

Orion Pax's Heroic Transformation under Oppression Using Vogler's Hero's Journey in Transformers One (2024) Movie

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Abstract: Liberation from systemic oppression is a recurring theme in literature and movies, frequently explored through the experiences of human characters. However, little research has examined how nonhuman characters reflect these dynamics. The research aims to identify Orion Pax's journey to regain liberation from systemic oppression that undervalued him as a miner and undermined him as a lower class. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the research identified 10 of the 12 stages of Orion Pax's transformation as a step towards his final transformation into Optimus Prime. The findings reveal that Orion's oppressive environment undervalues him as a defective bot with no cog to urge him to yearn for a new life. Along the journey, he learns of Sentinel Prime's crimes, which motivate him to fight for his freedom, only to be betrayed by D-16, resulting in his untimely death. His resurrection as Optimus Prime restored the balance to Cybertron and abolished the rigid social structure of Cybertron. Ensuring freedom to the miner class of Cybertron with a new vision of equality. This research argues that Vogler's Hero's Journey is not bound to the traditional self-discovery structure, but can be applied to non-human characters in oppressive environments, providing a new perspective on systemic oppression and liberation from oppressive environments. This research contributes to the enrichment of the narrative and literary fields in the transformation of Hero's journey in the field of Transformers Universe.

Keywords: *Hero's journey, Character Transformation, Liberation from the oppressive state, Transformers Universe, Mining exploitation*

INTRODUCTION

Oppression remains a global issue. Shaping not only systems but also scarring the individual psychology as they experience racism, inequality, and other forms of dehumanisation. One clear example of this is the mining industry, which has been linked to human rights violations for decades since miners endure unsafe conditions, minimal tools, and neglect. Williams et al. (2023) said that oppressed internalise inferiority and worthlessness among

marginalised groups, eroding their self-respect and constricting them from opportunity. Therefore, the research on how an individual frees themselves from oppression is needed to analyse the transformative forms they take to free themselves from limitations and injustice and finally regain their autonomy.

Systemic oppression has profound effects on individual thoughts, emotions, behaviours, and sense of identity. Marks et al. (2020) noted that prolonged exposure to oppressive environments can cause severe psychological and social

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consequences. To break free from this chain and regain their autonomy, individuals often undergo substantial emotional and cognitive changes. As a result, a psychological transformation is essential in understanding how people respond to injustice, adapt, and gain liberation.

According to Box-Steffensmeier et al. (2022); Human behaviour is often considered difficult to understand. However, many experts provide in-depth explanations of transformation as a central aspect of human experience. According to Chirico et al. (2022), transformation deeply affects both emotion and cognition. This means a transformation changes the person wholly and transforms them into a different person, emotionally or personality-wise. In addition, transformative experiences can reshape individual life goals and identity, as stated (Chan, 2024). Transformation can occur for several reasons: Cognitive, emotional distress, behavioural, and environmental.

Sidor & Dubin (2024) state that the environment and social context play an important role in shaping how behavior is transformed, affecting decision-making and motivation. In addition, the social environment also leaves a lasting impact on transforming thoughts, feelings, obedience to authority figures as perceived as superior, and conformity to group standards as the urge to be accepted by the group (Staff, 2025). In oppressive environments, this social influence is magnified. David & Derthick (2017) explain that unjust treatment can lead to psychological distress but also catalyse the transformative process of self-awareness, resilience, and collective empowerment. According to Brouwer & Carhart-Harris (2021), for empowerment to occur, it happens in several stages. One example is the PiMS (Pivotal mental states) model, which explains that a triggering event is required to enter the individual's mental state that will enable cognitive and emotional reorganisation, and ultimately the integration of new perspectives and behavioural change. Therefore, this model is suitable for the oppression environment, as the changes that trigger this usually happen in acute circumstances.

For an individual to gain liberation from oppression, an acknowledgement of the harsh conditions is needed (Vickery et al., 2023). The process of identity shift is frequently depicted in literature and movie as a central driver of

character development. Oftentimes, the character transformation does not happen in a linear and literal fashion; instead, through several stages, the character is faced with psychological and situational hardship that showcase internal or external struggles before obtaining new insight and developing into a new character, which impromptu a similar model to PiMS by Brouwer & Carhart-Harris (2021), though it differs but the essential baseline transformation happens through a triggering event.

The importance of awareness and triggering events is relevant in psychological terms and frequently reflected in literature and cinema. Transformation is a central driver of character development, often depicted through psychological and situational hardship that leads to growth. These fictional transformations mirror real-life experiences, typically unfolding through conflict, revelation, and renewal.

