

Superhero Cinema and its influence in the Development of the Postmodern World Myths

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Dedication

To the real heroes of our world, those who dare to keep their eyes open in absolute darkness and see beyond: Daniel Johnston, Siddhartha Gautama and Evila Rueda.

Acknowledgments

Special thanks to my thesis director, Silvia Tarazona, for her insights and belief in this investigation; without you, it could not have been possible. I also would like to thank my dog and best friend, Chester Mateo Ramírez, for bearing with me through those daybreaks filled with tobacco, caffeine and lunacy.

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Abstract

Title: Superhero cinema and its influence in the development of the postmodern world myths.¹

Author: Kevin Sebastian Ramírez Ardila²

Keywords: *Archetypes, Cinema, Myth, Superheroes, Symbols.*

Description: This paper explores the superhero film genre and the mythological traces that can be found in it. The analysis focuses on three different films: Spider-Man (2002), Super (2010) and Avengers: Endgame (2017). It was revealed that ancient heroes still find their way to appear in the stories of today, but with different names and faces. Furthermore, narrative structures persist through the millennia, even in an era where myths appear to be disappearing from all the spheres of our lives. Left behind to be considered as “primitive science” as Tylor (1974) and most of our contemporaries consider, myths still secretly govern our destinies and motivations. The data were collected through a focus group consisting of fifteen participants living in the city of Bucaramanga, all sharing a keen interest in superhero stories. Findings from the focus group were put into perspective altogether with a hermeneutical analysis of the films already mentioned, providing an additional insight to the themes explored in this research.

¹ Degree work.

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Resumen

Título: Cine de superhéroes y su influencia en el desarrollo de los mitos del mundo posmoderno.³

Autor: Kevin Sebastian Ramírez Ardila⁴

Palabras clave: *Arquetipos, Cine, Mito, Superhéroes, Símbolos.*

Descripción: Este artículo explora el género cinematográfico de superhéroes y los rastros mitológicos que aún perduran en él. El análisis se centró en tres películas: Spider-Man (2002), Super (2010) y Avengers: Endgame (2017). Se reveló que héroes de tiempos remotos aún encuentran su manera de aparecer en las historias de hoy con distintos nombres y rostros. Además, sus estructuras narrativas persisten a través de los milenios, incluso en una era en la que los mitos parecen estar desapareciendo de todas las esferas de nuestras vidas. Abandonados a ser considerados “ciencia primitiva” como lo consideran Tylor (1974) y muchos de nuestros contemporáneos, los mitos todavía gobiernan secretamente destinos y motivaciones. Los resultados se recopilieron a través de un grupo focal formado por quince participantes de la ciudad de Bucaramanga, todos con un interés por las historias de superhéroes. Los hallazgos del grupo focal se pusieron en perspectiva junto con un análisis hermenéutico de las películas ya mencionadas, proporcionando una visión más amplia de los temas explorados en esta investigación.

³ Trabajo de grado

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Introduction

When we think of the word “myth”, two terms may come to our brains: false and ancient. Even the Oxford dictionary (n.d) describes it this way, too: “a story from ancient times, especially one that was told to explain natural events” and “something that many people believe but that does not exist or is false”. It is often unnoticed, but the contemporary world has despoiled man from much more than anyone dares to admit. One of those things is our connection to myths, to the point of considering the word “myth” itself a synonym of false. But, myths are not false. As a matter of fact, they may be more real than life itself.

Not so long ago, divine and sacred narratives dictated the course of human life. Myths were tools to elevate humanity to something beyond itself and to as Armstrong (2004) puts it, to let man be safe from the everyday struggle that primitive survival came with. Back then, myths not only had a spiritual purpose but also a material one as survival essentially depended on them. In these last two centuries scholars have agreed that myths have disappeared from most spheres of life. López (1997) identifies this as a crisis and a result of the modern era. Science and reason took the cosmological functions that myths previously had, without completely covering all the other myth functions. So what is commonly seen as a step ahead in human intellectual evolution, becomes its opposite: a regression. For Lopez (1997), we have descended from a view of the world previously impregnated with the constant contact with the divine and sacred, to a view of the world purely materialistic and sterile.

In his analysis of the blockbuster film “Star Wars”, Campbell (2011) makes a diagnosis of the world. What stands out from this analysis is that Campbell recognizes that a popular movie, despite being fictional as it happens with myths, can carry a message about

the world we live in. Yet, Campbell does not compare myths with cinema, although he recognizes that cinema contains traces of mythological elements. On the other hand, anthropologist Lévi-Strauss (2013) recognized that in the modern era other forms of art could and would take the role that oral tradition had to propagate myths in ancient times. Campbell did not live to see how blockbusters would evolve. In the last decade, the superhero cinema has rapidly become the most popular and profitable movie genre of all time. Superheroes may be the last surviving archetypes we have in popular culture of gods and heroes. Just like in ancient times! It cannot be a mere coincidence that in the age in which myths appear to be disappearing, man's interest for these stories grows.

Research question

To what extent is mythology presented in superhero cinema and what is its influence in its target audience?

Justification

The myth of one man alone can divide history and time into two different eras. Entire civilizations have been created because of myths. Consequently, entire civilizations have been destroyed because of myths. In present times, as a result of the industrial and scientific revolutions, our views over the world have been restrained by our sensorial perceptions. We only consider true and real things we can see, hear and touch. As Nietzsche (2001) predicted with the death of God, the western world lost the narrative on which it is based. Even some modern scholars waste their time finding out if people as Jesus Christ existed or not. They fail to understand what Segal (1998) acknowledges with his interpretation on Jung's concept of myth and that is that they do not matter in terms of whether they happened or not, but in terms of what they represent for us.

The importance of this research is not getting the reader's gaze back to old myths, as doing so would mean that myths should be revived, and as matter of fact they have to die for others to be born. The importance of this research, redundantly, is to become aware of the myth's importance now and always. It is essential to recognize all these narratives as forces that unconsciously drive the human will at every instant of our lives. Thus, myths should be shaped to cover and serve the human needs and to guide the individual to pursue his role in the world. At its core, myths are there to accompany man to face the threats he has to face. Nevertheless, what we have today is something different. People spin around all kinds of inconsequential and harmful myths and they are not even perceived as myths. Whether it is development, capitalism, technology or even whatever we have managed to define as civilization. Inconsequential: because they never go beyond what man is capable of doing or the illusion of a material and objective reality. Harmful: because as seen by Fischer (2009) there exists an undeniable link between the growth of mental distress and psychotic illnesses in countries due to capitalist and technological development.

For Segal (1998) myths cannot exist without ritual, at least not in a significant way. Naturally, it makes one wonder what is the ritual that can be found in superheroes cinema. Taking into account that Campbell (2011) once described film theaters as temples and that now movies can be watched without the need of theaters via streaming. Why would people still go to the cinema? The only possible answer that can be found may be the phenomenon of "event movies". This term refers to highly expected and big budget movies. Thus, people are not going to watch these kinds of movies because of the movie itself, they are assisting these functions because there is a social implication that "event movies" demarcate important points in popular culture history. Some even go dressed up as the main characters and every

time the hero comes out triumphant when facing a threat, there is an overwhelming sound of applause and ovation. That is a ritual.

1. Objectives

1.1 General research objective

To identify the elements displayed in superhero cinema through the analysis of its mythological patterns.

1.2 Specific research objectives

- A. To revise the mythological patterns found in superhero movies.
- B. To explore how these cultural products influence the ways of thinking of its target audience.
- C. To depict the ways in which superheroes cinema followers identify with the stories.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Perception of the myth today

Wittgenstein's (2013) famous quote "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world" has been usually interpreted by linguistic relativism that our language determines and influences our thought. Yet, one can go beyond this interpretation and say that there is no such interaction between language and thought, they are actually the same. If our only tool to interpret reality is language, that would mean we are never in touch with an objective and real world, but rather what we are experiencing is language alone. This would contradict the idea of an objective world proposed typically by positivism. Camus (2013) adds to this debate the next:

“But you tell me of an invisible planetary system in which electrons gravitate around a nucleus. You explain this world to me with an image. I realize then that you have been reduced to poetry”. (p.24)

Camus' idea of science is particular and important in the myth context as he recognizes that science narratives fall into the same trap that every other explanation about the world as they are just stories (language). Thus, every attempt to explain the world is a story that disguises itself as the truth. Campbell's mythological functions can help us to go further into this matter. For Campbell (2011), mythology served four different functions in ancient cultures. First, the mystical function, which helped us to navigate the unknown. Second, the cosmological one, which gave us explanations about the world and how we got here. Third, the sociological function, which dictated how individuals should behave collectively with others. And fourth, the pedagogical function (the most important one in Campbell's eyes), which dictated what was the individual's role in the world. Science replaced mythology since the age of enlightenment as it took its cosmological function. This leads to thinkers such as Tylor (1974), and people today, to consider myths as primitive science and unnecessary in our world. Nevertheless, even though we do not need myths to tell us where the universe comes from, we still need them. The transition between myth and science left the need to fulfill the other functions mythology previously had leaving the door open for nihilism to infect western societies. As it can be seen once again in Camus' (2013) reflections:

“And you give me the choice between a description [about the world] that is sure but that teaches me nothing and hypotheses that claim to teach me but that are not sure. A

stranger to myself and to the world, armed solely with a thought that negates itself as soon as it asserts..." (p.23)

2.2. Structure of the myth

For Levi-Strauss (1965), although myth shares some elements with language, myth is a language on its own. He also claims that it usually goes beyond language as it possesses "malleability" characteristics, which can be translated as that a same myth can fit into different languages structures, symbols and cultures without losing its structure and the meaning carried within. The elements shared with language may help us to analyze our sample, which is superhero movies. Saussure's description of language acknowledges that language possesses basic units as phonemes, morphemes and sememes (Klages, 2001). Myth basic unit, on the other hand, is what Levi-Strauss (1965) denominated as "mythemes". Klages (2001) explain mythemes in the next way:

"Let's take a standard structure of a myth: There's a hero who faces an obstacle, overcomes the obstacle, and has some (positive) result. Now everybody writes down your own details for this myth. We then list on the board all the variations we've made of this myth: who's the hero, what's the obstacle, how is it overcome, and what's the result. The structure of each version is identical, but each variant is unique."

