



Journal
of
Literature
and
Drama
Studies

e-ISSN: 2791-6553 ★ Volume 2.2 ★ December 2022

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Editor's Preface*

* Ankit Raj
Guest Editor

Myths, Archetypes and the Literary Arts

I have been fascinated with stories ever since my childhood, more so with the recurring nature of certain tropes and motifs that transcend geographical, temporal and cultural barriers and surface in the unlikeliest of places. Our oldest tales hold compelling power, for not only are they timeless enough to be remembered down the ages, they continue to give us meaning, purpose, guidance and solace till the present day in the form of oral tales, songs, cinema, theatre, comic books, video games, and literature.

When Dr. Önder Çakırtaş and Marietta Kosma asked me to edit a themed issue of the journal, I succumbed to my fondness for stories and proposed that we bring together an issue that examines how myths and archetypes, originating from our collective unconscious, in turn shape our collective consciousness and with it our collective knowledge, and leave imprints in our creative expression such as literature, theatre, film, graphic novels and comics, music, video games, and more. I had hoped for this issue to be eclectic in its scope, and so it turned out as we received fine contributions that delve into the study of myths and archetypes in many forms of literary expression—film, fiction and non-fiction, drama, poetry, comic books, and stand-up comedy.

Michael Filas reads the protagonist Carol from Todd Haynes' 1995 film *Safe* as a tragic archetype, and aligns the indices of COVID-19 pandemic life (face masks and social isolation for safety) with Carol's similar response to her illness. Soham Mukherjee and Dr. Madhumita Roy analyse how Albanian writer Ismail Kadare uses myths to make sense of the national condition of Albania from the beginning of World War II until the early 2000s when Albania began its process of recuperating from the Balkan Wars in the 1990s. Shuvam Das, towards his aim to examine the superhero myth in manga, performs a poststructuralist reading of *One-Punch Man* and *My Hero*



Academia to draw parallels between Albert Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus* and Japanese superhero manga, examining how these works deal with the existential question about the meaning of life. Continuing the theme of superheroes is Kelvin Ke Jinde as he draws upon Plato's idea of the auxiliary class and Joseph Campbell's monomyth to read the superhero in the Marvel Cinematic Universe as a modern version of the auxiliary class and shows how the MCU re-mythologises Plato's auxiliary class for contemporary culture. Riccardo Gramantieri studies Henrik Ibsen's *Ghosts* with the aim to use the character Oswald Alving as a model and offer a different interpretation of the literary work in which Oswald moves. Towards this end, Gramantieri interprets the plot of the play and lends support to the schizophrenic theory of Oswald's illness using Carl Jung's archetypal theory. Bhishma Kumar and Sovan Chakraborty apply concepts of primitive mythology to discuss Mary Oliver's fictional and non-fictional works, concentrating on how a sense of place and nature can be felt and treated respectively by going beyond the ego-centric attitude of human beings. Hampton D. Harmon, in an effort to holistically understand the influence of stand-up comedy on American culture, identifies the religious nature of comedian Bill Hicks' work and self-presentation through the Judeo-Christian concepts of "messiah" and "prophet." Harmon presents a case study and close reading of Bill Hicks' televised special *Revelations*, evaluating the latter's comedy as a fulfilment of the prophetic archetype. Stella Chitralkha Biswas reviews *Ahalya*, the first novel in the Sati series by Koral Dasgupta, which is a retelling of the well-known mythological account of a hapless woman and her plight under the brunt of a patriarchal social order. In her review, Biswas stresses that *Ahalya* can also be read as celebrating what it means to be a "woman" rather than emphatically laying claims on the erasure of gender differences.

I would like to thank the contributors who trusted the journal with their fine writing. I am also immensely grateful to Dr. Önder Çakırtaş, Marietta Kosma, the esteemed editorial board, the



learned referees and the skilled technical team for helping me bring the issue to life.

As we enter a new year with hopes for a pandemic-free era and fears that the virus may not be gone altogether, I pray this year brings health, happiness and fulfilment to all.