Narrative structures often mirror this multi-stage transformation, with literary frameworks offering models for understanding character evolution. As stated by Murtadho et al. (2021) literary works reflect social realities and provide moral insights that guide readers in comprehending human behavior within society. Furthermore, movie serves as a medium to convey social, cultural, and political issues (Gofur & Priyoto, 2025). This indicates movie is a powerful tool not only for helping audiences understand characters' emotions but also for engaging with the societal issues presented. One standard model for this is Christopher Vogler's Hero's Journey (2007) framework, which explains character transformation in a twelve-stage structure. The structure is widely used in modern storytelling cinema, showcasing a protagonist or a hero's character transformation from a common and distressed condition into achieving greatness. It should be noted that Vogler's structure is a modern adaptation of Joseph Campbell's original seventeen-stage monomyth inspired by the world's mythologies referred to as monomyth. While comprehensive, it is too complex for modern storytelling. Vogler's frameworks simplify it into twelve stages, introducing the Hero's character and gradually progressing into a reawakening and redemption story arc, explained below:

Table 1. Describes the Twelve Stages of Vogler's Hero's Journey

No	Stages	Description
1.	Ordinary World	The Hero's normal life before the journey
2.	Call to adventure	A hero's life is disrupted, calling them to face the challenges ahead.
3.	Refusal to the call	The Hero hesitated due to fear, unworthiness to accept the mission.
4.	Meeting the mentor	A guide appears to offer insight, support, or tools.
5.	Crossing the First Threshold	The Hero leaves the familiar world behind-stepping into the unknown.
6.	Tests, Allies, and Enemies	The Hero's facing trial and gaining an alliance or rival.
7.	Approach to the inmost cave	The Hero prepares for the incoming battle or their inner self
8.	Ordeal	Hero faces the ultimate crisis (death of allies, foes, or themselves) in return, gaining new insight
9.	Reward	The Hero gains knowledge, power, or a prize.
10.	The road back	The Hero returns home and changes.
11.	Resurrection	Facing final changes or tests that symbolize the Hero's rebirth. A lasting transformation,
12.	Return with the elixir.	The Hero returns with wisdom or benefit for their world.

In Transformers One (2024), Orion Pax is a model for this structure. He is introduced as a lowly miner, powerless and marginalised in the underground mine of Iacon City. Later on, he is faced with the harrowing truth of Sentinel Prime, a good leader that turns out to be a corrupt dictator, thus Orion leads a rebellion and liberates miners from Sentinel Prime's shackle. Orion Pax's arc represents a deep psychological and narrative transformation by experiencing emotional struggle, resistance, and self-realisation that finally led to liberation.

Orion Pax's transformation is a unique object to analyse as his transformation is rooted in oppressive states, and the liberation is fueled by self-justice to free other miners. Most existing analyses on Vogler's Hero's journey framework are centered on individual quest or self-discovery. Currently, no studies have linked the Hero's journey with systematic oppression or class struggle, especially not in the case of non-human characters like Orion Pax, who is a robot. This research addresses that gap by proposing that Orion's transformation is not only heroic but also a direct response to oppression and institutionalised injustice, and a novel contribution to Vogler's Hero's Journey, narrative analysis, and literary analysis. Not only Transformers One (2024), an animated movie belonging to the Transformers franchise,

a pop culture icon since the 1980s, was made by Hasbro. The movie is a relevant and powerful medium to contemporary audiences, using animation to discuss political and social changes (Nwosu & Agoha, 2018).

Several studies have explored the Hero's Journey. Noviana (2019) analyses Chihiro's heroic transformation from a timid girl into a brave and confident girl who can lift her parents' curse. Syahputra & Kasprabowo (2020) focused on Dave, an average teenager who decided to be a superhero despite having no power or training. Through self-motivation, his goal was achieved, and he was able to inspire others to become superheroes. Meanwhile, Noormansyah & Arifianto (2023) apply the twelve Hero's Journey framework to the characters of Ajo and Iteung. Ajo's story starts with a mission to kill a thug named Tiger, but sadly, Ajo ends up in prison, ending his arc in a depressive state. In contrast, Iteung transformation starts with an act of revenge to kill the two-rapist officer who made her husband, Ajo, impotent. In the end, she managed to kill the two rapists and reunited with Ajo, highlighting Iteung's complete hero's journey arch meanwhile, Ajo as an incomplete Hero's journey. Sobari (2024) examines Enola Holmes's character development through finding her missing mother. Mashlahatin (2022)

analyses Ben Cash's transformation through conflict in his relationship, turmoil from his wife's death, and finally finding inner peace. Pasya et al. (2020) examines the Once-Ler villain's journey and his transformation from a good character to a villain in *The Lorax*.

