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Topic: A Study of Post-postmodernism in Marvel's Black Panther and Endgame

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Student's (official) Name: Liu Kaiyu

Class: 3i4

Name of Teacher-Mentor: Ms Liew Pei Li

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 General Background

The superhero film genre has seen development and a huge increase in popularity over the years. According to Wikipedia, superhero fiction is defined as a genre of speculative fiction examining the adventures, personalities and ethics of costumed crime fighters known as superheroes, who often possess superhuman powers and battle similarly powered criminals known as supervillains (Wikipedia, 2009).

Comics writer Grant Morrison has expressed doubt that superhero stories are a genre, calling superheroes "a special chilli pepper-like ingredient" that artists use "to energise other genres," such as Westerns, war stories, detective stories and more (Jameson, 2019). In my opinion, I partially disagree with his definition. Personally speaking, superhero films have become established enough to create an entirely new genre by itself. According to the *New York Times*, seven of the 11 top-grossing films of 2017 were superhero movies. Heroes who conquer the impossible are generally adulated and draw attention and admiration from the audiences, which can account for the popularity of the superhero genre. (Abrahams, 1966).

The start of the superhero fiction genre dates back to the early 20th century. Its first noticeable jump in popularity occurred in the heat of World War II, which is possibly accounted for due to the stories' plots of good triumphing over evil. However, in recent days, the genre of superhero fiction has seen a major revival in its popularity. This can be seen through the spate of superhero films recently, with for example, DC's character Batman, making a comeback in cinemas almost every 4 years since 2000, with another new movie *The*

Batman coming in 2021. These stories of superheroes act as a form of escapism. The disjunction between superhero fiction and our ordinary lives causes the fiction to appear especially intriguing. Films now have also been progressively more successful at reflecting modern societal changes such as racial stereotypes, boosting its appeal to audiences today (Torrecampo, 2018), allowing prominent figures in the comic industry, such as DC and Marvel, to produce and release numerous renditions of the world's favourite superheroes, such as Batman and Captain America.

Marvel's 2018 film *Black Panther* and 2019 film *Endgame* have been very popular, most prevalently in the big community of Marvel fans. Just like many movies, such as *Captain America, the First Avenger* (2011), *Rocky* (1976), *Rudy* (1993) and the *Karate Kid* (1984), *Black Panther* (2018) was told from the perspective of an underdog, in this case, the protagonist T'Challa, overcoming great odds to defeat his opponent, Erik Killmonger, with their differing views for the future of Wakanda. *Endgame* (2019) also had a similar approach, where the Avengers were under Thanos' heavy oppression after half of their team were wiped out. Both movies' plots in ways display characteristics of the post-postmodern literary theory, which will be the central focus of this paper.

1.2 Rationale

Both films have become extremely successful works within the Marvel cinematic universe, smashing box office records and receiving positive reviews worldwide. According to *The Guardian*, *Black Panther* (2018) is "a subversive and uproarious action-adventure, in which African stereotypes are upended and history is rewritten." (Bradshaw, 2018).

According to The New York Times, *Endgame* (2019) is a "poignant, powerful finale (that) more than lives up to the hype: It is a thrilling conclusion and a deeply emotional exploration of loss and love, duty and honour, friendship and family." (Scott, 2019). *Black Panther* (2018) became the highest-grossing film by a director of African-American descent, grossing US$1.3 billion. *Endgame* (2019) has beaten *Avatar*'s (2009) record to become the highest grossing film of all time, with *Avatar*'s (2009) previous record of US$2.790 billion. Hence, it is not wrong to say that these films have definitely left an impressive mark on the history of the Marvel cinematic universe.

Black Panther (2018) has been very popular amongst global audiences. With the context and plot of the film, ideas of post-postmodernism, or otherwise known as new sincerity, are present. It manifests itself as the ideal postcolonial society, being the polar opposite of highly recognised societal "norms" and conditions. It challenges the traditional depictions of African nations as one that is poor and developing. In the movie, it is presented to be at the forefront in terms of technological advancements. The science and fact-based system points to post-postmodernism with its rejection of postmodernism's skepticism.

