

THOR'S JOURNEY AS A HERO IN *THOR: RAGNAROK* FILM (2017)

Arif Rahman, Surya Sili, Fatimah M.

Department of English Literature, Faculty of Cultural
Sciences, Mulawarman University
E-mail: ariff.rahmanhakim@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The hero's journey is the journey that has to be passed by the hero in their adventure to finish their mission. This research was aimed to explain about Thor's journey as a hero to save his people in Asgard of *Thor: Ragnarok* (2017) film. This research used Joseph Campbell's theory of hero's journey to explain about Thor's journey as a hero in the film. This research was a qualitative research. The data used in this research came from the scenes and script (dialogues) related to Thor's journey as a hero. The result of this research showed that Thor passed the three stages in hero's journey. Thor passed all the steps in the first stage (Departure) which were Call of Adventure, Refusal of the Call, and Crossing the First Threshold. He also passed all the steps of the second stage (Initiation) such as the Road of Trials, Atonement with The Father, Apotheosis and The Ultimate Boon. In the third stage (Return), Thor was not able to pass all the steps. He passed three steps out of five which were the Resque from Without, Master of the Two Worlds, and Freedom to Live.

Key words: hero, superhero, hero's journey

ABSTRAK

Perjalanan kepahlawanan merupakan sebuah perjalanan yang harus dilalui oleh seorang pahlawan dalam petualangannya menyelesaikan misi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan tentang perjalanan Thor sebagai seorang pahlawan untuk menyelamatkan kaumnya di Asgard dalam film Thor: Ragnarok (2017). Penelitian ini menggunakan teori perjalanan kepahlawanan milik Joseph Campbell untuk menjelaskan tentang perjalanan Thor sebagai seorang pahlawan dalam filmnya. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif. Data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini berasal dari adegan-adegan dan naskah (dialog-dialog) yang berhubungan dengan perjalanan Thor sebagai seorang pahlawan. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa Thor melalui tiga tahapan dalam perjalanan kepahlawanannya. Thor melalui semua tingkatan dalam tahap pertama (Keberangkatan) yang terdiri dari Panggilan Petualangan, Penolakan terhadap Panggilan, dan Memasuki Gerbang Pertama Petualangan. Ia juga berhasil melalui semua tingkatan di tahap ke-dua (Inisiasi) seperti Ujian-Ujian Perjalanan, Pertobatan dengan Sang Ayah, Pendewaan dan Anugerah Tertinggi. Di tahap ke-tiga (Pulang), Thor tidak dapat melalui semua tingkatan yang ada. Ia

melalui tiga dari lima tingkatan yaitu *Penyelamatan Diri*, *Penguasa Dua Dunia*, dan *Kebebasan untuk Hidup*.

Kata kunci: pahlawan, pahlawan super, perjalanan kepahlawanan

A. INTRODUCTION

Hero usually appears in the literary works. Usually, the hero is described as a powerful being that has a great ability and also really strong such as the superheroes from Marvel's like Iron Man, Spiderman, Thor, Captain America, Black Panther, etc. Thor was one of the characters in Marvel Cinematic Universe, a shared universe created by Marvel Studios that make superheroes stories. Thor was described as a god of Thunder and became one of the most strongest character since he could live for a really long time. In *Thor: Ragnarok (2017)* film, Thor had to face one of his greatest enemies which was his own sister Hela to save the Asgard people. This research focused to analyze Thor's journey as a hero in *Thor: Ragnarok (2017)* film by using Campbell's theory about hero's journey. Campbell's theory talks about three stages that a hero would usually go through in his adventure so that the he could be defined as the real hero.

B. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1. HERO'S JOURNEY THEORY BY CAMPBELL

Campbell divides the theory of hero's journey cycle into three different stages which are Departure, Initiation, and Return. These three stages then later are divided into smaller steps as follows:

a. Departure

Departure is the first stage of hero's journey consisting of three specific steps such as Call to Adventure, Refusal of the Call, and Crossing the First Threshold. This stage occurs where the hero begins his journey from the "world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder" (Campbell 30).