While these studies Noormansyah & Arifianto (2023), Noviana (2019), Syahputra & Kasprabowo (2020), Sobari (2024), Mashlahatin (2022), Pasya (2020), contribute to the Hero's Journey framework. However, they predominantly focus on self-motivation, revenge arc, inner self-finding, and villain route arc. None have applied Christopher Vogler's Hero's Journey to analyse characters driven by structural oppression. By analysing Orion Pax, a robotic character who undergoes systematic oppression, this research demonstrates how the Hero's journey can be applied as a framework to understand resistance, collective struggle, and gain liberation in oppressive environments. This research aims to explore how Orion Pax's character transformation reflects systemic oppression and liberation using Vogler's Hero's Journey framework.

Though Orion Pax's character is robotic, this does not hinder his capacity to symbolise human liberation, as Nayar (2024) argues that robots and artificial beings can function as metaphors for human experience. Orion Pax's Hero's journey symbolises class struggle and political liberation in the real-world mining industry, which has been linked to violating human rights. An investigation in 2024 uncovered child labour exploitation from lithium mines in Nasarawa, Nigeria (Adebayo, 2024). Children as young as six years old work long hours under inhuman conditions for less than a dollar a day. These miners worked using minimal tools in life-threatening conditions with a system that neglected and exploited them as cheap labour. Though small, the Mother Boss movement was initiated by women in the Democratic Republic of Congo to voice their disagreement on this injustice (Gouby, 2024). Orion Pax mirrors these real-world stories from a low-life miner to a revolutionary leader.

This research contributes to the applicability of Vogler's Hero's Journey beyond its traditional use in character-driven or personal growth ambition. This research shifts the focus toward transformation driven by structural oppression by analysing Orion Pax, a robotic character who undergoes systematic oppression.

METHOD

This research uses a qualitative descriptive approach as defined by Alhazmi & Kaufmann (2022) to describe the data with minimal interpretation to develop textural descriptions and stay true to its source. Highlighting the balance between description and interpretation in the data sample. This method is apt for analysing Orion Pax's arch journey because it provides a comprehensive summary of specific events or phenomena. As stated by Furidha (2023), it aims to create an accurate, factual account of the characteristics, context, and relationships of the phenomenon under study. It is useful for exploring new or poorly understood topics and for situations where a clear, data-based description is needed rather than theoretical.

The primary data are taken from the *Transformers One* (2024) movie, focusing on scenes, dialogues, monologues, visual elements, and character interactions involving Orion Pax. The secondary data include journals, scholarly articles, previous research, and relevant online sources that support theoretical analysis. Tools for data collection include a laptop, smartphone, writing instruments, and active note-taking. The researcher watched the movie multiple times to identify scenes relevant to the Hero's Journey. These scenes were noted, categorized, and refined to align with the analysis.

This research uses a narratological approach to examine the structure of Orion Pax's transformation. Propp (1928) first introduced this concept by identifying 31 narrative functions in Russian folklore. Campbell (1949) then developed the structure of the Hero's Journey by analyzing mythology which refined the narrative structure into 17 stages such as the Call to Adventure, the Rejection of the Call, and others. Later, Christopher Vogler adapted Campbell's stages into 12 stages to better suit modern cinematic storytelling. This research applies Vogler's 12 stages of Hero's Journey to analyze Orion Pax's transformation in *Transformers One* (2024). The research process began with formulating the research questions and objectives. Next, the researcher collected primary data by overseeing the movie, identifying scenes that correspond to the twelve stages of Hero's Journey, and narrowing down relevant dialogue, plot developments, and visual cues. The data was then analyzed through the lens of narrative structure to trace Orion

Pax's transformation. This approach helped to structure the narrative progression and supported the conclusion that Orion Pax's character follows the arc of a hero rising from oppression to liberation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the analysis of Orion Pax's Hero's journey from dialogue, scene, and visual elements from the movie. Using Vogler's twelve stages of the Hero's Journey framework. The researcher has identified ten stages that align with Orion's development, excluding two stages, namely Refusal of the Call and The Road Back, due to their implicitness and not fully appearing in the movie. Each stage of the Hero's Journey represents a significant emotional, narrative, and political shift of Orion's journey from oppressed minor into a wise leader liberating Cybertron. The findings are arranged in linear stages following the Hero's Journey stages progression.

Ordinary World

The Ordinary World stage introduces the Hero's everyday life to give the audience information about the Hero's social background, strengths, flaws, and the limitations they have in this story to give a tone to the story. In *Transformers One* (2024), Orion Pax is introduced within a rigid social hierarchy, positioned at the bottom as a mining bot. His status is not only occupational but a symbol of systemic oppression in Cybertron's class structure.

This exclusion is immediately apparent in the early scenes. A guard confronts Orion, who is lurking in an archive room. The guards dismissively confront him and mock him for his lower status.

Guard #2: "It's that defective mining bot. Or-ee-on Pix."

Orion: "Orion Pax."

