

Myth and Cult in Literature

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The journal essays focus on exploring the different dimensions which myths take in literature. The articles are broadly classed under nine heads. These include: Greek Mythology in Literature, Indian Mythology in Literature, Native American Myth, Comparative Mythology, Myth and Cult in Christianity, Myth and Cult in Literary Criticism, Psychodynamics of the Myth in Life and Literature, Paradox of Life and Death and Modern Myth Making Process.

The first essay titled, “The Myth of India in History, the American Classroom, and Indian-American Fiction” by Dorothy Figueira examines how the present is shaped by competing pasts and in doing so it not only remakes the present, but creates a new past and redefines identity through an act of memory. In such instances, history may be elevated to myth, when the needs of the present are read into the past and an image of the past is imposed on the present. She discusses how Indian diasporic identity can be studied as a myth. She focuses on the initial myth of Indian identity, the discourse concerning Aryans which gave historical value to ancient Indian history, contributing to identity politics during the colonial and nationalist periods. She examines the work of several Indian diasporic authors to see how a postmodern Indian identity is fashioned in this body of work.

Shireen Vakil’s essay on “Seamus Heaney” illustrates how Heaney shuns the Yeatsian use of Celtic myth, in favour of a more secular or disruptive myth to express the predicament of his country. One of the ways in which he approaches the subject is through the use of Nordic myths of Jutland that gives him an analogy with the violence of the North. Heaney was influenced by P.V. Glob’s book, *The Bog People*, which described the findings of Iron Age ritual killings in Denmark. It was evident that many of the corpses that were unearthed had a violent death, a fact that resonated with Heaney’s larger concerns of the socio-political situation in Northern Ireland. Her article examines some of the Bog poems from *North*, to show Heaney’s reworking of the myth of the motherland, one that speaks not of ‘a terrible beauty’ being born, but of a more active militancy that challenges and questions the status quo.

Greek Mythology in English Literature

Shreya Chatterji’s essay, “The Fictionalised Life of Alexander the Great in the Novels of Valerio Massimo Manfredi” while dealing with the life of the great hero also endorses

the view that myths and legends bring about the resurrection of hopes and values in the context of culture. They impart invaluable life lessons and provide an iconic figure to emulate and look up to. She believes that we can trace it, in the modern context, to the neuro-linguistic, psychological models. The feelings that ensue are awe and admiration, and the need for confrontation with basic human truths. Such myths and their retellings afford elevated thoughts, learning and perhaps even an application in everyday life.

Sugandha Indulkar's, "Harry Potter's Greek Connection", traces J.K. Rowling's popular Harry Potter series of books to ancient Greek mythology to decode its success, value and appeal. She quotes from cultural historian Jacques Barzun to endorse her point of view that, "What links myth with literature is the imagination."

Indian Mythology in Literature

Ambreen Safder Kharbe's essay, "Mythological Exploration in *The Thousand Faces Of Night, Where Shall We Go This Summer* and *A Matter Of Time*" argues that mythological themes in Indian literature first bear its most influential and destiny defying traces in the two epics, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. The protagonist Sita in *Where Shall We Go This Summer* recalls the qualities of Lord Rama's wife Sita in the *Ramayana* and is given an emblematic stance, for patiently bearing and partaking all her suffering in life. *A Matter of Time* reflects myths from *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad* and *Katha Upanishad*. Deshpande in this novel rewrites myth. The three sections of the novel deal with three different Indian myths. The paper further explores the relationship of the protagonist with the great epics *The Mahabharata* and *The Ramayana* and the *Upanishads*, in the current context, by decoding myth.

Lakshmi Muthukumar's essay, "Problematizing R.K.Narayan's Use of Myth in *The Man-Eater of Malgudi*" seeks to show how Narayan uses a re-telling of the Bhasmasura myth in modern terms in order to scrutinize the social practice of gender, especially masculinity, in middle class upper caste Southern India. Narayan's location as an upper caste South Indian Brahmin is itself problematic and immediately makes him vulnerable to allegations of being classist and exclusionist as a novelist.