- **Call to Adventure** refers to the time when the hero receives his call to the adventure via a herald, who represents "the power of destiny" (Campbell 52). This power is called the 'herald', who may summon the hero, for example, to some high historical undertaking or some other task that will bring a change to the hero's life, which will never be the same again for better or for worse (51).
- **Refusal of the Call** is the moment when the hero, instead of accepting the call to adventure, refusing it due to some reasons. This step does not occur to every hero, but to the ones that do, end up answering the call in the end. This is because after the call is given; everyday life does not taste what it used to.
- **Crossing the First Threshold** is when the hero steps over into the unknown- something that normal people are "more than content"

(Campbell 78). The hero leaves his familiar surroundings in crossing the first threshold and steps into the unknown, where darkness and danger lie (77-78).

b. Initiation

Initiation is the second stage of the hero's journey cycle that happens when the hero has to go through many trials in order to get what he has come to claim (Campbell 30). This second stage consists of another three steps which are The Road of Trials, Atonement with The Father, and Apotheosis and The Ultimate Boon.

- **The Road of Trials** occurs when the hero has to go through many trials, where he is "aided by the advice, amulets, and secret agents of the supernatural helper" (Campbell 97).
- **Atonement with The Father** refers to a step where the hero either defeats his "father" (i.e. a father figure) and takes his position or in some way earns the trust of his father. That there is a new element of rivalry in the picture: the son against the father for the mastery of the universe, and the daughter against the mother to *be* the mastered world (Campbell 125).
- **Apotheosis and The Ultimate Boon** are the steps where the hero starts to realise his real identity. Segal explains, in this stage, the hero "discovers who he really is" (5). While 'The Ultimate Boon', occurs when the hero is either blessed by the gods or steals what he wants and therefore has to escape (Kesil 30).

c. Return

Return is the last stage of the hero's journey cycle about the hero's success ending. The hero starts his journey home bringing with him whatever boon he has secured on his journey to bestow it "on his fellow man" (Campbell 30). This stage covers five further steps for the hero to achieve his successful ending which are Refusal of the Return, Resque from Without, The Crossing of the Return Threshold, Master of the Two Worlds, and Freedom to Live.

- **Refusal of the Return** occurs when the hero refuses to return from his "blessed isle of the unaging Goddess of Immortal Being" (Campbell 193).
- **Resque from Without** requires the hero to to be brought back from his supernatural adventure by assistance from without" and return from "the mystic realm into the land of common day" (Campbell 216).
- **The Crossing of the Return Threshold** gets the hero to another mission which is to remain as his 'hero-self' when returning to the normal world (Kelsi 31).

- **Master of the Two Worlds** applied for the hero who is able to freely cross the border between the two worlds: the “real” one and the mystical one. He belongs to them both (Kesil 31) and is respected in both (56).
- **Freedom to Live** signifies the peace and prosperity and salvation that the hero brings with him from his quest. It is the ‘happy ending’ of the story (Campbell 221).

2. PREVIOUS STUDIES

There were four previous studies used to help the current research enhanced its analysis of hero’s journey. The first previous study was entitled *Heroes of Middle Earth: J. Campbell’s Monomyth in J.R.R. Tolkien’s The Lord of The Rings (1954-1955)* by Tuta Kesti in 2007. Kesti’s study discussed about the hero’s journeys of the five characters in Tolkien’s *The Lord of The Rings* novel which were Frodo, Sam, Aragorn, Eowyn, and Gandalf. The second previous study was entitled *The Hero’s Journey: A Postmodern Incarnation of the Monomyth* by Sarah Hoffman in 2012. Hoffman’s study discussed about the application of monomyth theory into Atwood’s novels, *Orxy and Crake* and *The Year of The Flood* as the realm of postmodern dystopia.

The third previous study was entitled *The Stages of Hugh Glass’s Journey in The Revenant Movie: A Hero’s Journey Analysis* by Astri Munawaroh in 2017. In Munawaroh’s study, she discussed about the phases of hero’s journey on Hugh character using Campbell’s theory. The fourth previous study was entitled *Hero and Villain: A Study of Joseph Campbell’s Monomyth in Neill Gaiman’s The Graveyard Book* by Fadhillah Fatihatullaili in 2017. This fourth previous study concerned its discussion on the application of monomyth concept towards the hero and villain characters in Gaiman’s novel *The Graveyard Book*.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

This research’s design was a qualitative research. It was because this research aimed to describe about the stages of hero’s journey on Thor character of *Thor: Ragnarok* (2017) film. The data used in this research were scenes and words related to the discussion of Thor’s journey as a hero. The data were taken from *Thor: Ragnarok* film and its script. The instrument used in conducting this research was the researcher himself. In collecting the data, the researcher performed several steps which were watching *Thor: Ragnarok* (2017) film, reading its film script, reading Campbell’s theory of hero’s journey, and taking notes of all the related data from the film script and scenes after connecting those data to Campbell’s theory.

