

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Research

The hero's journey is a common pattern that exists in so many fictional works. According to Greene, the hero's journey is a trope that has been utilized in many different narratives, from ancient stories to modern ones and it helps create more compelling and engaging stories. This archetype was introduced by Joseph Campbell in his 1949 book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. In ancient tales, the hero's journey exists within narratives such as *The Odyssey*, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, the Sagas of the Buddha, and many more. The hero's journey trope is also contained within pop culture. For example: the adventure of Katniss Everdeen who was driven by her desire to keep her sister safe and to get a better life in *The Hunger Games*; Harry Potter's adventure in the Wizarding World that started as a fun and magical trip that eventually leads to a dangerous adventure; the Last Dragonborn's quest to defeat the evil dragon, Alduin, in the award-winning video game, *The Elder Scrolls V: Skyrim*. These are just tiny examples of the hero's journey archetype, which also exists in many fantasy novels including Christopher Buehlman's *Between Two Fires*, which tells the story of a brigand roaming the plagued land of France during the black plague, finding absolution.

In the novel *Between Two Fires* by Christopher Buehlman, the development of the main character, Thomas, is very significant. Set in Medieval France during the Black Plague, in 1348 to be precise, Thomas, a knight turned brigand, was banished from his land by the *Comte d'Évreux*, or the Count of Évreux, which is a title granted to the nobles in the county of Évreux, Normandy. Thomas is a brigand, and according to Cambridge Dictionary (2024), a brigand is a group of thieves in the countryside stealing from people traveling through the area. The term "brigand" has a historical association with the word "brigade," and it originally referred to a foot soldier in an army. At the beginning of the story, Thomas is traveling with a band of robbers led by a man named Godefroy. They are wandering across plague-ridden and war-torn France, pillaging near-abandoned villages, robbing houses and merchants, and doing many other malicious acts in order to survive or simply to satisfy their desires. Eventually, during this journey, they meet Delphine, a young girl orphaned by the plague and she is one of the key factors in Thomas' development into a better person and reaching absolution. From this point, Thomas began his accidental journey with Delphine in France and encountered many events that slowly changed his nature, perspective, and personality eventually allowing him to reach absolution.

After experiencing the quest, the main character may undergo a change in nature, perspective, and personality. It is a journey where they find their "real" self, or where they can atone for their sins and wrongdoings, also known as absolution. The term absolution is derived from the Latin word "*absolvere*", which means "to

be free," and in a religious context, it means to be forgiven in the eyes of God. In literature, this process is known as a redemption arc. According to Craiker (2022), redemption arc is a term in literature for the characters that undergo development in terms of personality, usually a bad character turns into a good person by the end of the story. Therefore, in literature, absolution is achieved by a redemption arc, which is comprised of several events and revelations that finally lead to a change in the nature, perspective, and personality of the character and let them reach absolution or redemption.

Thomas' life as a brigand and his arduous path to reach absolution serve as a striking reminder of the human desire for absolution and the life-changing impact of faith. His search for salvation becomes a symbol of optimism in the midst of desperation as well as a testament to the human spirit's strength. Thomas unintentionally takes on his fears and doubts as he journeys to try to reach absolution as a cruel brigand. His courage and willingness to seek forgiveness serve as an encouragement to all of us, reminding us of the potential for transformation and the unlimited possibilities that each of us possesses.

1.2. Identification of the Problem

Between Two Fires reflects the story of a knight turned brigand struggling to survive in such a harsh world, as well as a fateful encounter that may be the start of an adventure that will evolve his character, nature, and perspective, and finally let him achieve absolution. Throughout his journey, he encounters various

challenges: such as demons, monsters, the plague, and even death and resurrection. In such a life-changing adventure, the hero's journey approach, or the monomyth, plays a significant part in analyzing Thomas' journey to redemption. Does Thomas go through all of the stages proposed by Campbell in his book? And, how important are the Biblical allusions contained within the novel in giving the readers a better understanding of the story and a sense of relatability to Thomas' journey? These will be explained in this research.

1.3. The Scope of the Research

The research focuses on Thomas' hero's journey to reach absolution as a brigand. This research will try to reveal how Thomas as a brigand transformed into a better version of himself and finally reach absolution at the end of the novel by identifying the stages of the hero's journey that he went through.