From the previous movie in the series, *Avengers: Infinity War* (2018), half of the Avengers were wiped out by Thanos. Lacking manpower, the Avengers were at a loss. From time-travelling to battling Thanos himself, the Avengers overcame great odds in *Endgame* (2019) to bring back those who were killed. The film portrays the hope that the Avengers had , saving half of the population from their unjustified death by retrieving the stones, no matter how impossible it may seem. Their intense battle to reverse Thanos's immoral genocide highlights their fight for those who did not deserve to just be erased from existence. Through

that, it emphasises the importance of existence through their will to live. *Endgame* (2019) signifies the mighty battle in which heroism triumphs over injustice. It is particularly intriguing to study not only due to its success, but also its continuation of the initial loss in *Avengers: Infinity War* (2018), which is especially effective in conveying elements of post-postmodernism.

Black Panther (2018) is indisputably a film unlike the rest within the Marvel franchise, and is a fresh spin in its genre of superhero films. One cannot deny that nations like Africa are less developed as compared to countries like Britain or America. The deviation from traditional and stereotypical white supremacy has made the film an interesting piece worthy of study. Much can still be learnt about the almost unexplored existentialist themes within the films, hence the necessity of this project.

1.3 Research Questions

- To what extent are existentialist themes of the will to live and emphasis on an individual's ability to control their own fate and development observed in *Black Panther* (2018) and *Endgame* (2019), and what significance does it have to the idea of post-postmodernism?

- How are elements of post-postmodernism, such as its rejection of skepticism, cynicism and nihilism to arrive at hope and the portrayal of technology shown in the films *Black Panther* (2018) and *Endgame* (2019)?

1.4 Thesis Statement

Black Panther (2018) and *Endgame* (2019) reject the nihilistic and postmodernist views of earlier films and arrive at a new concept, post-postmodernism, through its representation of truth, hope and the characters' individual choice, and the embracing of technology.

1.5 Scope of Research / Delimitation(s)

The research will explore post-postmodernism in both *Black Panther* (2018) and *Endgame* (2019), but the focus of research will be put solely on the film, not the comics. These two films have had huge exposure and effectively convey concepts explored within this research paper. These anticipated films are unique, for *Endgame* (2019) marks the end of the series of movies before, and *Black Panther* (2018) completely denying the stereotypical white-supremacist system, hence being most suited for the purpose of this paper.

1.6 Significance of Research / Usefulness

Existing literary research articles such as "*Black Panther*: Thrills, Postcolonial Discourse, and Blacktopia" (Eckhardt, 2018) have provided insight on how *Black Panther* (2018) brings up post-colonialism, but there is a gap in terms of post-postmodernism. Research articles, such as "'I Remember You Was Conflicted': Reflections on *Black Panther*, the African American/African Divide, and Scholarly Positionings" (LaRue, 2018), tend to place their focus on the film's societal aspects, such as its relevance to modern-day

communities and interactions of cultures. *Avengers: Endgame* (2019) also points to post-postmodernism due to the rejection of postmodernism and appearing themes of existentialism. However, literary papers that connect the film to the concept of post-postmodernism are absent. The scarcity of post-postmodernism in popular culture makes this research paper significant, as it contributes by entering unchartered territories of literary research. This research aims to contribute further to literary study in this field, and hopefully bridge the existing gap between discussion of post-postmodernism in popular culture.

1.7 Limitations

This paper may be limited to the boundaries of literary concepts of postcolonialism and post-postmodernism, and might only provide shallow insight into concepts related to philosophy in each of the theories. Aside from discussion on existentialism as a characteristic of post-postmodernism, there may be a lack of engagement with philosophy in this research. However, some characteristics within postcolonialism and post-postmodernism, no matter philosophical or not, can still contribute to the literary study of this project. Minimal research projects focusing on post-postmodernism in both films have been conducted, and for the purpose of this paper, a research on literary aspects of the films are sufficient to bridge the existing gap.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Postmodernism

The discussion of postmodernism in popular culture has been progressively growing in both quantity and breadth, covering an ever expanding range of forms within popular culture, with academics noting the postmodern tendencies of modern horror (Pinedo, 1996) in comics, both DC (Kipniss, 1994) and Marvel (Silvio, 1995) as well as in popular crime films such as *Brian De Palma's Scarface* (Bogue, 1993). The term postmodernism "can be described as a set of critical, strategic and rhetorical practices employing concepts such as difference, repetition, the trace, the simulacrum, and hyperreality to destabilise other concepts such as presence, identity, historical progress, epistemic certainty, and the univocity of meaning." (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2015).