Essentially, this would mean that all myths are the same story told in different ways to be adapted in different cultural, historical and geographical settings. Campbell (2008) recognizes these patterns repeated in the form of characters and motifs as archetypes. Then, if there is nothing substantially important or inherently original in every myth, why is it worth analyzing the myths present in today's superhero cinema and not any other myth? Well, at the

time of analyzing the myths we currently habit, we may provide a light to the course of contemporary life. Taking Campbell's mythological functions, it may be discovered through the analysis of these blockbusters' movies the roots and influence over our sociological paper in the world, as well the pedagogical function of pop culture. In this same set of ideas, Žižek (2006) states that "cinema is the ultimate pervert art. It doesn't give you what you desire - it tells you how to desire". With this idea in mind, gaining conscience over our role, in a world molded by cultural products, may provide us with a grade of independence and control over our individual and collective destiny. It is a way to not only know what we desire, but also a way to find out why we want what we want, why we fear what we fear and essentially why we do what we do.

Barnard (2010) states that "myths occur in a larger inter-societal or cross-cultural mythological context, as well as in the context of specific speech communities". This statement may be true, but it is incomplete if we think about contemporary times. Today we found ourselves at the doors of a globalized world. This would mean that we are running towards a single homogeneous culture or at least to something likely. Campbell (2011) was conscious of this, and even predicted that myths in the future would necessarily have to include not only communities, but the whole universe. We see that superhero movies go around the world and have become the most profitable film genre worldwide. So, there is a big possibility that if anywhere it is in these movies that a global myth can be found. Nevertheless, some authors such as Caillois (2003) may differ and say that myth does not have a place in contemporary society. To which it could be responded that even if myths do not have a real place nowadays, they are still relevant as their absence can be noted and carry tragic repercussions.

Retaking the Levi-Strauss' (2013) definition on myth, where it is allowable for myths to be spreaded in different types of art, a question needs to be asked for the development of this research: Is popular media art at all? And if it is not art, can it carry a mythological intention anyway? In Agamben's (1999) view, as a result of modernism and its consequences (postmodernism), art takes a new path. In accordance with the economic system, art becomes a product and acquires the characteristics that are found in any industrial product. So, the main intention of these cultural products (blockbuster movies for this research purpose) is clearly not sending a message or creating an aesthetic pleasurable experience for the viewer, it is selling. The audience are seen in the same way people are seen from a capitalist point of view, as mere consumers. This may result in the absence of values, where the individual is now deprived from a significant myth to guide his life. Or as Agamben (1999) puts it:

The essence of nihilism coincides with the essence of art at the extreme point of its destiny insofar as, in both, being destinies itself to man in the form of Nothingness. And as long as nihilism secretly governs the course of Western history, art will not come out of its interminable twilight. (p.36)

This can tell us two things. One, there is not a real myth behind superhero movies, and all that can be found behind them through their analysis is no more than a window to the emptiness our times have produced. Or second, that superhero movies feed the narratives that shape the world and work as tools to maintain its status quo. In any case, it would mean that there is something worth studying. With this scenery individuals sacrifice themselves in order to maintain the reality these narratives have created. I mean this, not only symbolically, but factually. Again, mental illnesses and deaths provoked by the world social conditions of today are only rising (Fischer, 2009).

2.3 Cinema's influence on society and society's influence on cinema

Since the dawn of cinema, all kinds of movies have been made. Human nature, complex as it is, has always turned to art as a way to express its most hidden desires and traumatic experiences in a free and uninhibited way. Fiction works then as a window to a secret world. A world where the things we do not dare to do or say in reality are shown without any physical consequence. With this in mind, we can know why film directors consider cinema to use the same language as dreams. Just as in our dreams, in cinema time moves differently, and more relevant to our research, every light and object is a *symbol* for something else (Fellini, 1984). Nevertheless, one difference between dreams and cinema is that the symbols in movies are often designed and manufactured externally to us. And this may be the scariest part of it, too: In film theory it is considered that "Hollywood movies inevitably supported social oppression by denying, in one way or another, its existence" (Wattenberg, 2015). Taking this aspect further, Wattenberg (2015) also adds that movies are intended to preserve culture, even the harmful aspects of it, as an example he mentions that most mainstream movies are intended to promote their male viewers' pleasures and promote a sexist society.

Other thinkers, however, would disagree with the last tak. Instead, they would argue that fiction does not influence the world that much, but it is the other way around most of the time. Because sexist and unfair societies existed before cinema, movies just happen to show it and thus we can not blame social conditions entirely on them. For example, thinkers, such as Zizek (Pervert's guide cinema) consider fiction to be a getaway medium from which fantasies, socially constrained, get to exist. Like a safe playground which allows the darker human instincts to be shown, meanwhile not having any repercussions on real life:

[Fiction] It's reality. It's more real than it appears to you. For example, people who play video games, they adopt a screen persona of a sadist, rapist, whatever. The idea is, in reality I'm a weak person, so in order to supplement my real life weakness, I adopt the false image of a strong, sexually promiscuous person, and so on and so on. So this would be the naïve reading... But what if we read it in the opposite way? That this strong, brutal rapist, whatever, identity is my true self. In the sense that this is the psychic truth of myself and that in real life, because of social constraints and so on, I'm not able to enact it. So that, precisely because I think it's only a game, it's only a persona, a self-image I adopt in virtual space, I can be there much more truthful. I can enact there an identity which is much closer to my true self.

“Our truest life is when we are in our dreams awake” would add Thoreau to this discussion (1998, p.162). Others consider a third position. They think that the influence of the cinema over society is a two way communication. As if in some way, both society and cinema would be two alive entities interacting with each other all the time. Cohen-Séat (1957, p.57) says: “The cinematic fact (...) consists of social circulation of sensations, ideas, feelings, and materials that come from life itself and that cinema shapes according to its desires,”

Be whatever it is, we can be for sure that:

“In order to understand today's world, we need cinema, literally. It's only in cinema that we get that crucial dimension which we are not ready to confront in our reality. If you are looking for what is in reality more real than reality itself, look into the cinematic fiction”. (Zizek, *Pervert's guide to cinema*).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

For the purposes of this research, a mixed approach is chosen one as it is the most suitable, given the fact we can inquire how, from a symbolic interactionist approach, “the social structure or social situation causes individual behavior” (Cohen et al, 2002, p.22) and at the same time we can compare it with our quantitative findings. Creswell & Plano Clark find mixed approach useful as:

It occurs when the researcher intends to bring together the results of the quantitative and the qualitative data analysis so they can be compared or combined. The basic idea is to compare the two results with the intent of obtaining a more complete understanding of a problem, to validate one set of findings with the other, or to determine if participants respond in a similar way if they check quantitative predetermined scales and if they are asked open-ended qualitative questions (2018, p.97)

In order to answer the research question, which end is to reveal the ideological elements present in superhero movies, a hermeneutic content analysis will be used over this type of cinema emphasizing participants’ answers and perceptions on the film genre. Because it is important to note that, as Denzing (2008, p. 240) suggests, the function of a film is “to reproduce the (dominant) values and beliefs of everyday life and society”. So, it can not be avoided to wonder if the analysis of these cultural products may be an indirect analysis of a group of people and its social, psychological and spiritual conditions, in our case the people who participated in this study and those who consume the superhero genre in general.

Qualitative research is also useful at the time of interpreting myths as it allows researchers to deal with data that in any other way would fall into being considered obsolete and unscientific by a merely quantitative positivist approach. A structural analysis of the myths will also be used. Levi-Strauss (1965) was the first to adapt from linguistic structuralism this language analysis technique into the myth analysis field. The acknowledgment of the mythemes present in Superhero movies will help us to decipher what is the transcendental ideology and message they carry. Most myths share the same mythemes, but what makes each of them unique is the details and combinations that each culture produces in its own specific historical and social setting. In a conference, Levi-Strauss made a comparison between myths and musical pieces. Mythemes work in the same way as musical notes. Alone, they do not matter at all. But if you put them in a specific order, they create melodies and harmonies that can reach the deepest parts of the human soul.

In the same line of the techniques used to study the mythological elements found in superhero cinema, it is clear that it is impossible not to make use of comparative mythology. It should be then left in clear that in comparative linguistics two perspectives exist: particularist and comparative (Segal, 1999). Particularists focus on the details, meanwhile comparativists make an emphasis on the similarities. Some scholars, such as Segal (1999) believe these two perspectives to be opposites. Meanwhile, they will be complementary in this research to each other and to opt for one or the other would result in an unnecessary mistake.