After the data had been collected, the researcher continued to analyze them. The process of data analysis were done through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In this step, the researcher also applied coding categories in the process of analyzing data.

No.	Category	Sub-Category
1.	Departure (DEP)	1) The Call to Adventure (CA) 2) Refusal of the Call (RC) 3) Crossing the First Threshold (CFT)
2.	Initiation (IN)	1) The Road of Trials (RT) 2) Atonement with The Father (AWF) 3) Apotheosis and The Ultimate Boon (AUB)
3.	Return (R)	1) Refusal of the Return (RR) 2) Resque from Without (RW) 3) The Crossing of the Return Threshold (CRT)
		4) Master of the Two Worlds (MTW) 5) Freedom to Live (FL)

In data reduction, the researcher filtered the data to have more precise data related to the theory and discussion of this research. As the result, there were some data that had been reduced from the film scenes and script. In data display, the researcher analyzed the data to answer the question of this research and displayed the findings into descriptions. In conclusion drawing, the researcher made conclusion of data analysis after assuring that all of the data were valid and relevant to answer the research question.

D. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Departure

Departure was the first stage in the Campbell's theory that took the hero to start his journey and adventure. In this case, Thor as the hero went through three steps in Departure stage which were The Call of Adventure, Refusal of the Call, and Crossing the First Threshold.

a. The Call of Adventure

The call of adventure was the stage where the hero for the first time was given to a mission from the Father and the hero had to begin his journey or adventure given from the father (father figure). As for Thor, he got a mission of Ragnarok as the beginning of his journey as a hero from his own Father.

Data 1 (CA, min. 00:20:25)

Odin (Father) : **I failed you. It is upon us. Ragnarok.**

Thor : No, I've stopped Ragnarok. I put an end to

Surtur. Odin : **No.**

From the data above Odin said that the "Ragnarok" was near and it was upon them. Thor thought he had already put an end to Ragnarok as he defeated Surtur. However Odin said "no" as he gave the Ragnarok mission to both of his sons.

b. Refusal of the Call

Second stage in the phase of Departure was Refusal of the Call. Based on the theory in this stage, the hero refused the call he heard when the first time he

knew about the mission. But, for Thor when he heard about it for the first time, he thought that they would do the call of the adventure together. Unfortunately, his father only wished Thor to do the call by himself.

Data 3 (RC, min. 00:20:40)

Odin : **But my time has come. I cannot keep her away any longer.**

Thor : Father who are you talking about?

Odin : The Goddess of Death. Hela. My Firstborn. Your

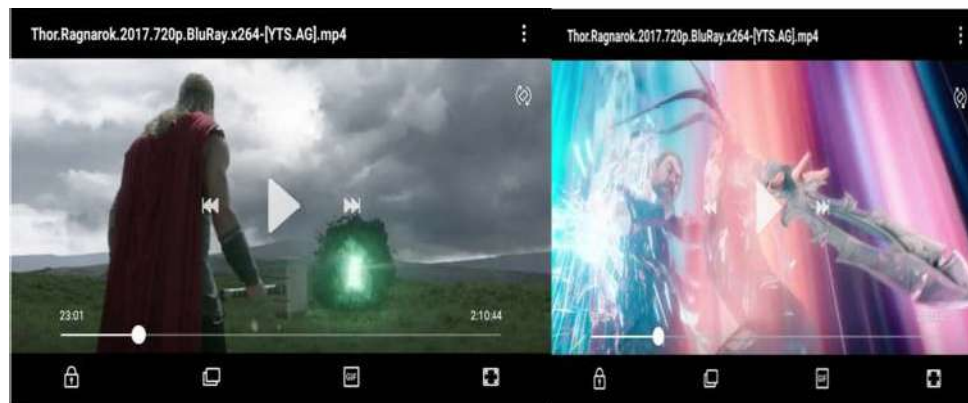
Sister. Thor : **Your what?**

Odin said to Thor and Loki that they had to face Hela (their sister) because he could not stay in this world any longer and therefore they had to face this mission by themselves. It was then proved in the data 3, where Odin said that they must face this call alone when Thor said that they could face her together as a family.

c. Crossing the First Threshold

The last step of the Departure stage was Crossing the First Threshold. In this step, Thor had already accepted the mission and started to step out of his comfort zone. The scene below was the moment when Thor met Hela for the first time. He wanted to conquer Hela. However, it turned out that he lost his precious possession which was his hammer which led him to a new planet.