Guard #2: "Who cares! We told you to never come back here!" (00:04:08)

The use of the word "defective" reflects how mining bots are perceived as inferior, referring to him as a broken person but showing how his individuality is tied to his societal function. Not only that, but the Guard also deliberately mispronounced his name ("Pix" instead of Pax) dehumanising Orion of his dignity and failing to recognise him as someone equal to his stature. This scene conveys that bots like Orion are not only undervalued but mocked, their existence

reduced to a defective utility.

This sense of worthlessness is echoed by D-16, Orion's fellow miner and friend. As he stated:

D-16: "We're miners. We mine. That's all." (00:07:16)

The statement reflects the defeat of losing his own autonomy, stripping himself of agency and inspiration to do better, since he believes he has limited opportunities in life. All of this reinforces the idea that miners should not question the role they have been given but instead carry out the role society has put on them in a diligent manner.



Figure 1. Orion Mining Energon deeps underground

Further visual reinforcement of this social structure occurs at 00:09:58, where Orion and the miners are shown harvesting Energon, a vital energy source that sustains life for all Transformers. Despite their labour being essential, they are the most neglected class, toiling underground with no recognition or autonomy. This scene echoes Marxist critiques of labour exploitation: Those who produce value often benefit least from it.

Ocean et al. (2022) explain that oppression manifests through exclusion, subordination, and the exploitation of individuals' time and energy to serve others' agendas. This systemic devaluation is exemplified further by the character Elita, a mining bot who hopes to earn a promotion.

Elita: "We are a mere thirty units of Energon away from my promotion to supervisor. Are you happy for me?" (00:09:02)

She expresses restrained hope. However, rather than being promoted, Elita is harshly reassigned to a more degrading role, exposing how the system did not easily give miners access to move upward in the structural system. Her superior, Darkwing, delivers the order

without empathy:

Darkwing: "You are no-cog bots with limited options. Report to waste management. Immediately." (00:11:55)

The dialogue above reinforces Cybertron hierarchy, bots born without cogs—an essential mechanical part for transformation to cars, planes, or motorcycles—are labelled as “no-cogs”, treated as defective and stripped of value from birth. Their lives are marked by mechanical determinism: they are denied both transformation and progress.

In conclusion, the Ordinary World illustrates the rigid system of Orion Pax's life as a marginalised miner: undervalued, not respected, and inferior to others. He lives in a system where he is psychologically conditioned to believe his life is confined to his designated role as miner. This dark beginning sets the foundation for Orion's initial value and his transformation to break free from this shackle during his Hero's Journey.

Call to Adventure

At this stage of the Hero's Journey, the protagonist experiences moments of emotional turmoil that trigger a yearning for change. This signals the beginning of transformation when the Hero senses that their current life no longer aligns with their internal purpose or identity. The awakening of Orion Pax begins with his growing dissatisfaction with the rigid social roles assigned to him. This shift is clearly defined and articulated in his dialogue:

Orion: "There's gotta be something more I can do. I can feel it. Don't you want to choose your path? Do whatever you want?" (00:07:15)

The dialogue above illustrates Orion's desire to be independent and break out of his role as a lowly miner. He is no longer content with his life, and proclaims, “There's more I can do”, marking the emergence of longing to begin his journey. The sentence reflects Orion's first point of awareness in his life, showing that he is frustrated and longing to be someone other than a miner. His daydream question to his friend D-16 signifies the initial personal desire for freedom, but also a desire for collective emancipation by inviting his friend D-16 to question the rigid system. As noted by Brouwer & Carhart-Harris (2021) in their study of the PiMS model, when the walls of social conditioning begin to crack, emotional tensions

occur, resulting in the individual seeking new identities. This aligns with Orion's yearning to make his own path and divert from the path he has been assigned.

Orion's dissatisfaction is reinforced again after the Iacon 5000 race and meeting the great leader Sentinel Prime:

Orion: "Sentinel Prime, sir. We joined the race to show everyone our potential. That we bots can do more than just mine Energon." (00:24:29 – 00:24:35)

Although he did not win the race, Orion's participation was revolutionary: he became the first no-cog bot (a class deemed defective and socially inferior) to compete. His act represents a symbolic defiance to the narrative that bots like him are incapable of greatness. According to Vierra et al. (2023). The process of breaking free from oppressive systems involves several psychological stages: beginning with awareness, followed by the acknowledgment of injustice, and eventually moving toward active resistance and advocacy. Orion's behavior aligns with the initial phase, his emotional turmoil, which is caused by breaking from his societal role and finding his own path. The second phase leads him to the urge to redefine his identity, signalling the earliest psychological ruptures in his social conditioning. Thus, the Call to Adventure stage is the symbolic awareness of Orion Pax's condition and the first step toward liberation and breaking free from his societal role as a miner.