3.2 Corpus

Given the impossibility to analyze a whole movie genre because of time schedules and the overwhelming quantity of superhero movies existing, I have delimited the films to be

analyzed. These are: *Spider-Man* (2002), *Super* (2010) and *Avengers: Endgame* (2019). In these three movies, Campbell's (2008) monomyth (hero's journey) can be found, which only by that opens the possibility of these movies being analyzed and studied in order to get somewhere close to a possible answer for the research question. Besides that, they also belong to different periods of time in which superhero blockbusters have been developing. *Spider-Man* is not the first superhero movie, as a matter of fact it is far from being one of the firsts, yet it is the first superhero movie that changed blockbuster cinema (the guardian). It is the one that reveals mass audiences' interest in comic books characters. In *Spider-Man*, we see Peter Parker and his transformation into Spider-Man. In an analysis made by Armelia (2019, p. 47) states that *Spider-Man* "shares the secret behind this so-called popular culture, the effort of hegemony and power domination with the shades of humanity and heroism". In *Super*, we have a different approach to the superhero cinema. *Super* is a dark comedy movie and exploits the absurdity of its genre. The writer Alan Moore, after decades of writing comic books, considers the superhero phenomenon to be a cultural catastrophe and a tool of infantilization (McSweeney, 2020). How can it be that these stories, about individuals with divine powers who fight crime in tights, made for children in times of war, result to be so appealing for adults in the contemporary era? The importance of analyzing *Super* lies in showing us the ridicule and the inherent emptiness of these cultural products. And finally, *Avengers: Endgame*, which is the second highest grossing film ever (Box Office Mojo, 2021), allows us to get a better understanding about the relation between this type of movie and myths. What is interesting about this film in particular is not only that it represents the highest point of the genre, it is that it is accompanied by a ritual. And what occurs here is that when myth is accompanied by a ritual, it is usually reinforced, along with its values and ideologies, in the culture that it is displayed (Segal, 2004). The ritual at issue is the global premier of the

movie, which the industry and its marketing enterprise promotes as a more meaningful audiovisual experience creating a general sense of anticipation, situating the movie as something that only happens once, even though it is one more in the overwhelming quantity of products. That is the definition of event movies (Moulton, 2021). And we may be in the eyes of the biggest one until now. In *Mythos* (1998) it is explained that the main problem is that we do not have rites in our modern era due to the heterogeneity of the culture. There may not be a single word that clicks in everyone's experiences nowadays. It is also proposed that western culture is based on ideas, meanwhile other cultures such as the amerindian are based on visions. And myths can only come from visions. Nevertheless, the superhero premiers may contradict this idea. We do have rites in our times, but they enact a different kind of myth that does not possess any spiritual value whatsoever, but a merely materialistic one. What scholars did not dare to question themselves is that far more terrifying than living without myths and rituals is living a myth that will eventually destroy the spirit.

3.3 Data collection instruments

Different instruments were used during the research. First, a field diary was used throughout the watching of these films alongside with a discourse analysis of all media related to the production of these films, such as scripts, interviews, conferences, etc.

Also, people who consume the genre in Bucaramanga were surveyed to find out their perceptions on the superhero genre and support the analysis of the audiovisual material existent.

4. Results

In this section, the results of the questionnaire will be found plus the corresponding graphics and a description of the percentages obtained. A brief overview of the responses will be given, followed by interpretation. Later on in the following sections, the results of these surveys will be put in perspective through the lenses of the theoretical framework.

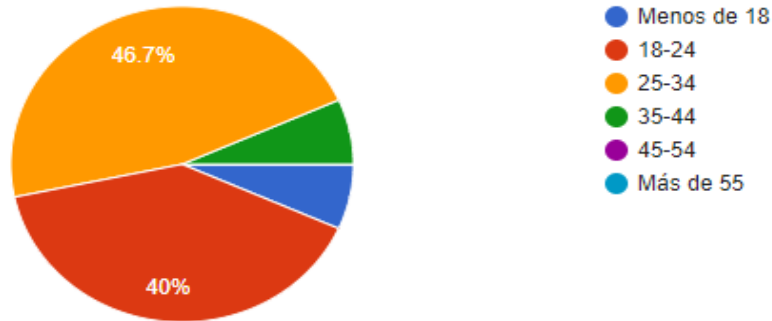
4.1 Demographic information

The following questions were developed based on the questions that arose naturally when connections were observed between the literature found and the movies analyzed in this investigation. These connections and inquiries mentioned can be found in the journal field. Thus, the answers of participants here are not scientific per se, but they're the perception of a small group of individuals that grew up with the superhero genre. This is far more important than anything we could consider 'true' from a positivist point of view given that it brings us closer to answering our research question and finding a real truth behind it, secluded from a merely positivist bias.

The ages of the participants in this study reached most ages as seen in figure 1 given that it was important to inquire into how the superhero film genre is seen through the eyes of different generations. 6.7 % (1) was underage, 40% (6) were 18-24 years old, 46.7% (7) were 25-34 years old and finally 6.7% (1) was 35-44 years old.

Figure 1

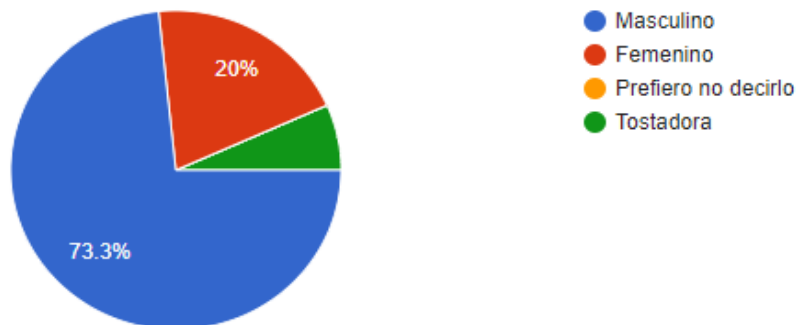
Demographic information: age of the participants



Additionally, in regard to gender 73.3% (11) of the participants identified as male, 20% (3) as female and 6.7% (1) as other.

Figure 2

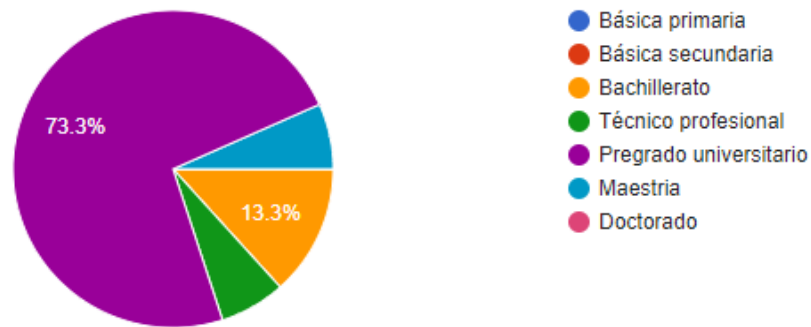
Demographic information: gender of the participants



In regard to educational levels, most participants 73.3% (11) coursed or are coursing an undergraduate course, 13.3% (2) high school, 6.7% (1) an associate's degree and 6.7% (1) a master's degree.

Figure 3

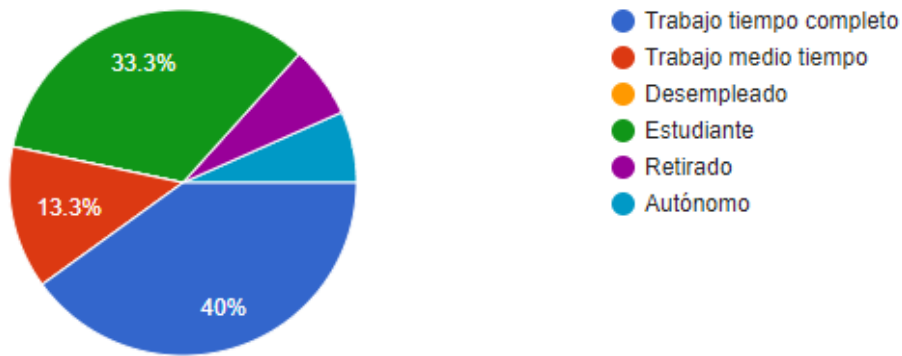
Demographic information: Education



Moreover, 40% (6) of the participants work full time, 33% (5) are students, 13% (2) work half time, 6.7% (1) is autonomous and 6.7% (1) is retired.

Figure 4

Demographic information: Employment status

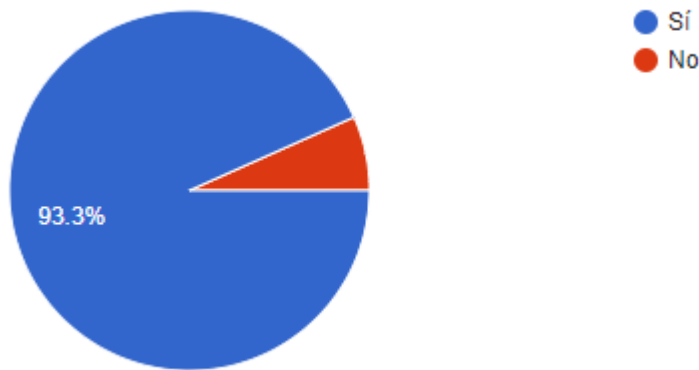


4.2 Participants’ interest in superheroes

The majority of the participants, 93.3% (14) stated that they did like superheroes, while the remaining 6.7% (1) did not.

Figure 5

Do you like superheroes?

