friends according to the movie because when someone approaches him his bodyguard scares them. Chris also has a dream to become part of his father business.

4.2.6 Shadow

Frank D'Amico is the main antagonist in Kick-Ass movie. He is the shadow archetype that represents darkness throughout the story. He is a vicious drugs leader and Chris D'Amico's father who rules the city. Even though he has many henchmen his fighting skill are great in this movie is showing that he is a black belt in karate. His supported by many mafia even police at his own control that is show how much power he hold in this movie.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on this article by the researcher it can be concluded there are differences between Campbell and *Kick-Ass* movie hero's journey. Despite the differences, overall the hero's journey in *Kick-Ass* movie is similar to Campbell's theory. According to Campbell, the hero will undergo 17 stages in his life to complete the journey. However, in this movie it's only 9 stages. The nine stages he undergoes are *The Call to Adventure*, *Supernatural Aid*, *The Crossing of the First Threshold*, *Refusal of the Call*, *The Meeting with the Goddess*, *Woman as the Temptress*, *The Belly of the Whale*, *Apotheosis* and *The Ultimate Boon*.

The researcher also finds out the archetype characters that occur in this movie. During this movie, Dave who represents the *Hero* archetype encounters many adversities to complete his quest to become a hero that he wants. Struggle, fights, death making a difficult choice and on the brink of death moment what Dave gains and what he lost he has been through it all. Meeting with Big Daddy as *Mentor* and Hit Girl that becomes his *Ally* to face the enemy such a Rasul as the *Threshold Guardian* Dave must overcome. How Dave gets tricked by Red Mist as the *Trickster* and *Shapeshifter* to fulfill his own greed to join his father's business. To finish what Dave has started to become the hero that he wants fighting against the boss villain who represents darkness throughout the story the *Shadow* Frank D'Amico.

6. SUGGESTION

After watching the movie *Kick-Ass*, The researcher hopes this study gives some valuable information and reference for the reader. Through this article, the researcher understands that the hero journey that happens in *Kick-Ass* movie it gives inspiration and

motivation as and also an epic movie. The researcher also hoping that for the next researcher who used this theory will be able to find more about Hero's journey in his or her study.

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