

Call for Papers for Special Issue of
Essence & Critique: Journal of Literature and
Drama Studies

on

Myths, Archetypes and the Literary Arts

Essence & Critique: Journal of Literature and Drama Studies (ISSN 2791-6553) invites submissions for a special issue of the journal on **Myths, Archetypes and the Literary Arts**.

Ever since humans came into being, stories have been our constant companions. Be it the orally transmitted tales of our early ancestors or the physically enacted, handwritten, printed, and now digitalized modes of storytelling; if there are some things that haven't changed over the course of human history, one is our enchantment with stories. As cognition grew in humans and led to the birth of civilizations, stray stories assumed the form of myths, often rooted in folklore and religion, and continue to offer meaning, purpose, guidance and solace to peoples from different cultures around the world. Regardless of the temporal, geographical and ethnic diversity in the stories created by humans, recurring tropes and motifs abound and are often summed under the term "archetype". Drawing from areas such as theology, anthropology, psychology and literature, the concept of archetypes is timeless, universal and has remained ingrained in human consciousness since archaic times. An archetype can be: a recurring trope or motif in mythology, literature or art; a universally present thought, idea or image residing in the collective unconscious of individuals; a Platonic idea referring to pure fundamental forms which every other art form tends to imitate; or a prototype that serves as the original model for objects to copy. Treatises on the subject of archetypes can be traced back to Plato, who described ideas or "eidos" as pure constructs of the human mind that were an inherent part of the soul since before it was born into the world. All worldly things, in Plato's opinion, are imperfect copies. Twentieth-century analytical psychology studies archetypes as "primordial images" or "archaic remnants," phrases coined by Carl Jung who in his *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious* (1968) identifies the collective unconscious of the human mind as the abode of archetypes that are more or less similar in all individuals. Primordial images, Jung believes, are born during the initial stages of human evolution and have been part of the collective unconscious ever since. It is through these images that archetypes are experienced universally and more importantly, that the unconscious reveals itself. Jung contends that the mind of every human contains these inherent unconscious understandings of the human condition and the collective knowledge of humankind in the collective unconscious. The anthropological origins of archetypal criticism date back to Sir James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1890-1915), the first influential text dealing with cultural mythologies, wherein Frazer studies and compares primitive and modern religions

and brings out the beliefs and practices inherent and common to all religions. Joseph Campbell, the twentieth-century comparative mythologist, lectured in a similar vein in his seminal text *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949) and in several volumes on mythologies from across cultures, inspiring popular imagination and expression including George Lucas' *Star Wars* franchise.

The massive ontological and epistemological changes since the world wars, the decline of European colonies, the rise of global capitalism, the internet revolution, and more recently the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic have forever altered our notions of truth and knowledge, not sparing art and literature in their wake as the very concepts of genre, narrative and meaning are blurred in a world of multiple truths and realities. Notwithstanding the supposed collapse of grand narratives, myths and archetypes abound and stay topical in contemporary experience and expression, lurking both in plain sight and at times in the unlikeliest of places, as in—the monomyth (or the hero quest) narrative in the works of postmodern writers such as Kurt Vonnegut, Thomas Pynchon and Tom Robbins; the Biblical allusions in the discographies of Scandinavian metal bands; the creation myths and cosmogonies modelled on religion in superhero comics and cinema (most recently Zack Snyder's *Justice League* and Marvel's *Eternals*); and video games inspired from myth and folklore, to name a few instances.

The special issue of the journal aims to examine how myths and archetypes, originating from our collective unconscious, in turn shape our collective consciousness and with it our collective knowledge, and leave imprints (both advertently and inadvertently) in our creative expression such as literature, theatre, film, graphic novels and comics, music, video games, and more.

Possible lines of thought may include but are not limited to:

- Locating myths and archetypes in works considered devoid of them
- Refuting and/or redefining existing studies on the subject
- Employing archetypal and myth criticism to explain seemingly unrelated works
- Understanding contemporary events and popular culture with myths and archetypes
- Reassessing the relevance of myths and archetypes in life and the literary arts

Authors are invited to email 4000-8000 word papers (prepared as per MLA guidelines) in an anonymous document along with the paper title, abstract, keywords, author name(s), author affiliation(s) and bio-note in a separate document to araj@hs.iitr.ac.in and essencecritiquejournal@gmail.com with the subject line “[author name(s)] – E&C Special Issue Submission” before **May 31st, 2022**. The issue will be published in **August 2022**.

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