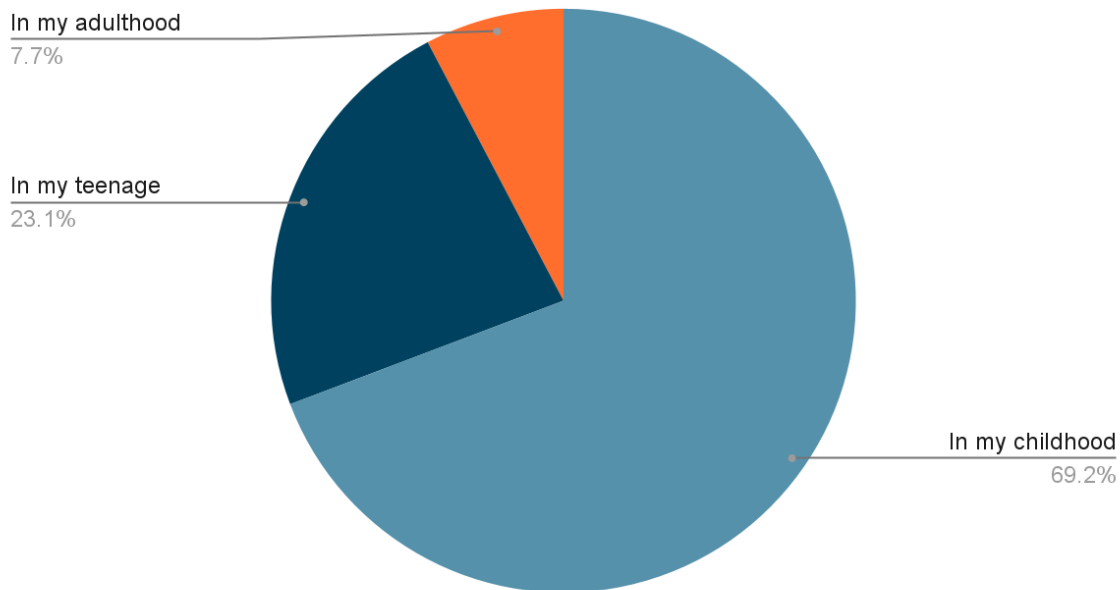


Among that majority of participants that enjoy superheroes, they were asked since when they started to like them. And it was found that 71.4% (9) started to like them since they were

kids, 21.43% (3) since they were in their teens and only 7% (1) started to like superheroes in their adult life.

Figure 6

Since when do you like superheroes?



Participants were also asked why they liked the superhero genre and what they found interesting in it. I noticed that even though participants are not aware of Campbell's (2011) concept of myth or they do not even consider superhero movies to be linked whatsoever to myths, these movies do accomplish a mythic function over them beyond their consciousness. In their words, they like them because these heroes "face problems impossible to solve". For Campbell (2008), in his monomyth theory, heroes always face problems that apparently overwhelms them. He specifically represents this through a 'dragon'. We need to take into account that the dragon can be anything or anyone. As it has been said in this investigation, it does not matter at all the names we give to the dragon. The dragon is a representation, in the monomyth, of something that

is apparently beyond the hero's capacities that needs to be slayed to fulfill his destiny and evolve. Sadly, dragons do not only exist in fiction. Cultural, economic and political issues are everywhere. These are humanity's dragons. Superhero cinema may not only serve as mere empty entertainment to look away from the world we live in. If one pays enough attention, one may realize that superheroes are not heroes because of their supernatural powers, but because of their willingness to face their own darkness. Campbell (2008) describes a stage in the hero's journey named 'refusal of the call', a stage in which the hero sees himself immersed in fear and refuses to go on his adventure. Right now, the world seems to be in that stage. Crises are just around the corner and sources of distraction are everywhere. Most myth scholars agree that the ultimate function of the myth is to lead us to take control over our lives and overcome the anxiety inherent to the experience of being alive. Superhero cinema is not apart at all from this concept of myth. Our participants get close to this concept of the myths acknowledging that these movies are invitations to dream of "alternative worlds to the one we live". All in all, stories are an invitation to make sense of reality and mold it at the same time, but for that it is needed to slay the dragon first. This is why superhero movies impregnated with mythological elements are so relevant and appealing to mankind more than ever today:

Participant 1 "Some are too powerful, but they face social and mental issues as regular humans. Also, I like that some do not have powers and they are more powerful than those who do".

Participant 2 "They make men to look like gods"

Participant 3 "Their capacity to reflect common man expectations on a higher level".

Participant 7 "The humanity of the protagonists against situations impossible to solve".

Participant 10 “Bravery and fiction”.

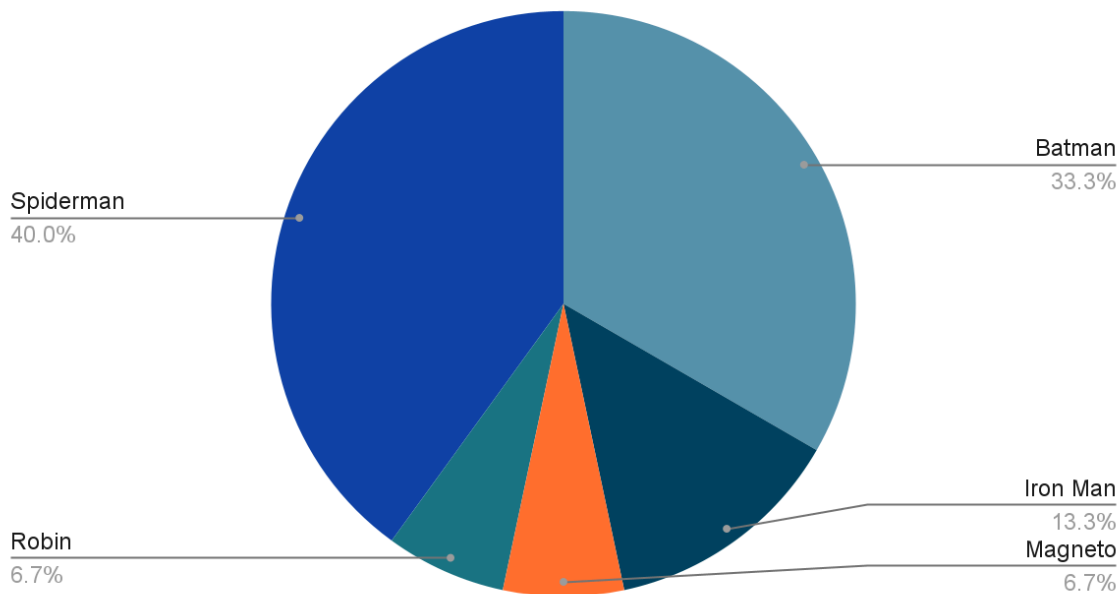
Participant 12 “How alternative worlds to the world we live would be”.

The previous answers inevitably lead to wonder what the participants’ favorite superheroes are and why. What are the values their lives require and they consciously or unconsciously seek in fiction? What do they struggle with? How they relate to those characters they see in fiction and why they seem to sparkle a light within that makes these heroes so appealing.

The results of their favorite superheroes were the following: 40% (6) chose Spider-Man, 33.3% (5) Batman, 13.3% (2), 6.7% (1) Magneto and other 6.7% (1) Robin, Batman’s sidekick.

Figure 7

Who is your favorite superhero?

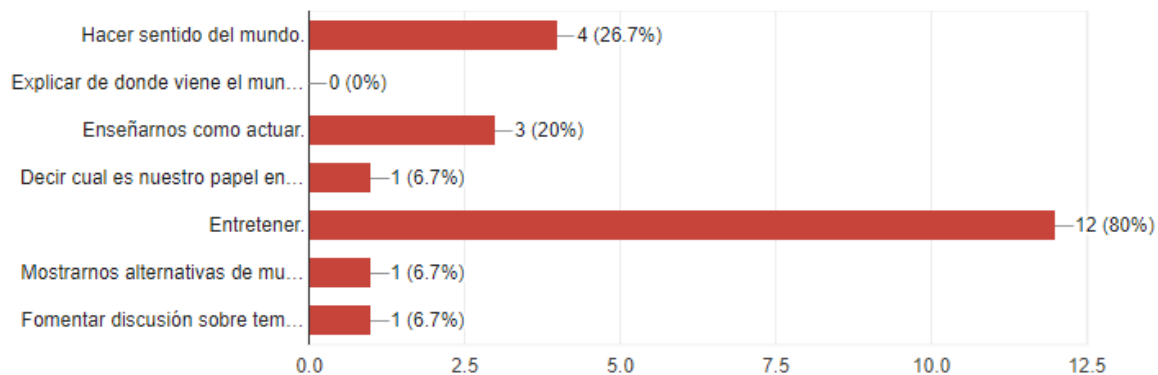


4.3 Superhero cinema and myths

Based on Campbell's (2011) functions of the myth, participants were asked what role they think the superhero film genre fulfilled in our current society. They could choose multiple options. 80% of the participants think that it is to entertain, 26.7% to make sense of the world (mystical function), 20% consider it teaches how to act (pedagogical function) and 6.7% that it shows us what is our role in the world (sociological function), how life could be different and to put in discussion contemporary issues.

Figure 8

What do you think is the role of cinema in our world?



In line with the previous questions about participants' favorite superheroes, and given that *Endgame* (2019) is one of the films analyzed in this investigation due to the reasons already mentioned in the corpus, participants were asked who they thought the most important character in the film was.

