Captain America: Disassembling Traditional Narratives

Audrey Garcia • Mentored by Prof. Eyal Amiran • UC Irvine • April 2021
World War II: Joe Simon and Jack Kirby’s Original Captain America
Watergate and the Post-Nixon Era - Steve Englehart’s Captain America and The Falcon: Secret Empire
Watergate → Captain America becomes Nomad, “man without a country”

Literal redefining of who Captain America is

Breaks established binary from World War II era
9/11 and its Aftermath – Ed Brubaker and Mark Millar’s Civil War and Epilogue
CIVIL WAR

- Attempts to re-establish the definite binary; parallels Pearl Harbor
- American hero -- domestic terrorist
EPILOGUE

- “Death of a dream” -- Death of the traditional American Dream?
- Death of personal liberties (Patriot Act)
Present Conflict – Ta-Nehisi Coates’ Captain America and Legend of Steve
NEW CHARACTERISTICS FOUND IN COATES’ CAP

- Dedication to ideologies over American government
- Anticipates post-Trump era
- Daughters of Liberty
- Crumbling binary -- American values become increasingly vague
I can't speak for what was, and I've never condoned terror.

But isn't the law the law? All countries have borders. If we start condoning illegal activity--

Wait. Hold on, Papi. Last I checked, you were wanted for murder. It don't get more illegal than that.

And this is the border. Pick up a newspaper. Ain't no law down there.
“They could jail the revolutionary, but they could never jail the revolution. And the Daughters of Liberty rise to meet to it.”
The Parallel Between Motives
Captain America: the Other and Racial Tensions
CAPTAIN AMERICA ON THE OUTSIDE

- No “glory days”
- History of racist government policies leads to 1970’s awakening
- New Captain Americas: Sam Wilson, Isaiah Bradley, and Samantha Wilson
Captain America as the (Domestic) Terrorist
COMPLICATING THE POLITICAL BODY

- Regular Vigilante Status → Demolishes binary
- Cap not the traditional Other
- Challenges/expands views of terrorism
- Position as the Other expands the definition of American
"For nearly two hundred years, the spirit of freedom has never been forgotten here--"

"And for that reason, countless men and women, crushed under the brutal heel of totalitarianism, have been able to keep alive their dreams of liberation."

"This is bigger than you or any other individual, Cap! It's bigger than all of us!"