Data 5 (CFT, min. 00:23:01-00:25:01)



The scene in the data 5 showed when Thor met Hela. She made him to lose his hammer and they started to fight. Thor then was cornered to escape with his brother, Loki. They went to the another planet where they started their journey before got back to their place to save the people of Asgard and took their revenge on Hela.

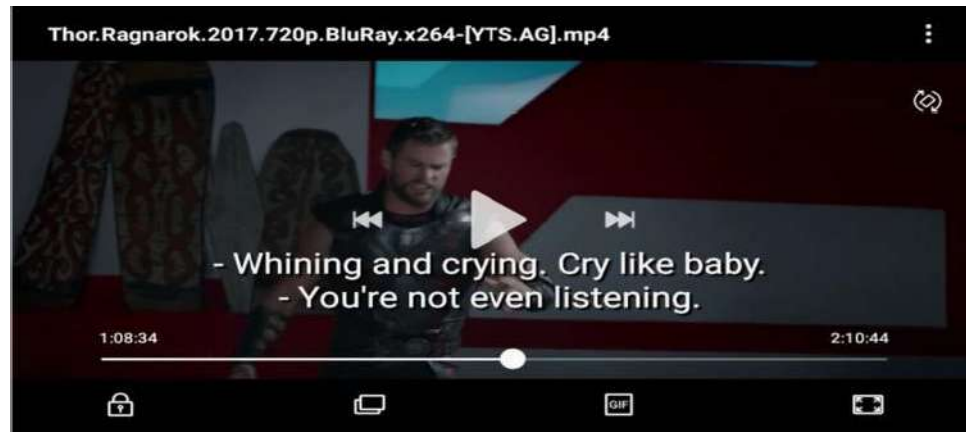
2. Initiation

Initiation was the second stage of hero's journey. Here, Thor went through three steps to complete his initiation stage such as The Road of Trials, Atonement with The Father, and Apotheosis and The Ultimate Boon.

a. The Road of Trials

In this step, the hero met many ordeals that he obtained by using his magic item. The hero also met some helper agent which helped him on the journey of his mission. After the hero passed this step, he was able to go to the next level as the next step of the adventure.

Data 6 (RT, min. 01:08:34)



Hulk : THOR SAD!!! Thor hops up, YELLS in Hulk's face. Paces around.

Thor : **I'm not sad, you idiot. I'm pissed off! Angry. I lost my father. I lost my hammer. Whining and crying. Cry like baby. You're not even listening.**

From the scene and conversation above, they showed when Thor told Hulk about his problems. Thor was angry and sad because he just lost his father along with his hammer. It signified the ordeals that Thor had to face and deal with when he was in his journey as a hero.

b. Atonement with The Father

In this stage the hero either defeated his "father" (i.e. a father figure) and took his position or in some way earns the trust of his father.

Data 8 (AWF, min. 01:48:28)



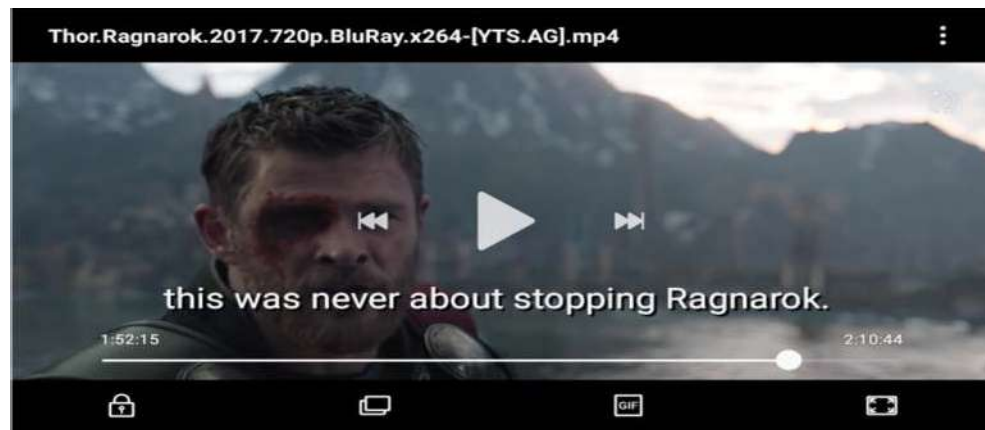
Thor : She's too strong. Without my hammer I cannot—
Odin : Are you Thor, God of Hammers? (Thor looks up, meeting his gaze).
Odin : That hammer helped you control your power, focus it. But it was never the source of your strength.
Thor : It's too late. She's already taken.
Odin : **Asgard is not a place. Never has been. (gestures around him) This could be Asgard. It is wherever our people stand. And right now those people need you.**
Thor : I'm not as strong as you.
Odin : **No. You're stronger.**