In the last century, many thinkers found unexplainable similarities between religion and mythology. Many mythological themes, patterns and symbols repeat all over human history among time and space. Cultures that never got in touch always end up talking about the same

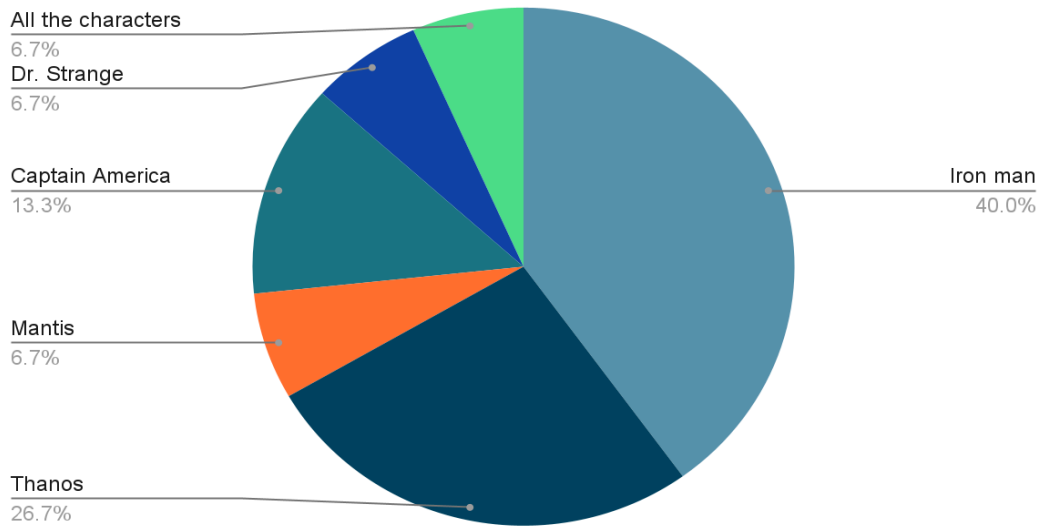
people but with different names. Jung (2014) considers these to emerge from the ‘collective unconscious’, an area of their psyche where all the human experiences are contained. Thus, Jung archetypes reduce characters to their innermost qualities and let us visualize that even though they are not technically the same people, their role in our lives is. Campbell (2011) expanded these ideas through his work in comparative linguistics and mainly focused on the hero archetype. Following Campbell’s line of thought we can compare superheroes characters with mythological and religious personalities. For example, Superman, the most well known superhero, is the story of Moises, which at the same time is the story of an older Egyptian hero Ra-Harakhti. Moses’ parents, fearing that baby Moses may be killed, send him down the river in a basket. He is taken by the Pharaoh's family and grows up to be the savior of the Israelites and sets them free. At the same time, Superman is an alien sent in a spaceship because his world is ending and his parents fear he may die. By the power of destiny, which in the bible lore is the power of God, he ends up on planet Earth and is taken and raised by a human family. He grows up to be the savior of humanity. We can notice these two story structures are the same or at least share their essential elements. The interesting part is that their differences lay in how they are adapted to the culture in which they are told. And also that comic book stories do not have any religious significance whatsoever, but they still seem to emerge from the collective unconsciousness. And it is also important to mention how Campbell (2011) predicted that in the future, myths would be universal and they would not be restricted to geographical locations or specific groups of people. Jung (2014) think that these characters ring a bell within us because they appeal to our inner self. In the same line of thought, Campbell (2004) considers that these symbols are “vehicles of communication between the deeper depths of our spiritual life and this relatively thin layer of consciousness by which we govern our daylight existences”.

With this in mind, we can take the creation and propagation of the different archetypes in superhero cinema as a form of communication that goes beyond the linguistic barrier. As diving deeper into them and analyzing them would allow the research question of this investigation to be answered. At the same time different questions can be asked for further investigation: what is the kind of myths our lives are requiring and where should we look for them?

Just to mention a few Jungian (2014) archetypal figures the participants mentioned, we can see *the hero* in Iron Man, who through courageous acts and difficult challenges aspires to improve the world. In the same way that Jesuschrist sacrificed himself because of his love for humanity, Iron Man does it as well. In Captain America, we can see *the orphan*, seeking to connect with others through moral value. In Thanos, the villain, we can find *the rebel*, seeking radical changes and disruption willing to destroy that which he does not like. In Dr. Strange, we find *the magician*, aiming to transform reality and to reach an understanding of how the universe works.

Figure 9

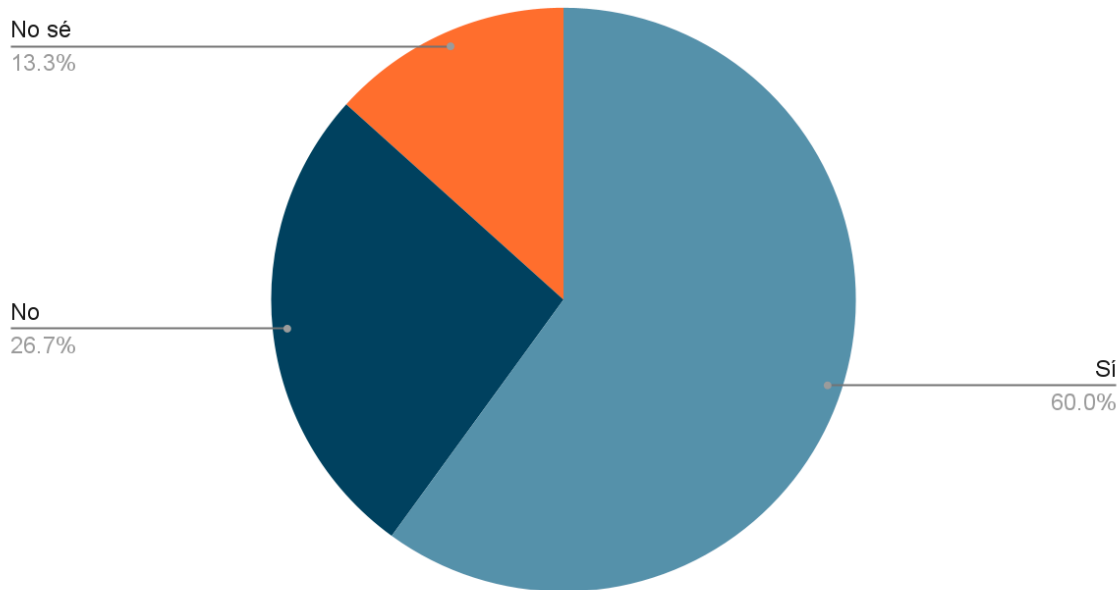
What is the most important character in Avengers: Endgame (2019)?



At the time of doing this research, superheroes are not considered ‘myths’ by the general public. This is, as it will be explained deeply in the conclusions, because of the contemporary concept of the myth. This investigation looks forward to bringing clarity to the concept of myth, even though it may seem as a regression of what myths were in ancient times. Myths are essential to life and are the filters from which we get in touch with reality. Thus, our perceptions are anchored to myths. This is why it becomes a necessity to explore and question what is the myth we are living. Because one can suppose that we are not living any myth at all, but that only makes us blind to our own motivations and desires and who or what are behind them. Remember that “cinema is the ultimate pervert art. It doesn't give you what you desire - it tells you how to desire” (Zizek, 2006). Consequently, we need to ask what are the participants’ opinions on the relationship between superhero cinemas and myth. 60% (9) answered that there is indeed a relationship, 26.7% (4) said that no, there is not and 13.3% (2) do not know.

Figure 10

Do you think there is a relationship between myths and the superhero genre?

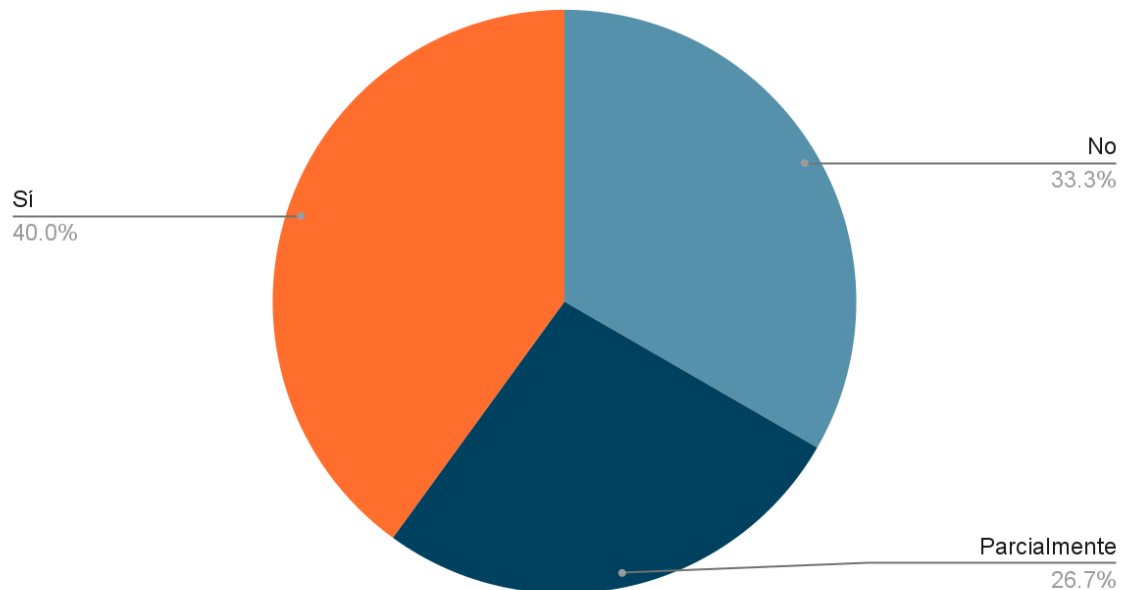


Superhero stories first appeared in times of war and they were intended for kids. The well known comic writer Alan Moore considers that they are today a tool of infantilization (McSweeney, 2020). Even one of the most iconic superheroes in popular culture, Spider-Man, exemplifies this idea. Peter Parker is a regular teenager that has to deal with the adult world. His enemies are always grownups in power that seem to make the world a worse place. Spider-Man whatsoever is always there as a comic relief and as an opposite to an apparently dark world dominated by older people.

This is why the participants were surveyed on whether they considered the superhero genre to be targeted at children and the answers were the following:

Figure 11

Do you consider superheroes movies to be for kids?