Postmodernism can be seen as a rejection of modernism, but also a continuation of it. Arising after World War II, the world sought to find a way to deal with the trauma of war and found the grand narratives of modernism (the power of human beings to create, improve and reshape their environment with the aid of practical experimentation, scientific knowledge, or technology) (Wikipedia) inadequate due to the misguided pursuit of scientific and technological knowledge leading to the creation of weapons of mass destruction during World War II (Duigan, 2014).

As one of the first thinkers to coin the term, Jean-Francois Lyotard would say, "Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity towards metanarratives" (Lyotard, 1979). In other words, postmodernism is seen as a nihilistic rejection of all sorts of overarching assertions, grand narratives, or attempts at imposing meaning upon the world. Through the course of reading through the papers which attempt to look for traces of postmodernism in popular culture, I agree with this definition.

With self-reflexivity, ironic detachment and criticism of grand narratives becoming increasingly prevalent in popular culture (seen in the increasingly common use of literary techniques such as breaking the fourth wall, with *Fleabag* (2013), *House of Cards* (2013) and *Deadpool* (2016) being examples), academic discussions of these trends have also risen in tandem. Most of the academic discussions of postmodernism in literature and popular culture, such as "Postmodern literature: Practices and Theory" (Sheeba, 2018) and "Postmodern American Fiction" (Green, 2003), agree upon the use of key postmodern thinkers and their concepts for a postmodern analysis of texts, namely the works of Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jean Baudrillard being commonly used to categorise works as postmodern. Particularly with Baudrillard's concept of simulacra, and a criticism of what Lyotard terms as metanarratives and Derrida's concept of the core, as they are considered to be some of the most noticeable figures in the field of academic discussion on postmodernism.

2.2 Post-postmodernism

Discussions of New Sincerity in culture (film, TV, and literature) have been largely limited to discussions of artifacts mostly regarded by the general public as lying on the fringes of culture due to their perceived inaccessibility, greatly due to it being a relatively new movement compared to prior concepts, such as postmodernism. Examples include early -twentieth-century literature, in the works of Joseph Conrad (Ophir, 2012) and the works of Andre Gide (Collignon, 1951) in their existentialist treatment of themes of sincerity, self-expression, and authenticity, or within American literature, especially in *The Road* and

its treatment of the frequently discussed existential theme of despair and hope (Woodson, 2008).

In response to postmodernism, the new sincerity movement was a trend within many forms of culture including art, literature, film, television and philosophy. It is argued to have begun in the 1980s or 1990s and emerged as a reaction to postmodernism, thus its other name, post-postmodernism. It is seen as an attempt to move away from the cynicism and nihilism of postmodernism, with its criticism of metanarratives (Lyotard, 1979), ironic detachment and deconstruction of everything (Derrida, 1967). Since the late 1990s, there has been a small but growing feeling both in popular culture and in academia that postmodernism has gone out of fashion. (Potter, Garry and Lopez, 2001). However, there have been few formal attempts to define the era of post-postmodernism succeeding postmodernism, but none of the proposed designations has been officially confirmed. Post-postmodernism also involves its rejection of postmodernism's criticism of metanarratives, where an "overarching" story gives context, meaning and purpose and to all means of life. This means that post-postmodernist ideals do not reject metanarratives' attempts to legitimise life. For instance, existing racial superiority in our current society can be seen as an example of a metanarrative. David Foster Wallace's essay "E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S Fiction" (1993) is widely considered a manifesto for the movement, especially with its line:

> The old postmodern insurgents risked the gasp and squeal: shock, disgust, outrage, censorship, accusations of socialism, anarchism, nihilism. Today's risks are different. The new rebels might be artists willing to risk the yawn, the rolled eyes, the cool smile, the nudged ribs, the parody of gifted ironists, the 'Oh how banal'. To risk accusations of sentimentality, melodrama. Of overcredulity. Of softness. Of

willingness to be suckered by a world of lurkers and starers who fear gaze and

ridicule above imprisonment without law. (pg. 82)