Muktaja Mathkari's essay, "Stereotypical Laxmanrekha and Rama Mehata's *Inside the Haveli*", explores the symbol of the Laxmanrekha, to indicate that it is a symbol of patriarchal control over female movement and how retribution must follow if there is transgression on the part of a woman. She shows how deep uprooted it is in the

racial unconscious of the Indian Patriarchal society and how it is reflected not only in this novel but also in other Indian texts.

Shyaonti Talwar's, "Mythicising Women who Make a Choice: A Prerogative of the Indian Collective Unconscious to Demarcate Modesty and Right Conduct for Women" discusses the Indian woman's predicament. She argues that whenever she displays the power to make a human choice, she is either mythicized and turned into a supernatural being or glorified and put on a pedestal to be worshipped so that there is a sense of separateness or a distance between her and the multitudes she represents. These women include: Sati, Radha, Kunti, Draupadi, Shakuntala and others. This sends a strong message forbidding the Indian woman to replicate their acts and through this inherent paradox and duplicity, the rules for a woman's conduct in Indian society are established.

Sushila Vijaykumar's , " Mythic Reworkings in Girish Karnad's *Yayati* and *The Fire and the Rain*" examines the Yayati myth in the *Adiparva* of the *Mahabharata* and deals with the father-son exchange of ages and the theme of responsibility. The second part returns to the Yavakri myth and the parallel Vritra myth in the *Vanaparva*, the third book of the *Mahabharata* to explore Brahmin power-struggles and fratricidal anxieties.

Titiksha Dhruv's essay, "Being Draupadi – Three Takes" focuses on Draupadi, the powerful female character of the epic *The Mahabharata* . She has shown how the Draupadi myth has been revived and explored by three contemporary women novelists, these include - Dr Pratibha Ray's *Yajnaseni*, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Palace of Illusions* and Kajal Oza Vaidya's *Draupadi*. In all these stories Draupadi remains a multifaceted personality who could be fiery and angry when the situation called for and also exhibit a compassionate nature. She becomes a role model and encourages people to face life with the same inner strength that she did.

Uddhav Ashturkar's essay, "Arun Kolatkar's 'Yeshwant Rao': A Stylistic View of the Mythical Text" examines one of the notable representative mythical poems. He uses the theory of linguistic criticism to establish that the text has got its own universe and the meaning lies in the same universe. Moreover the linguistic theory claims to be comprehensive because it offers a complete account of the structure of language at all levels, that is, phonology, lexis, graphology, syntax and semantics. Besides, the terminology of linguistics is systematic since language itself is a system of systems.

Native American Myth

Priya Joseph's essay, "The Reworking of the Hero Myth in *The Lost Steps*", traces the journey of the narrator, into the South American jungles in search of musical instruments used by the indigenous people. The journey into the primordial jungle releases him from the bondage of time and offers up alternate routes. The mode of magic realism and the use of literary references ranging across the Bible and European literature across ages necessitate the integration of myths from across the seas with native born myths into the weave of the narrative. The narrator's journey reworks the story of the classic questing hero, told many times over in different histories and which has resonated in the trials and triumphs of humanity.

Sindhu Sara Thomas' essay "Recovering Black Women's Subjectivity Through Reconstructed Myths in Toni Morrison's Fiction", focuses on Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* and *Tar Baby*, two novels in which she undermines Western and African American myths that disempower and devalue Black womanhood. It also examines Morrison's retrieval of the myth of flight from its western formulation and its reconstruction in order to recover the subjectivity of women signifying identity, community and survival.