Meeting the Mentor

In this stage of the Hero's Journey, the protagonist encounters a mentor figure who provides guidance, insight, tools, or emotional support needed to begin the path toward transformation. For Orion Pax, this pivotal moment occurs when he awakens Alpha Trion, a former Prime and survivor of the massacre orchestrated by Sentinel Prime.

Alpha Trion: "Sentinel is not a prime. You've been living a lie. I saw the truth with my own eyes... Come. I will show you." (00:44:30)

Alpha Trion leads Orion Pax and his friend outside the cave, where Sentinel Prime and his entourage meet with the Cybertron enemy, Quintesson Commander. Sentinel is shown to be given crates full of Energon to the Quintesson Commander and a promise to the warlord.

Sentinel Prime: "I know what I promised

you, but our mines... they're running out. There's barely enough Energon for us. I swear, I will get you the rest. triple-time every mining shift! no miner gets a break until I get my Energon! all of it! let's go!"
Alpha Trion: "Now you have seen the truth" (00:49:45-00:50:24)

This revelation sheds the truth on the corruption and lies of Sentinel Prime; he is, in fact, a conspirator with the enemy and overworking the miners until they are boneless with no break just to satisfy the Quitenson Commander. This signified miner exploitation and diminished their value without a care for their rights. Alpha Trion is not only a source of information but also catalyzes Orion's psychological awakening by offering the truth about Sentinel Prime's betrayal and exposing the systemic oppression that has defined Orion's life since birth.

Alpha Trion: "No son or daughter of Cybertron is born without a cog. He removed your cogs before you came online" (00:52:30 – 00:52:50)

Here, Alpha Trion reveals the harrowing truth of Orion Pax's true self that underpins his entire identity. The removal of Orion's cog symbolises the removal of freedom, agency, and identity, but also a stolen opportunity as the cog is stripped from him before he is conscious. Alpha Trion's revelation is a symbol of injustice, igniting in Orion a renewed sense of purpose. This revelation also shows the injustice that Sentinel Prime does to the other miner who stripped their cog from birth. This moment exemplifies what Domenico & Ryan (2017) describe in motivational psychology: when individuals encounter new truths that realign their values or sense of self, it can trigger a renewed motivation driven by increased autonomy and competence. By learning that his limitations were imposed and not inherent, Orion is psychologically empowered to rise against the system that defined him.

Alpha Trion: "What defines a Transformer is not the cog in his chest... But the spark that resides in their core. A spark that gives you the will to make your world better. My fellow Primes had that spark... And I see their strength in you" (00:53:10 – 00:53:15)

This motivational speech reinforces Orion's internal self-worth, affirming that the essence of

transformation lies not in the cog as external machinery but deep inside their heart.

Alpha Trion: "Take their cogs and access your full potential. The ability to change your world. How you choose to use that power is up to you." (00:53:03 – 00:54:00)

This final exchange magnified the mentor's role, not as someone who imposes direction but who opens the door to possibility. Alpha Trion offers Orion the symbolic and literal tool for transformation using the cog of a fallen Prime, but also leaves him with a choice on whether to embark on this journey or not.

Crossing the Threshold

The initial doubt is erased as the Hero is fully committed to the journey ahead and steps into a new world physically, emotionally, or morally. This stage marks the first step of leaving the familiar zone and entering the new world.

Alpha Trion: "You must return to Iacon City and alert everyone. Embedded in this are the records I have shown you. Use it to reveal the truth." 00:54:59

Alpha Trion's last words resonated with Orion's new motivation to uncover Sentinel Prime's past. He and his friends, D-16, finally leave the cave and travel back to Iacon City with the recording device that holds Sentinel Prime's crimes. This moment marks Orion's decision to act, not just react. It symbolises his commitment to change, moving out of his comfort zone and into the path of resistance, by exposing the truth of Sentinel Prime's crimes and lies by showing people footage of the massacres committed by the Primes. His motivation has now shifted from self-doubt to initiative, aligning with Vogler's "Crossing the Threshold" stage, where the Hero leaves the familiar world and accepts the mission.

Tests, Allies, and Enemies

In this stage, the Hero faces the first trial to test their faith, belief, and abilities. Along the way, they meet allies who support them and enemies who challenge them. In this stage, Orion faces tension from his best friend, D-16, who is suspiciously ignoring Orion's idea and slowly leaning towards his quest for revenge against Sentinel Prime. The dialogue below captured this tension:

Orion: "We need to hurry!"