The evident disapproval and vehement rejection of characteristics of postmodernism has been

a fundamental principle behind the new sincerity movement. A reversion to sincerity and

hope whilst simultaneously acknowledging the nihilistic revelations and rejection of

metanarratives of postmodernism, the literary and philosophical works associated with the

movement have been influenced by this line.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Through the lens of post-postmodernism , I have analysed the two movies' contents,

mainly their plots, characters and themes, and zoomed in to analyse individual scenes. I have

decided to put the focus on scenes that are more iconic and/or significant in relation to the

concepts for the purpose of this paper. For instance, scenes which clearly portray the

existentialist themes of identity and individual choice empowered by family members in

Endgame (2019) with its relevance to post-postmodernism will be analysed.

Taking on a combination of approaches to film analysis, I will study those scenes by

the "iconic" approach (analysis of visual and aural aspects) and "shot-by-shot" approach

(focusing on individual scenes). By looking at the scenes shot by shot, the visuals and audio

of the scene will be taken into account when analysing what the scene conveys. I will sort

those scenes in accordance to key features of post-postmodernism, such as existentialism. By

comparing scenes from the two movies which appear to convey or relate to the same feature,

for example the self-determination of fate, I can effectively study the different forms in which the concept manifests itself in.

Chapter 4: Discussion, Interpretations and Analysis

4.1 Choice and Fate

In both films, the portrayal of individual choice and the characters' (no matter protagonist or antagonist) decision to determine their own, the nation, or the world's fate can be observed. This forms ties with the concept of post-postmodernism, which believes that authenticity, sincerity, faith and trust can work to transcend the irony of postmodernism.

For instance In *Endgame,* Thanos's made the choice to maintain balance in the world to decide its fate, but the Avengers' made the choice to reverse the unfair genocide of the innocent people. Thanos had a nihilistic and utilitarian approach, as he viewed the elimination of life as a necessary condition to ensure sustainability, and thus, he resorted to extreme means to wipe out half of the population to ensure that the Earth's resources will not be drained due to overpopulation. It is through the Avengers' rejection of his actions that we can see the Avengers' conscious effort to reject Thanos's views and decisions. Perhaps one of the most iconic and known quotes that appeared in *Endgame* and in the previous movie in the franchise, *Infinity War*, is Thanos's line, "I am inevitable." In popular culture, this quote has been widely seen as a "meme". However, I feel that this catchphrase, which is usually not taken very seriously, has a greater significance for the purpose of this paper. His use of the absolute "inevitable" suggests his determination that his plans will not and cannot be

interfered with. He firmly believes that he was destined to achieve balance in the universe. He does not question the possibility of his plans being stopped by any external influences, be it the resistance of the Avengers, or the necessary sacrifices that need to be made. For example, in *Infinity War* (2018), Thanos showed a vulnerable and emotional side when retrieving the soul stone, for he needed to throw his own daughter, Gamora, off the cliff to exchange "a soul for a soul." This perhaps fortified his sense of duty and determination to serve his cause to prevent overpopulation. His usage of "I" in the statement also evokes the sense that he is the entity that is the epicenter of this predetermined end. However, the Avengers' fought back, utilising time travel to retrieve the stones before Thanos could to prevent him from reaching his aim. This successful defiance of that ending highlights the existentialist beliefs that the living human experience and a human's sentient choice to be alive should be prized over the ultimate outcome or goal of ensuring Earth's sustainability, which can link to post-postmodernism's existential beliefs of one's individual choice to live.

Another iconic scene is when Scarlet Witch delivered her line, "you took everything from me." In *Infinity War* (2018), Thanos had to retrieve the mind stone embedded in Vision, Scarlet Witch's lover's forehead, in order to power his Infinity Gauntlet. Scarlet Witch had to destroy the mind stone with her powers while fending off Thanos. This was extremely tortuous and devastating, as the destruction of the stone on Vision's forehead would ultimately result in his death, meaning that to prevent Thanos from reaching his aims, she had to kill her own lover. After the deed was done, she was visibly trembling as she mourned the loss of her lover, after already losing her brother, Quick Silver, in a previous movie in the franchise. It hurts her so much, especially since she has to kill Vision with her own hands. It results in the internal conflict which can be seen heavily tormenting her in her furrowed

brows and lost eyes, as her relationship with Vision battles with her conscience to do the right thing to stop Thanos.