1.4. Research Questions

This research is limited to answering the following questions in order to establish a certain limit to the analysis:

1. What kind of journey does Thomas as a brigand have to go through in order to reach absolution?
2. How do the biblical references contained within the novel give a better understanding of human beings' journey to attain absolution as presented by Thomas in the novel?

1.5. The Objectives of the Research

This research aims to provide enough information on the hero's journey in the novel *Between Two Fires*, which can only be accomplished by thorough research. The next goal is to observe how Thomas as a knight turned brigand, goes through many circumstances that help him change his nature, perspective, and personality, and finally reach salvation with the hope of inspiring the readers that reaching something as sacred as salvation for your wrongdoings is possible through endeavor. Finally, we will look at the importance of biblical references in giving a better understanding of human's journey to absolution.

1.6. Review of Related Studies

The review of the novel published by *Kirkus Review* (2012) is an evocative portrayal of the dark and disturbing world presented in the book. The review's usage of vivid and powerful language to convey the brutal and vicious settings of the story is on point. As stated in the review "A pack of thieves is about to carry her off and rape her when she is saved by a disgraced knight, Thomas, with whom she teams on a march across the parched landscape. Survivors desperate for food have made donkey a delicacy and don't mind eating human flesh." ("Kirkus Reviews"). The author is also highly praised in the review for his ability to capture the dismal reality that the characters are experiencing in such a compelling and engaging way. In addition, the review provides a detailed synopsis of the plot that is both insightful and informative without giving away any major plot details. With

its meticulous attention to detail, this review is sure to draw the attention of readers who are drawn to the macabre and fantastical in literature.

Another review of the novel by RyanHowse (2023) published in *Grimdark Magazine* provided a detailed analysis of the story, focusing more on the characters and their relationships rather than just the horror aspect. The review acknowledged the presence of medieval horror themes such as monsters, plagues, and wars, but it mostly discussed the characters' journey and how it affected their development. The author highlighted the importance of character development and their relationships, which added depth and complexity to the story. The review emphasized that the horror aspect of the book works best when the reader is invested in the characters. By creating a strong emotional connection between the characters and the readers, the author was successful in making the horror elements more impactful. The review also praised the portrayal of the dangerous journey across France, which added tension to the story. The author successfully conveyed the challenges the characters faced, making the story more engaging and realistic. Overall, the review provided a thoughtful and detailed analysis of the book, highlighting both its strengths and weaknesses. By focusing on the characters and their relationships, the review offered a unique perspective on the story and provided a deeper understanding of the book.

Another research is a thesis by Lokesjwara Nityananda Prabhu (2020) analyzes the archetype of the shadow in the novels *The Hobbit* and *The Name of*

the Wind. The shadow in the hero's journey archetype is the antagonist, the villain, or their alter-ego. The shadow is the most powerful character that the hero encounters on their journey. This study investigates how the shadow affected the hero throughout their journey. In conclusion, the research shows that the shadow in the story not only reflects the value of the protagonist but also changes its function entirely. This research is interesting because it also studied the importance of a shadow or an antagonist for the growth of the hero in a story. Not only are antagonists important for the plot, but they also serve as one of the reasons for the hero's character development.

Another research study is by Ning Li (2019), which focuses on Biblical allusions in literary work, *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne to be precise. The author argues that one of the most important symbolisms that reflect the Bible and Christianity in the novel is the scarlet letter "A". This is because Hester Prynne, the protagonist of the novel, wore the scarlet letter "A" on the breast of her gown, and according to the author, this symbolizes how the nuns wore the cross on their breast, "On the one hand, the scarlet letter "A" worn on Hester's breast of her gown would remind you of the cross worn on the breast of the nun's" (Li). The next symbolism is when Hester stands on the scaffold to bear the punishment of adultery, which may represent the Divine Maternity who bore the hardship of humans' sin. In conclusion, the inclusion of Biblical allusions in this novel and literature in general has inspired contemplation in the readers. This article provides an

incredible explanation of how Nathaniel Hawthorne implements the allusions of the Bible in his novel. And undoubtedly this article is able to inspire many writers to execute the allusions of the Bible in their novels.