D-16: "Here, I got it." (Snatches device from Orion) *Orion: "Be careful, our proof is inside..."*

D-16: "I—GOT—IT." (Threatening) Orion: "...Okay." (00:58:42 – 00:58:52)

The dialogue above illustrates the tension between the two of them. Orion seems to be startled by D-16's answer and anger outburst. In this dialogue, Orion is right to be worried as the device D-16 holds is the recording device that stores Sentinel Prime's crimes of massacring the previous Primes. This tension highlights Orion's test in his journey and his growth in a leadership role as he remains calm and patient in sudden anger outbursts from D-16.



Figure 2. The High Guard captures Orion Pax and his friends

Later on, Orion Pax and his friends are captured by the High Guard on suspicion of being Sentinel Prime subordinates, as shown in Figure 2 from sequence 01:02:11. Though Orion profusely denies the accusation, the High Guard does not believe him. As a result, all of them are imprisoned. This stage highlights the hardship Orion faces in his journey, how he is tested by D-16, sudden tension, and bad circumstances that hinder his journey.

Approach to the Inmost Cave

This stage marks the Hero's approach to the central crisis of the journey, where their deepest fear and internal conflict are brought to the surface. It prepares the Hero for the final battle, both morally and psychologically. In Transformers One, this moment occurs when Orion directly confronts Sentinel Prime, the reason for his misery and the oppressive leader that shapes his life.

Orion: "It's over, Sentinel. You can't escape the truth!"

Sentinel: "What truth? That I plucked the cogs from your newborn chests? Forced you to mine, so that I could pay off the Quintessons and live like a king? None of that matters, because the truth... is... what... I make it." (01:19:46 – 01:20:05)

In this exchange, Orion symbolically puts the regime on trial. His declaration, "You can't escape the truth," is not just a narrative confrontation but a psychological act of resistance. It signals his awakening into what liberation psychology calls critical consciousness: the moment when the oppressed not only recognise the injustice of their condition but begin to challenge the legitimacy of the oppressor's narrative (David & Derthick, 2017). Orion no longer sees himself as a miner or victim; instead, he reclaims his role as a liberator.

Sentinel Prime's chilling response, "The truth is what I make it", exposes the manipulative and narcissistic worldview of his perspective. It shows how domination sustains itself not just through control but through the distortion of truth. For Orion, this moment is not just about defeating a villain but dismantling the corrupt power that has defined his world. The word underlines Sentinel Prime's betrayal and highlights him as a symbol of corruption, narcissism, and authoritarianism. Therefore, showcasing his inner mindset that will do whatever it takes to manipulate the world according to his view. The stage is a pivotal moment, marking the truth out of the bag and no more lies spew, setting the stage for the ultimate transformation.

In addition, the moment Orion confronts Sentinel Prime with the word, "This is over, Sentinel. You can't escape the truth." Orion's moment of truth is metaphorically and narratively putting the regime on trial against his deceit. This stage is the build-up that leads to the climax, amplifying Orion's journey.

Ordeal

This stage represents the Hero's greatest crisis, often involving symbolic death, and marks the point where transformation becomes permanent. In Transformers One (2024), this tension intensifies as Orion Pax faces not only his enemy Sentinel Prime but also betrayal from his closest friend D-16.

Orion: "We're better than this. Don't be like Sentinel."

D-16: "Pax, you need to move... before I move you myself." (01:24:13 – 01:25:11)

Orion's plea is a final attempt to uphold morality over vengeance. His refusal to exert violence, even against a tyrant, underlined his kind beliefs and emerging path to leadership. When D-16 lashes out in retaliation, Orion

endures the assault, choosing to stay firm to his principles. His resistance can be defined by the psychological concept of moral resilience, where individuals maintain ethical standards despite adversity or opposition (Barbosa et al., 2024).

In a climactic turn, D-16 fires at Sentinel Prime, but Orion intercepts the bullet. The impact sends him plummeting into a chasm, and when D-16 momentarily reaches to save him, he coldly withdraws his hand with a devastating statement.

D-16: "I'm done saving you." (01:25:14)

After saying this, D-16 quickly let go of Orion's hand, leading Orion to his death, and going towards the pit below. This moment symbolises Orion's "death", both physically and metaphorically. The shocking moment shook Orion to his core as he could not believe his best friend D-16 betrayed him like that. According to Brouwer & Carhart-Harris (2021), such intense events may trigger Pivotal Mental States (PiMS), allowing individuals to restructure their values and behaviour. Orion's devastation acts as the trigger event, severing him from his old identity; he can no longer trust D-16 as it accumulates from betrayal and suffering. The stage highlights the pivotal point for Orion's transformation.

What makes this ordeal more profound is its impact on Orion's emotional well-being. His transition did not begin by defeating Sentinel Prime and exerting justice; instead, he was betrayed by his best friend, D-16.

Reward (Seizing the Sword)

The Reward stage represents a moment of revelation, transformation, and empowerment. The reward can be something literal, emotional, or a new revelation that encapsulates all the heroes experienced during their journey. In *Transformers One* (2024), Orion Pax's symbolic "death" is followed by his rebirth as Optimus Prime.