Avengers: Infinity War (2018): her lips visibly trembling after Vision asked her to destroy the stone.

At the final confrontation between Scarlet Witch and Thanos, her line presents a hopeless and bleak image, filled with anguish and rage. This effectively raises the sympathy of the viewer, as the sacrifices of innocent people that needed to be made were extremely unbearable as they were unethical to the common person. It also brings across the elements of hopelessness in the postmodern movement. Thanos replied with, "I don't even know who you are." Scarlet Witch then replied with utmost surety, "you will." Her battle for all she has lost shows her will to protect herself from losing anything else. The hopelessness in the first line is then contrasted with her moving determination and sheer unfathomable power, where she

single-handedly, with her bare powers, broke Thanos's blade while nobody else could, before stripping away and "plucking off" Thanos's armour. This made Thanos, who was determined he was not going to be stopped, resort to calling upon the help from the mothership's ammunition to stop Scarlet Witch. Her will makes her revert to sincerity in her fight against Thanos. This is significant to the post-postmodernist movement, for the elements of individual choice and the power and ability of humans to determine their own fates are clearly presented here.

In *Black Panther* (2018) too, Erik wanted to extend Wakanda's outreach by sharing its technology with the black community throughout the world to free them from their suppression, while T'Challa made the choice and felt that Wakanda should not weaponise the black outsiders and only fight when absolutely necessary. Like *Endgame* (2019), the hero and villain of *Black Panther* (2018) have different ethical values. T'Challa understands that Wakanda only survived for so long as they hid their power from the outside world, while Erik fought for the greater good at the expense of widespread violence. At the beginning of the film, Nakia, T'Challa's ex-girlfriend, was on a mission to rescue those who were kidnapped, and T'Challa ended it quickly so that she could return to make it for his crowning to become the new king. From this, we can see similarities in Nakia and Erik's motives, as they wish to utilise what Wakanda has to help those desperate of aid. However, T'Challa is unsure of how or whether to expand its outreach to the rest of the world, despite knowing that Wakanda has the ability to make a difference.

Through both movies, the portrayal of the characters' conscious individual choice and defiance of their predetermined purpose or end are representative of the post-postmodernist elements that are extremely similar to existentialist themes.

4.2 Importance of Family

In both movies, the drive from the characters' relationships with their family members appears to be of major influence to them. It is the main fuel to the characters' determination to fight for themselves and their arrival at hope.

4.2.1 *Endgame*, Nebula and Gamora

Gamora and her sister, Nebula, were portrayed to have a love-hate sister relationship. Near the end of the movie, Nebula from the past was in a faceoff against Gamora in the past and Nebula from the present and held each other at gunpoint. The Nebula from the past insisted on being loyal to his father, Thanos, and thought she would never join the Avengers to betray his father. Nebula, even knowing how cruel her father was, was still filial to him. The Nebula from the present urged her, "you don't have to do this," but the Nebula from the past insisted, "I am, this." She suggested that her duty to help her father's plans was a part of her, and it was an obligation that mattered so greatly to her that it was part of her identity. Considering her previous identity as an assassin, her cold-hearted and obedient nature was not surprising. However, when Gamora told her to listen to the Nebula from the present that "(she) could change," tears could be seen welling up in the past Nebula's eyes.

Avengers: Endgame (2019): Nebula being genuinely hopeful that she could change

Despite being a cyborg, she was genuinely hopeful that she could change and break away from the chains of his father's control. She knew what she wanted, and she could transcend beyond her robotic nature to experience heartfelt emotions. Past Nebula then replied, "he won't let me," and was shifting her gun to shoot Gamora. The Nebula from the present, pulled the trigger on the Nebula from the past, killing her instantly. From a post-postmodern perspective, Nebula's desires to lead her own life is an intangible manifestation of post-postmodernism's fortification of personal individuality and choice. This scene is symbolic in showing how the old Nebula is dead, and she chose her sister and justice over her sense of duty to help his father. Though the aim is good, the means are malicious, and Nebula could not bring herself to do that. This is also significant, as Nebula and Gamora were portrayed in another movie, *Guardians of the Galaxy 2* (2017), to love and hate each other at the same time due to their competitiveness.