The next study is an article by Reza Noormansyah and Budi Dwi Arifianto published in 2023. This article provides a comprehensive review of the application of Joseph Campbell's hero's journey and Christopher Vogler's archetype functions in film narratives. This article discusses the hero's journey and archetype narrative presented in the Indonesian movie *Seperti Dendam, Rindu Harus Dibayar* (2022). This research unveils that the traditional stages of the hero's journey in this film are not presented in a linear sequence. Instead, they predominantly manifest during the protagonist's meeting with the mentor, particularly during Ajo's moments of trial. These pivotal interactions occur repeatedly, most notably when Ajo meets Jelita and Ki Jempes. A shift in the protagonist's role also occurs when Ajo is imprisoned, leading to a transition of the protagonist's status to Iteung, who takes on the task of seeking vengeance for Ajo.

Another article is by Julius and Robby Satria (2022). This article provides a comprehensive analysis of Jack London's *Call of the Wild*. The article delves into how Buck, the main character of the novel, embarks on the stages of the hero's journey. This research concludes that Buck has undertaken three phases of the hero's journey, encompassing a total of eight stages: four out of five steps in the departure phase, three out of six stages in the initiation phase, and one out of six

stages in the return phase. Consequently, it is evident that the hero's journey in this novel closely follows the pattern outlined by Joseph Campbell, and is a prominent feature in this novel.

Next is a research article by Meng-Hsuan Wu and Ya-huei Wang published in 2022. This article discusses the monomyth in the movie *Spirited Away*. The analysis identifies key stages of the monomyth/hero's journey, including departure, initiation, and return, emphasizing Chihiro's transformation from a timid girl to an autonomous individual. The article highlights how Chihiro's journey is marked by challenges that lead to her self-individuation and personal growth. It is a prerequisite for a hero to experience such transformation. Through the hero's journey, despite people all over the world having different civilizations and cultures, there is a common human experience, we are all fated to undergo a passage of separation, initiation, and return in order to gain self-discovery and enlightenment.

Another research is an article by Homam Altabaa and Nor Ainun Barieah binti Zahari. The study by employs the archetypal stages of the hero's journey to analyze *Hansel and Gretel*. This framework explores how the tale of Hansel and Gretel imparts moral lessons about courage, regression, shrewdness, loyalty, evil, compassion, and destiny through the use of the hero's journey. The study is limited to analyzing the final version of Hansel and Gretel in the Grimms' collection using Joseph Campbell's archetypal hero's journey framework. By analyzing the fairy tales through the stages of monomyth, we can elaborate on their themes and role as

guides for the human quest for growth and self-fulfillment. Hansel and Gretel skillfully employ numerous archetypal elements such as the quest, the evil woman, order versus chaos, thresholds and helpers, the trickster, and the witch to allow its protagonists to achieve psychological and moral maturity, as well as material rewards.

Next is a research article by Sri Rahmi Wahyuni (2018). The article delves deeply into the parallels between Agatha Christie's classic mystery novel, *Murder on the Orient Express*, and Joseph Campbell's concept of the monomyth. The analysis demonstrates how each stage of the monomyth theory can be correlated with the novel, albeit with necessary adjustments due to the novel's classification within the mystery fiction genre. Additionally, the protagonist is depicted as a hero, grounded in the belief that every individual has heroic attributes, the intricate plot of the novel seamlessly integrates with the seventeen stages of Joseph Campbell's monomyth theory.

Another article is by Aditya Nanda Difa (2022). This article provides a detailed analysis of how Rick Riordan's novel aligns with Joseph Campbell's hero's journey. This is evident in how the stages of the hero's journey were applied in the story, the first phase of the hero's journey is departure, where the hero moves from the common world into the unfamiliar. The second and main phase of the story is initiation, where the hero initiates his heroic nature by overcoming various trials and problems. Through quests and battles, true heroic traits emerge. The final

stage is the return phase, where Percy Jackson achieves his goal of bringing back his mother and returning the stolen items. He then returns to the common world as a changed person, someone who is wiser, smarter, and stronger than before.