After falling deep into Cybertron's core, Orion hears the thundering voice of Alpha Trion:

Alpha Trion: "Your noble sacrifice for the greater good has proven you worthy in the eyes of Primus. He entrusts in you the future of Cybertron... and... the matrix of leadership. Arise, Optimus Prime." (01:27:16)

This moment signifies Orion's rebirth, his reward for staying true to his principle and the

sacrifice he has made to exert justice on behalf of Cybertron's people. He is also rewarded for enduring the betrayal from D-16. All this hardship and journey rewarded him with the most prestigious title, the Matrix of Leadership, a powerful cog and symbol of leadership that acknowledged him as the new leader of the Cybertron people. Figure 3 below from sequence 01:29:04 showcases the transformation as physical as well: his damaged body is restored, his armour enhanced, and a new weapon in the shape of a hammer symbolises his new rule to exert justice and fairness.



Figure 3. Orion becomes Optimus Prime

From a psychological perspective, this sequence represents the vital phase of the pivotal mental state (PiMS). According to Brouwer & Carhart-Harris (2021), after a transformative ordeal, individuals who surpass it emerge as new individuals with a vigorous sense of self. For Orion, receiving the Matrix is not merely a reward but a final state of his identity. He is no longer the miner yearning for change, nor simply a victim of oppressive conditions, but the symbol for new beginnings and leader to guide others. This aligns with Vogler's Hero's Journey states that "Seizing the sword" can symbolize knowledge or power that can be used to complete their journey. In this case, the Matrix is a literal tool to validate his leadership to the Cybertron people and the last tool needed to complete his character transformation. He is now named Optimus Prime, leader of Cybertron, no longer Orion Pax, an undervalued miner.

Resurrection

In the Hero's Journey, the Resurrection stage represents the Hero's emergence with a new identity. In *Transformers One*, this resurrection is done by Orion Pax—now Optimus Prime, who confronts D-16 for his betrayal.

Optimus Prime: "We were given the power

to change our world... and you chose to destroy it. Just like Sentinel, you have betrayed Cybertron and its citizens. And you betrayed me." (01:31:05 – 01:35:16)

Orion's confrontation with D-16 represents Orion's final growth in his role as leader but also character growth. As before, he hesitated to reprimand D-16 for his anger outbursts, but now he is outright calling him out for his misdeeds. Orion has now completed his transformation from an undervalued miner to a wise leader with power equal to the former Sentinel Prime, as he stated, "We were given the power to change our world... and you chose to destroy it." This implies that the immeasurable power they had had surpassed their past selves in the ordinary world stages.

Furthermore, Orion Pax points out D-16 hypocrisy: "Just like Sentinel, you have betrayed Cybertron and its citizens. And you betrayed me.". Throughout their journey, D-16's actions have been fueled by rage against Sentinel Prime's crimes. However, in his uncontrolled pursuit of vengeance, D-16 begins to embody the very cruelty he once opposed. By attempting to execute Sentinel without due justice and ultimately turning against Orion himself, D-16 crosses the boundary he once claimed to uphold.

Orion's accusation highlights this hypocrisy, stating that D-16 has not only betrayed him but also Cybertron and its citizens. Optimus emphasizes his misdeed is beyond personal revenge but malice against everything he upholds. Orion confronts D-16 about his crime as he is now a leader with the responsibility to uphold justice for the collective good. In doing so, he reaffirms his commitment to protect the people of Cybertron, demonstrating that his new role as Prime is not symbolic but deeply ideological.

Optimus Prime: "The line between friend and enemy is not as clear as I once believed. Once it's crossed, there's no going back..." (01:32:20)

This moment encapsulates the final stage of Orion Pax's transformation. No longer governed by uncertainty or emotional restraint, Orion speaks with the clarity of a leader shaped by loss, betrayal, and moral awakening. His words reveal the realisation of his weight in his new role as leader. How he recognises as a leader, he must confront painful truths,

including the loss of a good friend.

Return with Elixir

The final stage of the Hero's Journey, "Return with the Elixir," marks the Hero's return to their world, not as they once were, but as a different individual. The heroes bring back an elixir that can be a literal item or knowledge that can benefit the community in their home. In Transformers One (2024), Orion's resurrection as Optimus Prime brings back the Matrix of Leadership that is needed to revitalise Cybertron's dying planet with Energon energy.

As depicted from sequence 01:34:06 in Figure 4 below, the Matrix of Leadership that he now carries is the key to restoring Cybertron's dying core, unleashing a sea of radiant blue Energon across the planet.



Figure 4. Energon returns

This revitalisation benefits all the Cybertron people and is soon followed by another miracle: The return of cogs to bots who were previously devalued as "defective" as seen from figure 5 below from sequence 01:34:38.