Thor met his father when he thought about giving up because he doubted his own power. He asked his father to tell him how to be as strong as his sister and that he could not conquer it anymore. After hearing about it all, his father still believed in Thor and told him that he could do the adventure until the end. It was because he was stronger and also there were many people who needed him. Here, it proved that Thor earned the trust from his father and was able to take his position.

c. Apotheosis and The Ultimate Boon

In this stage, the hero learned what he started to look for in the first place. The Ultimate Boon occurred where the hero was either blessed by the gods or steals what he wanted and therefore had to escape.

Data 9 (AUB, min. 01:52:15)



Thor : Asgard's not a place, it's a people. (then) This was never about Ragnarok...it was about causing Ragnarok. (to Loki:) Go to the vault. Surtur's crown. It's the only way. (blessed) Bold move, brother. Even for me.

Thor finally understood about the true purpose of his mission. It was to protect

his people and defeat his sister. It was never about their place of residence, because they could live anywhere.

3. Return

Return was the last stage of the hero's journey. Here, Thor was also able to pass through the five steps of Return as he became the hero in his journey. Those five steps were Refusal of the Return, Resque from Without, The Crossing of the Return Threshold, Master of the Two Worlds, and Freedom to Live.

a. Refusal of the Return

In Thor's case, he was not included into this stage because he took that his journey was meant for his people. He was the king of his own world himself so he had to return to his people and saved them from any danger. Also, the missions that he did were given by his father.

Data 10 (RR, min. 01:05:00)



The scene of data 10 above proved the statements of Thor's only thought about his people and needed to went back as fast as possible to save them. He even asked help from the outside.

b. Resque from Without

Thor was on his adventure where he lost his hammer. He was trapped in another planet, but he managed to convince his friend Hulk and Valkyrie to help him to solve the mission with him. He succeeded and got the best ship from there and brought his two friends to return to Asgard.



Data 11 (RW, min. 01:38:34)

Thor : Okay, drop me off at the palace and I'll draw her away. Valkyrie : And get yourself killed?

Thor : **The people trapped down there are all that matters. While I'm dealing with Hela, I need you two to help get everyone off Asgard.**

The data scenes and dialogue above showed that Thor and his friend got back to Asgard. He needed to save it and his people by defeating Hela, his sister with the help from his friends.

c. The Crossing of the Return Threshold

This stage was not passed by Thor because he had already known about all of the problems they faced. Due to the fact that they were all no ordinary human beings, they lived in another uncommon planet which was why they were already familiar with all the supernatural things. Thor was the king and the Lord for himself and he did not change during his adventure.

d. Master of the Two Worlds

This steep had been passed by Thor when he finished all of the previous steps. He was able to freely choose where he needed to bring his people to live after defeating Hela and destroyed Asgard.

Data 12 (MTW, min. 02:00:36)



Heimdall : Where to?

Thor : **I'm not sure. Any suggestions? Miek, what's your home planet?** (Angle on Korg, who is holding Miek) (sans robot (sans robot exoskeleton).

Korg : Oh, Miek's dead. I accidentally stepped on him on the bridge, I've just felt so guilty I've been carrying him around all day.

Korg : Miek, you're alive! He's alive everyone! What was your question?

(Thor looks forward, taking charge of this one). Thor : Earth it is.

The scene and dialogue in data 12 showed of how confident Thor was by asking for any suggestion for the next place for his people to live as their next home. This proved that Thor was already the master of the two worlds, who could conquer and brought his people to wherever he wanted because he believed all people from the two worlds would gladly accept him.

e. Freedom to Live

Thor decided to bring his people to his ship while thinking about the next place for them to live. When he decided the next place, he used his experience and knowledge during his journey and collected the wisdom he had in the end by finishing his adventure.

Data 13 (FL, min. 01:57:55)



The scene of data 13 told about how Thor saw his home, Asgard was being destroyed with his people that he saved. The next scene showed when Thor sat in his throne again after his adventure to finish the mission.