5. Analysis and findings

5.1 Spider-man (2002)

“Who am I?” (Raimi, 2002, 03:10) is the first line said by Peter Parker, alter ego of Spider-Man. The fragments next to be analyzed were chosen solely from this question and for the sole purpose of answering it. They are arranged by the acts proposed by Campbell’s () monomyth: the hero’s journey.

5.1.1 Departure

At the beginning of the movie we see Peter Parker before he turns into his superhero persona Spider-Man. He is a regular teenager who suffers social exclusion. And all we get to see

are his main characteristics are based upon the things he does not have and desires deeply. He does not have the girl he has loved since he was a kid, Mary Jane. He does not have enough friends. His parents are dead; He lives with his uncles. He does not have a car because he comes from a suburban low class household. He is ridiculed and bullied by his peers in school. He is physically weak. He is utterly insecure about himself. And the only thing he possesses may be his intelligence and ability to take photographs, yet it does not give him the social value he craves. Spider-Man's character is born in tragedy.

And in this first act, Peter Parker gets his powers. And most interesting of all is that even though Spider-Man's character fits quite well into Campbell's monomyth. He is a peculiar hero in the sense that the supernatural aid comes before the call to adventure. Just for example, other heroes such as Theseus, the Greek hero, first has to fight the minotaur and then gets the supernatural aid they need from an unexpected source which in Theseus' story is Ariadne's thread that allows him to get out of the labyrinth. Nevertheless, Peter Parker does not earn his powers in any way, he gets them just because. Here we can see that the Spider-Man movie basically falls on being escapist fiction. Issue of this as noted by Hodder (2022) is that this type of fiction does not allow any real thinking, thus can not have any real transformative social value. She also expresses that fiction possesses the power to change an observer's relationship with the world they interact with everyday. But, Spider-Man's struggles are solved magically before he even dares to face them. What can that mean for the viewers who identify with Spider-Man? What kind of hope can that represent, if not an unrealistic and harmful one?

Well, cultural theorist Mark Fischer (2009) expresses that the social and economic conditions of the world can not be changed because of our perceptions that such a thing is impossible and nothing better can be obtained. Fischer (2009) also gives examples of how

popular culture is charged with neoliberal ideology and perpetuates these perceptions of general hopelessness. It is fair to say that the Spider-Man myth feeds this narrative. Spider-Man has never grown or changed. Growing is seen as a bad thing in the movie, too. His enemies are always mature men, usually in power. Meanwhile, he remains as a teenager dressed in leggings trying to save the world. Spider-Man's myth is ridiculous in the sense that nothing really gets to be challenged and suffering is not seen as a tool to improve and grow, but as a drawback he magically gets rid of while the rest of the universe suffers from. This works as a tool of societal infantilization, especially in men as they are the ones who these stories mostly as shown in figure 1. Adionatilly, Coats () thinks that our contemporary heroes save the world before they go to bed. This metaphorically means that they have to be heroes before they become adults, seeing growing up as a kind of disease and tragedy. Spider-Man gets divine intervention before he descends into the night. Says Jung (2014, p.337) "By day no light is needed, and if you don't know it is night you won't light one, nor will any light be lit for you unless you have suffered the horror of darkness". In real life and ancient mythology, it is only through struggle that one gets to its objectives. Spider-Man betrays Campbell's monomyth. Heroes first accept responsibility and then they are aided by mystical forces. Nevertheless, Peter Parker first gets divine intervention and then he has to deal with responsibility. The most famous quote from the movie even remarks this idea: "Remember, with great power comes great responsibility" (Raimy, 2002, 33:45).

5.1.2 Initiation

In this second act is where Peter Parker becomes Spider-Man.

5.1.2.1 The road of the trials. It is in this stage where heroes are put to test in order for them to start their transformation. They usually fail once or more. For Peter Parker, he is blinded by his powers and uses them instead for his own advantage, allowing a robbery that gets his uncle and paternal figure murdered. Followingly, he is blinded by rage and kills the murderer. In grief, after witnessing the city's issues, decides to take action and become a masked avenger for those who need it.

5.1.2.2 Woman as the Temptress. Peter Parker renounces the love of his life to be a superhero.

5.1.2.3 Atonement with the Father/Abbyss. In this stage, Peter Parker faces the villain of the movie, the green goblin, who is the father of his best friend. He is the only paternal figure Peter has left. The dialogue between them two carries great meaning as the motivations of both are put in discussion as opposite poles:

Here's the real truth. There are eight million people in this city. And those teeming masses exist for the sole purpose of lifting the few exceptional people onto their shoulders. You, me, we're exceptional. I could squash you like a bug right now. But I'm offering you a choice. Join me. Imagine what we could accomplish together. What we could create. Or we could destroy it. Cause the deaths of countless innocents in selfish battles again and again and again until we're both dead. Is that what you want? (1:16:46)

Here is where Spider-Man sees himself in his villain and chooses not to be like him. It is typically in this stage that heroes come to realize that good and evil are two sides of the same coin.

5.1.2.4 The ultimate boom. Spider-Man defeats his enemy and the experience gets him full control of his powers.

5.1.3 Return

Spider-Man never returns to his ordinary life in the film. He refuses to return and integrate his new persona (Spider-Man) with his old one (Peter Parker). He remains a victim of his powers and light, never allowing him to mature. We could consider Spider-Man to fall on the ‘*puer aeternus*’ archetypal image. Another popular character that fits into this archetype is Peter Pan. Even though spectators are growing up, Peter Parker is still the same age in all his movies and still deals with the same situations and the same villains. One of the most important aspects of this arc is that he refuses to take responsibility for his powers and uses them for his own good. In a certain way, the Spider-Man story is the fantasy of the teenage losers of the new millennium. This is why it is a relatable and popular story. Spider-Man is a loser until he receives his powers magically and then decides to go on his adventure always remains as a teenager and his struggles just accentuate this fact and his childish attitude towards life. The issue comes when thinkers like Jung (2014) predict that the rise of *puer aeternus* adults only lead to the fall of civilization. There is evidence to support that these predictions may be true today. Our generation drowns in instant gratification activities. Binge-watching, for example, since 2013 has rapidly “become one of the most popular ways of spending free time” (Starosta & Izydorczyk, 2020, p. 1). Nevertheless, the *puer aeternus* syndrome growth in the society can be explained by the human desire to refuse the call, face the dark and take responsibility. In simpler words, it can be explained through our desire of not maturing. These tendencies and childish hopes of innocence result in pursuing the scaping fantasies that predominate the 20th and 21th century culture:

A man is a god in ruins. When men are innocent, life shall be longer, and shall pass into the immortal as gently as we awake from dreams. Now, the world would be insane and rabid, if these disorganizations should last for hundreds of years. It is kept in check by death and infancy. Infancy is the perpetual Messiah, which comes into the arms of fallen men, and pleads with them to return to paradise. (Emerson, 2022, p. 71)

Peter Parker is a perfect perpetual messiah as he represents infancy himself and the innocence of not growing up. For Otto Rank (2020) there exists a primal desire of returning to the mother womb. This desire may be one of the most powerful human fantasies and may be the most predominant one in superhero movies. This is prejudicial, as said by Mckenna in mystery of language (2019) “innocence allowed to grow beyond its proper bounds becomes festering, it becomes decadent, it becomes not innocence but idiocy...it turns on itself”.

Cinema speaks in a different language: the same language of dreams and stories. The fact that Spider-Man was the most watched movie in its year of release may indicate the tendency of how it is desired a myth where being children can be experienced again. Yet, it may be time to realize that such a thing is impossible and pursuing it only takes away the suffering, which ultimately is what really builds heroes.

5.2 Super (2010)

Super is the second movie that was selected for this investigation. This movie differs from the other two movies selected and most of the genre given that it is a comedy and looks forward to exploiting the superhero genre nonsense and the world's lack of myth.

Frank, the protagonist, is a middle aged man who works as a cook earning a minimum wage in the middle of the American nowhere. Just as Spider-Man, he is a loser and a loner, too.

Frank decides to become the masked avenger “Crimson Bolt” after his wife leaves him for a drug dealer. In his suffering, he has visions with the christian God who tells him what to do. Even though his moral values would supposedly align with the protestant christian American society habits, he still is an outcast. Reason for this may be that the christian myth has been dying for a long time and nothing has been capable of replacing it. Frank adopts his superhero persona for him to do the things he would not do as Frank himself. Says Jung (1962) about world’s lack of myth:

...in what myth does a man live nowadays? In the Christian myth, the answer might be. “Do you live in it?” I asked myself. To be honest, the answer was no. For me it is not what I live by. “Then do we no longer have any myth?” “No, evidently we no longer have any myth.” “But then what is your myth – the myth in which you do live?” At this point the dialogue with myself became uncomfortable, and I stopped thinking. I had reached a dead end. (p.210)

Crimson Bolt uses violence as a weapon. Violence is portrayed in the movie as a comic element given the brutality of it. The hero, Frank, is blinded by his own visions that it is his responsibility to save the world and restore christian values. “You don't butt in line! You don't sell drugs! You don't molest little children! You don't profit on the misery of others! The rules were set a long time ago. They don't change.” (Gunn, 2010, 29:58).