Nebula: I win, I bested you in combat.

Gamora: … I'm not the one who just flew across the universe just because I wanted to win.

Nebula: Do not tell me what I want… You were the one who wanted to win and I just wanted a sister!

Guardians of the Galaxy: Vol. 2 (2017): Gamora after hearing Nebula's wish

They accused each other of always wanting to win, but it ended when Nebula exclaimed that she "just wanted a sister." Dramatic music starts to play, as Gamora appears to understand what her sister wants, and her expression seems to soften under the glowing light of the fire. The scene in *Endgame* perhaps shows how Nebula's wish has come true, as the two have reached solidarity because they share the same vision, and support each other in hope of a better future, and a better version of themselves. The bonds forged between family members will rid them of their nihilistic and skeptical views towards justice, and in turn, to fight for good.

4.2.2 T'Challa's Relationship with his Father

In *Black Panther* (2018) as well, the familial ties between the two main characters, T'Challa and Erik, were portrayed. This was through the scenes where they received the heart-shaped crop when they were crowned king of Wakanda. The heart-shaped crop gave them the ability to enter the Ancestral Plane, and allowed them to speak to their deceased fathers. This father-son tie is significant, as they both wanted to continue the legacies of their fathers. This fuelled their visions and determination to decide the fate of Wakanda, which forms ties with post-postmodernism. After T'Challa's victory in the tribal battle when his position of king was challenged, his superpowers of the Black Panther were restored by a drink made from the heart-shaped herb, taking him to the Ancestral Plane, where he met his father. The star-studded and purplish-blue tinged sky appeared extremely dreamy and mesmerising, which can add to the atmosphere to appear more hopeful.

Black Panther (2018): T'Challa meeting his father in the Ancestral Plane

T'Challa: I'm sorry

T'Chaka: Stand up. You are a king.

After T'Challa apologised, T'Chaka ordered for him to "stand up," as "(he was) a king." This can be a significant line, as it fueled T'Challa's desire to be a proper ruler of the country. T'Challa took the responsibility passed down from his father extremely seriously. He

mentioned his unpreparedness to be king, and that he was not ready to be without his father. T'Chaka then replied, "a man who has not prepared their children for his own death has failed as a father." T'Chaka has been seen by T'Challa as a role model, and not only as a father, but a mentor as well. T'Challa was motivated to do his best, as he did not want his father to think that he had "failed" in his duties as a father. The loss of his father became the source of T'Challa's strength to fight for his own country and protect it. The death of his father birthed the sincere efforts of T'Challa to rule the country properly.

4.2.3 Erik's Relationship with his Father

Just like T'Challa, even though Erik was considered the antagonist in the movie, his hopes and motivation to overthrow T'Challa's current style of leadership were similarly fuelled by his desire to carry on the legacy of his father. This is significant to the hopeful and elements of sincerity pertaining to post-postmodernism. Erik's father, N'Jobu, was killed by his own brother for stealing vibranium to aid others. Erik Killmonger, when taken to the Ancestral Plane, got a flashback of when he discovered his father dead in his apartment back in 1992. When Erik first entered the room, he was seen wearing the same hoodie he wore when he discovered the death of N'Jobu, which signifies how Erik has never truly moved past his death. N'Jobu was seen speaking to young Erik about his home, Wakanda, which was unknown to Erik at the time. N'Jobu presented a hopeful approach when he recalled the sunsets in Wakanda being "the most beautiful in the world." He wished for Erik to carry on his cause and go to Wakanda to see it, but warned him that he "may not be welcome" and he will be seen to be "lost". This emphasises the divide between the homeland of Wakanda and the diaspora. Compared to T'Challa which showed obvious signs of genuine emotion of

longing to his father, Erik did not seem to expose his feelings at first. When N'Jobu asked, "no tears for me?" Erik replied, "everybody dies, that's just life around here." This is crucial in making Erik an empathetic villain, as it hurts to see how a child like him has been numbed and desensitised to the extreme when growing up that the death of his own father was something so casual and nonchalant to him. N'Jobu can be seen with regret in his eyes to see what his son has become.