2. Discussion

This research focused to describe Thor's journey as a hero in *Thor: Ragnarok* (2017) film by using the theory of hero's journey by Joseph Campbell. The theory divided into three phases which were Departure, Initiation, and Return. Departure was the first stage of the hero's journey. Thor began this stage when he was given the mission from his father to defeat Hela and save his Asgard people. Initiation was the second stage of the hero's journey which all of the stages were passed by Thor in his journey. He was trapped and he got so many ordeals. He also needed the help from others people to have him back to his place.

Return as the last stage was not passed completely by Thor. He did not go through the steps of Refusal of the Return and The Crossing of Return Threshold. In the steps of Resque from Without, when Thor needed the help from his friends and Master of the Two Worlds, when he could choose whichever place to bring his people to live and last one was the happy ending where he finished all

of his missions and got the Freedom to Live with his people.

The similarity between this research with the first previous study written by Kesti in 2007 (*Heroes of Middle Earth: J. Campbell's Monomyth in J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of The Rings 1954-1955*) that this research used Joseph Campbell's theory of hero's journey to analyze the journey of the character in the story. The differences between this research and Kesti's research were: (1) this research used only one character to analyze, while Kesti's research used five characters and; (2) this research used a film as source of data, while in Kesti's research used a novel.

The comparison between this research with the second previous study written by Hoffman in 2012 (*The Hero's Journey: A Postmodern Incarnation of the Monomyth*) contained similarity and differences. This research used a different literary work which was *Thor: Ragnarok* (2017) film, while Hoffman's research used two novels written by Margaret Atwood, *Orxy and Crake* and *The Year of The Flood*. Furthermore, this research used Campbell's theory of hero's journey to find out about Thor's journey as a hero in the film. On the other hand, Hoffman's research used Campbell's theory to prove that the monomyth was transplated into two novels of Margaret Atwood as the realm of postmodern dystopia.

This research also had the similarities and difference with the third previous study written by Munawaroh in 2017 (*The Stages of Hugh Glass's Journey in The Revenant Movie: A Hero's Journey Analysis*). The similarities were: (1) both researches used the hero's journey theory by Joseph Campbell; and (2) focused the analysis on the main character of a film. Munawaroh's research analyzed Hugh character of *The Revenant* film, while this research analyzed Thor character of *Thor: Ragnarok* (2017) film. The difference appeared on the fact that each study concerned its discussion on a different film.

The similarities between the fourth previous study which was written by Fatihatullaily in 2017 (*Hero and Villain: A Study of Joseph Campbell's Monomyth in Neill Gaiman's The Graveyard Book*) with this research existed on the matter of the research's object and theory used. Both researches used the main characters as the object of the research as well as using the same theory about hero's journey by Campbell. Meanwhile, there were two differences between the two researches. Fatihatullaily's research used Gaiman's novel, *The Graveyard Book* as the data source of her research. This research used *Thor: Ragnarok* (2017) film as the source of data. In Fatihatullaily's research, she focused the analysis on two main characters of the novel, Bod as the hero and Jack Frost as the villain. This research only concerned the analysis on one main character, Thor.

E. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings analysis, Thor character had gone through several steps required in completing his journey as a hero. There were three stages with each different step that Thor completed. He completed all the three steps in the stage of Departure as well as in the stage of Initiation. However, Thor did not go

through the five steps in the stage of Return due to his assertive characteristic as the King of Asgard.

REFERENCES

- Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. The Publishing Company. New York. 1966. Print.
- Fatihatussalam, Fadhillah. *Hero and Villain: A Study of Joseph Campbell's Monomyth in Neill Gaiman's The Graveyard Book*. State Islamic University Syarif Hidayatullah. 2017.
- Hoffman, Sarah. *The Hero's Journey: A Postmodern Incarnation of the Monomyth*, University of Southern Mississippi. 2012. Print.
- Kesti, Tutta. *Heroes of Middle-Earth: J. Campbell's Monomyth in J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings (1954-1955)*. University of Jyväskylä Finland. 2007. Print.
- Munawaroh, Astri. *The Stages of Hugh Glass's Journey in The Revenant Movie: A Hero's Journey Analysis*. State Islamic University of Sunan Kalijaga. 2017.
- Pearson, Eric et al. "Thor: Ragnarok."
ScriptSlug.com
<https://www.scriptslug.com/assets/uploads/scripts/thor-ragnarok-2017.pdf>. Accessed 12 Jan. 2020.
- Segal, R.E. *Joseph Campbell: An Introduction*. New York & London Garland Publishing Inc. 1987. Print.
- Thor: Ragnarok*. Directed by Taika Waititi. Performance by Chris Hemsworth, Walt Disney Studios Motion Picture, 2017.