Figure 5. Everyone receives their Cogs

This sequence represents the collapse of systemic oppression. No longer are bots divided by function or form; instead, equality is reinstated. The "elixir" in this context is both material (Energon, cogs) and ideological (Freedom, dignity, and autonomy).

Optimus Prime: A new beginning for Cybertron, and now we stand here together, as ONE. Proving we all have the power to transform. To become who we were destined to be, to right wrongs, to make our world better...

Here, freedom and autonomy are the rights of all sentient beings. Here, all are truly Autobots. (01:34:00 – 01:35:05)

This speech marks the culmination of Orion Pax's transformation into Optimus Prime. Not only as a leader but also as a symbol of liberation. He has returned to restore the balance and lead Cybertron with newfound wisdom and passion. His message expresses what liberation psychology calls the moment of collective healing, where transformation is no longer individual but socially integrated, inspiring others to reclaim their agency (David & Derthick, 2017).

The findings of this research show that Orion Pax's transformation in *Transformers One* (2024) aligns with Vogler's Hero's Journey framework. From an oppressed miner to a revolutionary leader, his arc is shaped by hardship, betrayal, and a growing awareness of injustice. These experiences drive his transformation into Optimus Prime, a leader who rises not only for himself but for others.

More than just a narrative structure, his journey mirrors real-world experiences, where people under oppression often face emotional turmoil and hardship before reclaiming their agency and power. Orion's journey reminds us that true change often begins in suffering but leads to strength, purpose, and hope for others. Vogler's Hero's Journey proved to be a useful analytical tool for mapping Orion Pax's transformation with clarity and depth. Unlike general character analysis, this framework allowed a stage-by-stage breakdown of Orion's experiences.

Particularly, the hardship he endures in systemic oppression conditions that would enable his transformation. Previous studies, such as Noviana (2019), Syahputra & Kasprabowo (2020), and Noormansyah & Arifianto (2023) have successfully applied this structure to stories of self-discovery, revenge, and redemption. Still, they often focused on human characters and personal motivation. This research expands the application by using the framework to explore a non-human protagonist in an oppressive state.

CONCLUSION

This research highlights a transformation journey exhibited by Orion Pax's character in *Transformers One* (2024). Using the Hero's Journey framework by Christopher Vogler, the researcher has identified ten of twelve stages of

the Hero's Journey, namely: Ordinary World, Call to Adventure, Meeting the Mentor, Crossing the Threshold, Tests, Allies, and Enemies, Approach to the Inmost Cave, Ordeal, Reward (Seizing the Sword), Resurrection, Return with Elixir. These findings are portrayed through analysing Orion Pax's dialogue, monologue, scene, and visual elements using a Qualitative descriptive approach. The finding signifies Orion's transformation from a cog-less bot and undervalued miner in oppressive environments into a wise leader named Optimus Prime. His transformation undergoes stages of yearning to be free from his designated role in society as a miner to forge his own path, and later on learns the truth of his deceptive leader, Sentinel Prime, from Alpha Trion. That reveals Sentinel's crime to have taken the miners' cogs from birth, stripping them of individuality, thus making them defective bots. The revelation motivates Orion on a journey to reveal Sentinel's lies to the Cybertron society, therefore marking this stage as crossing the threshold by stepping out of his comfort zone. In his journey, Orion is faced with a test from D-16 anger outburst that causes tension between them, but he is also captured by the High Guard, who suspect them of being Sentinel Prime subordinates. In the final stages of his journey, Orion managed to confront Sentinel in his Prime but was unexpectedly betrayed by D-16, thus leading to Orion's death. Orion's resurrection as Optimus Prime restored the balance to Cybertron, abolished the rigid structure of Cybertron society, and returned the miner cogs, thus regaining their individuality.

This research contributes to the applicability of Vogler's hero structure to a non-human character emerging from oppressive states. As previous studies by Noormansyah & Arifianto (2023), Noviana (2019), Syahputra & Kasprabowo (2020), Sobari (2024), Mashlahatin (2022), and Pasya (2020) centralize on human and self-discovery character. The research offers a new perspective on Vogler's journey, enriching the study of the *Transformers* Universe and the narrative study of the transformation journey. In conclusion, Orion Pax is a unique character to analyse as he is a complex character that manages to overcome oppression and liberate himself, as well as miners from the Sentinel Prime regime.

This suggests that the Hero's Journey is not limited to a self-discovery story but can apply to non-human characters and uncover a

character transformation from an oppressive state. For researchers, scholars, and audiences, this research acts as a gate to a new interpretation of Orion Pax's character transformation in Transformers One (2024) with a detailed reflection of class struggle as a lowly miner, resistance, and gaining freedom.

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