Black Panther (2018): N'Jobu, full of regret, "Well, look at what I've done."

Faint sirens could still be heard in the background, even in the Ancestral Plane, which shows how the unrest in the American neighbourhood he grew up in has never left him, leaving an endless mark. N'Jobu then said, "look at what I've done." He seemed to be blaming himself, as his betrayal and eventual death has made Erik the way he was then. Erik suggested that the one "lost" is the homeland itself, not them, which was why they could not find them. This was said with determination, and it marks the beginning of Erik's fight to recraft and rule Wakanda the right way, the way he thought was right.

Therefore, from a post-postmodernist view, the father figure to both the protagonist and the antagonist can be seen to be the main inspiration and motivation for their hopes and

aspirations for the nation. Their motive is not cynical, they are clear of what they and their parents want. These are portrayed similarly in both movies, for that family held a great place in these superheroes' hearts.

4.3 Significance of Technology

Metanarratives, according to Lyotard, is the concept that postmodernists doubted. The era of postmodernism rejected the larger truth or defining story, and one of such metanarratives is the explanations that science provides to the world's questions. It is evident that Wakanda has accepted the metanarrative of science, as its vibranium resources have enabled them to develop their technology to extreme heights. Wakanda's weapons and machines were extremely futuristic, and were unable to be produced by any other nation in the world.

Black Panther (2018): Shuri showing T'Challa her newest inventions

One specific example of a scene which shows Wakanda's technological prowess is in Shuri's lab. Shuri, T'Challa's younger sister, was a technological genius, and she was in charge of all of Wakanda's technological innovations. After T'Challa was crowned king, he visited Shuri's lab, which was filled with futuristic looking contraptions, where Shuri showed him her newest inventions. For example, her fully automated shoes were made "completely sound-absorbent." This is nearly impossible to accomplish in real life, and only more effectively portrays the scientific abilities and power Wakanda possesses. Throughout the movie, technology has been a constant in the plot. Ranging from the newly developed kinetic energy-absorbing black panther suit to the remote driving system which allows Shuri to navigate a car in another country from her own lab, technology is always present and embraced in Wakanda.

In *Endgame*, technology also has a major role in the development of the plot. In the movie, the Avengers learnt from Thanos that the stones have been destroyed, and they had no way of retrieving the stones to power the Infinity Gauntlet to revive the lives which were destroyed. Upon Antman's accidental discovery of time travel, Iron man then agrees to work on a time-travel machine which could bring the Avengers back in time to retrieve the stones and power the Gauntlet to reverse what Thanos has done. From this, it can be seen that the concepts of physical time travel and quantum mechanics are dealt with in the plot, and is heavily utilised by the Avengers to do justice for the innocent lives destroyed. Similar to *Black Panther*, the metanarrative of science is used as a tool for the Avengers to stop Thanos from reaching his aims. The functions of science served the purpose of the hopes of the Avengers to bring back those who have been unfairly erased from the face of the world.

5.0 Conclusion

From my analysis and findings, it can be concluded that it is an observable trend that filmmakers in popular culture include elements of post-postmodernism, such as existentialism and sincere hope, into their films. These elements perhaps help to aid in the depth and content of the film, as the screenwriters' development of a complex and empathetic villain and representation of a positive and hopeful perspective make the storylines of these works extra fulfilling and satisfying.

Both movies also utilise futuristic technology and science-fiction as an outlet to achieve that happy ending. Though, in the case of both movies, not only was technology embraced, it was also a primary cause of conflict. In *Black Panther* (2018), Erik wanted to use Wakanda's technology to fight and overthrow supremacist systems, and in *Endgame* (2019), future Nebula's memories were accessible by Thanos through past Nebula's database, which granted them the knowledge of the Avengers' plans, which made them interfere. This can be seen as a cautionary tale that we cannot be fooled by the rosy semblance of technology.

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