The lack of a collective myth has a fantasmagorical presence all over the movie and all over the contemporary world. It affects Frank and his enemies in different ways though, putting them as different sides of the same coin. “We have wandered into a state of prolonged neurosis because of the absence of a direct pipeline to the unconscious and we have then fallen victim to

priestcraft of every conceivable sort.” says Mckenna (Mystery of language, 2019). We see the protagonist all over the movie refuses this reality and uses his hero’s journey as a way to redeem himself, but it can be noted that this is only an outburst of his neurosis. He kills and hurts excessively those he considers evil, refusing to see that his own actions would be considered evil by the doctrines he says to follow. For this reason, all symbols are corrupted in the movie. Just for example, the superhero symbols: Frank’s superhero costume is ridiculous in a real world context. Violence is not celebrated and is seen as disproportional. Frank’s sidekick is a megalomaniac sadist who enjoys hurting others because of her own internal rage and not because of a greater good. When she dies, Frank does not learn anything or stops to reflect. He just decides to go on an absurd killing spree, victim of his own emotions and darkness. Christian symbols are also corrupted in the movie as well. Jesuschrist, for example, is not shown as the messiah he typically is portrayed in christian religions, but instead he is shown crawling around Frank’s room like a spider. The cross is also shown, not as a religious symbol, but as a comic book logo and marketing tool of religious institutions.

5.3 Avengers: Endgame

The last movie chosen to be analyzed is Avengers: Endgame (2019). This movie is of great interest for our research given it was a cultural phenomenon when it was released, marking the end of the last decade of superhero cinema. No other superhero product has reached the economic and social impact Endgame had (Box Office Mojo, 2021). Thus, it is the one that comes closer to the global myth and ritual if we take into account that movie theaters can function as temples (Campbell, 2011).

The most interesting characteristic of this era of superheroes is that the public generally has empathy for the villains. As seen in the surveys (Figure 8), people consider the villains to be

as important as the heroes. This is a general tendency if we look at other superheroes movies. In *Endgame*, Thanos, the villain, looks forward to ending overpopulation by disappearing half of the universe's beings. Villain's motivations in this generation of superheroes are valid, but it is their methods that are questionable. It also happens in *The Batman* (Reeves, 2022), where the villain kills corrupt politicians and Batman is the one in charge of stopping him. The message here is clear, violence is only permitted when it comes from those in power. The avengers are basically the world's police force. In *C: Civil War* (Russo, 2016) the plot is based upon this fact. The government wants to control superheroes and regulate their behavior which ends creating a rivalry among the avengers who support this decision and those who do not. At the end of the movie, the avengers supporting government control are the ones who win. This is dangerous from a social point of view given that it gives away power to those who already have it. We can also link this to Fischer's (2009) ideas of how alternatives to the world we live in are impossible and somehow the world we live in is the best we can have. Villains want to change the world and they represent the general discomfort of the viewers with the world's multiple problems, but at the end it is the government who knows best that things are better the way they are. In *Endgame*, nothing really changes if you pay attention. It begins with Thanos creating disruption in the status quo killing half of the universe and at the end, the avengers just bring back the world to how it was at the beginning. It is impossible not to note that there is a hidden agenda in these movies. Change is desired and allowed, but the means to obtain it, somehow, are not. Both superheroes and villains make use of violence all the time. The only difference is that superheroes make use of violence to preserve the current state of the world. Superheroes are the governments' military forces, but with powers. This is interesting if we also look at how protests movements have tripled in the same period these movies mentioned were made (Taylor, 2021). Here we can find a myth scattered with

neoliberal ideology and that is that the world we live in is the best we can live and the alternatives are prohibited.

6. Discussion and conclusions

People's growing interest in superheroes can be explained through the fact that we do not share a single myth that coheres all humans' experiences today. The stories and archetypes that once worked as a base to civilizations are falling apart and now are just considered stories. And the myths we get to create today are considered by the majority of the audiences as mere means of entertainment (as seen in Figure 7). Consequently, our need for a new myth becomes urgent. In other times, more primitive cultures told stories to themselves to explain the world. This can easily be the product of their connection to their natural environments as Armstrong (2004) explains. Thus, myths worked as a way to simplify the complexity of everything surrounding them and helped them overcome a nature that constantly tried to kill them; Myths were essential in their survival. Today, we do not need myths to explain the natural world as science has taken its place meanwhile our environments have become artificial. Tylor (1974) may not be entirely wrong at the time of saying that myths were the primitive science of our ancestors. Yet, the world is still complex in a whole new set of different aspects that hard sciences can not explain. There is a tendency noted by Fischer (2009) of how the more industrialized a society becomes, the more mental illness and suicide becomes present. This may give us the conclusion that we still need myths more than never for our survival. Nevertheless, the narrative present in the superhero movies feeds the idea that the administration of the world is over the humans' needs, leaving humans as secondary elements in the stories they create themselves. And the terrifying aspect of all this is that Campbell (2011) says "when man is in the service of society, you have a monster state, and that's what is threatening the world at this minute...". Just to mention a few examples

to make this clearer: In *Endgame*, Iron Man is presented as a messiah who sacrifices himself for things to remain exactly as they are. Iron man saves the status quo, but not humanity; In *Spider-Man*, the protagonist sacrifices his goals and objectives to do what the police of New York can not do; In *Super*, Crimson Bolt sacrifices his daily life and responsibilities to remind others that things were better before. In other myths, such as the Christian one, Jesus does not sacrifice himself for the system to keep being as it is, but all the contrary he tries to bring the kingdom of God closer to a humanity that has lost its way. Even, in other cultures such as the Buddhist one, the Bodhisattva is a savior because he abandons his life and body for the deliverance of humankind and raises up the natural world to higher state (Gier, 1979). At first glance, superhero fiction is not that transcendental and comparing it to christian and buddhist mythology may appear senseless, but that is because “our fundamental delusion today is not (...) to take fictions too seriously. It's, on the contrary, not to take fictions seriously enough” (Zizek, *Pervert's guide cinema*).

It is also undeniable how all superhero and hero stories in general follow the same patterns seen in Campbell's monomyth. Reason for this may be quite simple. As humans, we have grown up telling each other stories. Those stories that once worked for our survival are still impregnated deep in our psyche. Jung (2014) would explain this with the collective unconsciousness. However, for deeper research it would be interesting to see how similar stories are in other cultures to ours. Because if it is true that we do not possess a general global myth nowadays because of the heterogeneity of our culture, we still share a myth pattern in the western cultural sphere. It would be crucial to see what other narratives were developed in other cultures to understand and have a different interpretation of the world. As it was seen in this investigation, our perceptions of the world are found and expressed through the cultural products we create and

consume. Nickerson (2023), for example, finds that most of the world's most individualistic societies are either in Western Europe or were formerly colonies of Western Europe. If we pay attention to the christian myth, where western moral customs come from, and compare it with other cultures' transcendental myths, we will see that there are fundamental aspects that uncover our views of the world. Just for example, in Buddhist religion, Nirvana is obtainable for all beings and does not depend on the dichotomy of good and bad, where only those free of sin will reach (Gao & Lan, 2023). Thus, divinity in buddhist cultures is obtainable as one forgets about oneself and its needs and desires. Meanwhile, in Christian cultures, divinity is only reachable as one competes with oneself and what is around that arouses instincts considered sinful. Then, it is not weird to see from this perspective why in the west we tend to be more individualistic and eastern cultures tend to be more collectivists. Some of the population may have stopped believing in the same myth, but that does not mean that the myths that shaped our civilizations are completely gone. On the contrary, their traces can still be found within our attitudes and opinions towards life and the only difference is that we have been despoiled of transcendental meaning and we have run out of the universal truths that used to justify our actions. For López (1997) this is a tragedy, as we are disconnected from those universal truths, yet still act the same without really knowing why leaving a sense of general emptiness. Others, such as Agamben (1999), agree with the notion of 'general emptiness' and acknowledge how it secretly governs the art we create. However, he also gets to see this period in human history, like any other, as something to be overcome.

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Appendices

Appendix A: A collection of fragments charts and journal fields.

Number	Title	TCR	Script	Journal Field
1	Spider-man	03:10	<p>Parker/Spider-Man: Who am I? You sure you want to know? The story of my life is not for the faint of heart. If somebody said it was a happy little tale, if somebody told you I was just an average ordinary guy, not a care in the world, somebody lied. But let me assure you, this like any story worth telling, is all about a girl. That girl. The girl next-door. Mary Jane Watson. The woman I've loved since before I even liked girls. I'd like to tell you that's me next to her. Aw, heck, I'd even take him.</p> <p>Peter Parker/Spider-Man: Hey! Stop the bus! That's me. Tell him to stop! Please! Stop! Hey! Stop the bus!</p> <p>Mary Jane Watson: Stop the bus! He's been chasing us since Woodhaven Boulevard.</p> <p>Flash's Crony: Catch a cab, Parker! Peter Parker/Spider-Man: Thank you. I'm sorry I'm late.</p> <p>Flash's Crony #2: What a geek!</p>	<p>It is interesting how the movie starts with the question “Who am I” and ends answering it with “I am Spider-Man”.</p> <p>Yet, Peter Parker is not Spider-Man at all, this is just his alter ego. In the hero’s journey, the ultimate goal of the hero is to be fully integrated, and not to identify oneself with the divinity that’s been granted. And it is impossible to know which one is the real him and which one is the mask. This results in confusion to the point of Peter Parker considering that his real persona is his mask. And the thing is that Peter Parker is a loser, but Spider-Man is not. The Spider-Man persona becomes a way for Peter to be who he really is within, without really doing anything to achieve.</p> <p>The dangerous part of all this is that those who identify with Peter Parker will interpret the Spider-Man story as escapist</p>

			<p>Girl on Bus: Don't even think about it.</p> <p>Flash's Crony: You're so lame, Parker.</p> <p>Girl: Would you date him?</p>	<p>fiction. And myths are not supposed to make you look away as they are not made for entertainment. They are made for individuals to reach the full capacity of their beings.</p>
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Number	Title	TCR	Script	Journal Field
2	Spider-man	34:45	<p>Ben Parker: Now wait a minute, we need to talk.</p> <p>Peter Parker/Spider-Man: We can talk later.</p> <p>Ben Parker: Well, we can talk now. If you let me.</p> <p>Peter Parker/Spider-Man: What do we have to talk about? Why now?</p> <p>Ben Parker: Because we haven't talked at all for so long, your Aunt May and I don't even know who you are any more. You shirk your chores. You have all those weird experiments in your room. You start fights at school.</p> <p>Peter Parker/Spider-Man: I didn't start that fight, I told you that.</p> <p>Ben Parker: Well you sure as hell finished it.</p> <p>Peter Parker/Spider-Man: What was I supposed to do, run away?</p>	<p>His uncle and father model is killed. This fills him with a sense of revenge. He uses his alter ego Spiderman to kill the man who killed his uncle and make justice. This is he opens "his soul beyond terror to such a degree that he will be ripe to understand how the sickening and insane tragedies of this vast and ruthless cosmos are completely validated in the majesty of Being." (Campbell, 2008)</p>

			<p>Ben Parker: No, you're not supposed to run away, but... But, Pete look, you're changing. I know, I went through exactly the same thing at your age.</p> <p>Peter Parker/Spider-Man: No. Not exactly.</p> <p>Ben Parker: Peter... these are the years when a man changes into the man he's gonna become the rest of his life. Just be careful who you change into. This guy, Flash Thompson, he probably deserved what happened. But just because you can beat him up doesn't give you the right to. Remember, with great power comes great responsibility.</p> <p>Peter Parker/Spider-Man: Are you afraid that I'm going to turn into some kind of criminal? Quit worrying about me, okay? Something's different. I'll figure it out. Stop lecturing, please.</p> <p>Ben Parker: I don't mean to lecture and I don't mean to preach. And I know I'm not your father... Peter Parker/Spider-Man: Then stop pretending to be!</p> <p>Ben Parker: Right. I'll pick you up here at 10.</p>	
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Number	Title	TCR	Script	Journal Field
3	Spider-man	01:15:55	Norman Osborn/Green Goblin: Wake up, little spider. Wake up. No, you're not dead yet. Just paralyzed, temporarily.	It is after this fact that Peter Parker finally understands his uncle's words. It is here when he understands his capacity for evil

		<p>Norman Osborn/Green Goblin: You're an amazing creature, Spider-Man. You and I are not so different. Peter Parker/Spider-Man: I'm not like you. You're a murderer.</p> <p>Norman Osborn/Green Goblin: Well, to each his own. I chose my path, you chose the way of the hero. And they found you amusing for a while, the people of this city. But the one thing they love more than a hero is to see a hero fail, fall, die trying. In spite of everything you've done for them, eventually, they will hate you. Why bother?</p> <p>Peter Parker/Spider-Man: Because it's right.</p> <p>Norman Osborn/Green Goblin: Here's the real truth. There are eight million people in this city. And those teeming masses exist for the sole purpose of lifting the few exceptional people onto their shoulders. You, me we're exceptional. I could squash you like a bug right now. But I'm offering you a choice. Join me. Imagine what we could accomplish together. What we could create. Or we could destroy. Cause the deaths of countless innocents in selfish battle again and again and again until we're both dead. Is that what you want? Think about it, hero.</p> <p>Norman Osborn/Green Goblin: In spite of everything you've done for them, eventually, they will hate you.</p>	<p>and has the obligation to decide who he really is. Whether that means being the good guy or the bad guy. This is the beginning of his apotheosis. He understands now that he has to use his powers for good and justice as it is what he is supposed to do. He abandons his previous selfish desires to embark on his selfless journey.</p>
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Number	Title	TCR	Script	Journal Field
1	Super	07:02	<p>FRANK: Have you seen my wife?</p> <p>Jacques takes a deep breath.</p> <p>JACQUES: Shit. Man. Yes, I have. And I know this is hard. But I don't think -- Man. Man, I don't think she wants to see you anymore?</p> <p>Frank is silent, about to cry.</p> <p>JACQUES: Oh, dude... look... sometimes people just change, right?... I mean, I'm sure she still loves you. She'll always love you, right? Frank is not consoled.</p> <p>JACQUES: And I know she feels bad about it. Just the other day she was saying something, and I couldn't believe, it was so touching -- She looked at me and said... I can't remember exactly how it went, but everyone in the room, even these cunts here, were like, 'Oh my God. That's --' You know, it moved them. And it was about you. So, anyway, I'm sorry, buddy.</p> <p>Jacques nods to his men. They get into their cars. Frank stands impotently in the lot as they drive away.</p>	<p>Frank decides to become a superhero as a result of not coping with the fact that his wife ran away with a drug dealer.</p> <p>Frank is incapable of dealing with the situation himself and decides to become a masked avenger to do the things he can not do being himself.</p> <p>The movie mocks the superhero fans as it considers that these are emotionally handicapped, using these stories as crutches.</p> <p>Alan Moore, writer of the most important superhero stories of all times, mentions that superhero stories were made for kids in war times. Almost a century later and great part of society seems to be obsessed with these movies. Almost as if they worked as a kind of comfort or fantasies that allow us to escape from daily tragedies.</p>

Number	Title	TCR	Script	Journal Field
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1	Super	1:25:56	<p>JACQUES: Oh, fuck! Oh, fuck! Oh, Jesus! Oh no no no no no.</p> <p>The Crimson Bolt pulls a hunting knife from his belt. He grabs Jacques under the chin, pinning him against the wall, and aims the knife at him. Sarah watches, hyperventilating and half-covering her eyes. Jacques SOBS.</p> <p>JACQUES: What are you going to do?! Fucking execute me for my sins?! Don't think you're fucking better than me, you fucking psycho! You almost killed people for butting in line!</p> <p>FRANK: You don't butt in line! You don't sell drugs! You don't have sex with little children! You don't profit from the misery of others! The rules were set a long time ago! They don't change! People don't have any responsibility!!</p> <p>JACQUES: Just take her then! You stabbing me to death isn't going to change the world!</p> <p>FRANK: I can't know that... for sure... unless I try.</p>	<p>The movie is exaggeratedly violent to the point it is funny. It is also curious how Frank considers himself to be the good guy and yet he is the most bloodthirsty character in the whole movie.</p>
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Number	Title	TCR	Script	Journal Field
1	Avengers: Endgame	1:25:56	<p>THANOS: I am...inevitable.</p> <p>THANOS SNAPS HIS FINGERS. But nothing</p>	<p>Tony Starks fits the savior and messiah archetype.</p>

		<p>happens. Confused, Thanos turns the glove over to find...THE STONES ARE GONE. He looks to see...TONY, NANO-PARTICLES SLIDING AND SHIFTING, FORMING A NEW GAUNTLET ON HIS OWN WRIST: 133 134 COMPLETE WITH SIX INFINITY STONES. POWER SURGES THROUGH TONY, EXCRUCIATING, BUT HE STILL LIFTS HIS HAND...</p> <p>TONY: And I...am Iron Man.</p> <p>SNAP! WHOOSH. THE TIDAL WAVE EVAPORATES INTO MIST. ALL AROUND THE FIELD, SAKAARANS AND OUTRIDERS FOLD IN ON THEMSELVES, ATOMS DISINTEGRATING. THANOS LOOKS AROUND, WATCHING HIS TROOPS DISAPPEAR. SHIPS VANISH FROM THE SKY. CULLS, CHITAUURI, ALL BLOW AWAY... LEAVING THANOS STANDING ALONE. AFTER A LONG MOMENT, HE SITS DOWN ON A ROCK...AND ACCEPTS HIS FATE. He watches as... HIS ATOMS DISSOLVE. FINALLY, THANOS DISAPPEARS. ACROSS THE FIELD, QUILL turns to GAMORA...BUT FINDS HER GONE. QUILL Babe? Gamora?</p> <p>ACROSS THE FIELD...TONY STARK FALLS BACK AGAINST THE UPTURNED ROOTS OF A TREE, ARMOR SMOKING, ARM WITHERED AND BLACKENED. Dying. RHODEY RUSHES TO HIM, BUT WITH ONE LOOK, HE KNOWS IT'S TOO LATE. TONY EXHALES, ALMOST LETTING GO. Then... PETER PARKER lands, kneeling, taking</p>	<p>This is the greatest event in Avengers: Endgame and the whole saga probably. Tony Stark, the man, and not the superhero sacrifices himself for the rest of humanity. The action is quite simple. He only snaps his fingers and he's gone saving humanity. He's fully aware of the consequences of his acts and yet he decides to give his life to the greater good. But, what is the greater good if not a selfish perception of what is good for us and evil for others?</p>
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		<p>Tony's hand.</p> <p>PETER PARKER: Mr. Stark...Tony...it's okay, it's okay...Mr. Stark, we won. You did it, sir... But Tony gazes past him. Rhodey puts his hand on Peter's shoulder, guiding him away... AS PEPPER ARRIVES. She kneels, heartsick.</p> <p>PEPPER POTTS: Hey, Friday, what've we got? FRIDAY (O.S.) Life functions critical. Pepper stares into her husband's eyes...and knows. 134 (MORE) 135</p> <p>PEPPER POTTS: Tony, look at me. We're going to be okay... He stares at her, tears welling. I'm sorry. She touches his face, then leans in to kiss him.</p> <p>PEPPER POTTS: You can rest now.</p> <p>When she pulls back, she sees his eyes, fixed and glassy. Everything goes quiet. All around, OUR HEROES GATHER, the full weight of what's happened dawning on them. Tony Stark is gone.</p>	
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