Comparative Mythology

Kaustav Kundu's essay, "Mythical Cycles & Postcolonial Dreams: Contextualizing the Kaleidoscope of Ben Okri's Magical Realism" focuses on Ben Okri's use of dreams, as a central part of his magical realist technique in *The Famished Road* and its sequel *Songs of Enchantment*, and what purpose they serve in his viewpoint of postcolonial Nigeria. At one level, these dreams link the traditional, the mythical, and the modern. At another level, however, these dreams can be linked to a broader understanding of culture and society, to further the concept of magical realism and dreams in a transcultural context. He tries to ascertain that the noisy congruence of disparate cultural forces, usually taken as characteristic of cosmopolitan narrative, in Okri's works become a conduit into the more bizarre conjunctions of a feverishly visionary Africa.

Shalini R Sinha's essay, "Resurgence of Myths and Legends in Contemporary Literature of Indian English in an Emergent India", explores the resurgence of interest in Indian mythology today and shows that it coincides with the economic development of the nation and thus expresses the self-confidence of its people. The use of mythology by a few management gurus to provide guidance and direction in the fiercely competitive modern world is also explored. The works of popular

writers like Amish, Ashwin Sanghi and Devdutt Pattnaik are examined, to understand their appeal in the present age, to come to terms with the day to day challenges of life.

Myth and Cult in Christianity

Nazua Idris' essay, "Damsel in Shining Armour and Knights in Distress – Role Reversal of Mythical Gender Archetypes in Shakespearean Comedies" discusses how William Shakespeare reverses the mythical notion of "Damsel in Distress" and "Knight in Shining Armour" in his comedies. The paper focuses upon two of Shakespeare's most beloved comedies, *The Merchant of Venice* and *As You Like It* where we see a reversal of this long-held patriarchal view regarding gender role in society. Portia and Rosalind, the female protagonists of these comedies, not only come out of their own distress but also help the hero and other characters to come out of their crises. She shows how these two women transgress their socially defined role as "Damsel in Distress" and translocate themselves as the "Damsel in Shining Armour" capable of becoming the "saviour" of men and mankind.

Raj K. Dhar's essay, "The Rival Religion of Ted Hughes" explore Hughes' disillusionment with Christianity mainly for its suppression of the sexual impulse which he believed led to the disintegration of man's personality. The powerfulness of priests and their self-importance he observed were at variance with the egalitarianism Christianity professes. Hughes seeks the fulfilment of his spiritual aspirations in eastern mythologies. In the process he creates a mythology of his own and a personal religion too. Hughes's inclination towards Hinduism becomes evident in his later poetical works like *Gaudete*, *Crow*, *Cave Birds* and *River*.

Myth and Cult in Literary Criticism

Kamala Gopalan's essay, "Lost Eden – Springboard to Tell the Story of Another Fall?" describes the loss of an idyllic society, of a people, close to nature, innocent of the wiles and corruption of the Western way of life, and the fall from grace experienced by the protagonists along with their communities. There is a loss of identity and dignity that they experience soon after their encounter with the West. This ambivalence is often compounded by accompanying guilt, again reminiscent of Adam's position after the Fall. The postcolonial moment serves as a springboard to examine the pain and trauma of the colonial encounter itself in these texts.

Kirti Y. Nakhare's essay, "Myths Then and Today: An Analysis of the (Re)creation of the Mahabharata by Women Writers" discusses the view that myths hold an important position in human psychology and society, as it is through them that we can delve into the past and they hold a key to our future. She refers to Carl Jung who expressed his belief that all human societies go through the same stages of intellectual and cultural development and that nature and psyche are the same in all human beings. He thus considered the psychological processes to be manifested in the same way in our expressive behaviour across ages, through our myths. That is why she maintains that we probably have similar birth, evolution myths across cultures. She has examined the works of writers like Shashi Deshpande, Mahasweta Devi, Pratibha Roy and Irawati Karve who have reviewed myths and have creatively interpreted to suit current times.

Psychodynamics of Myth in Life and Literature

Dr. Avinash Desousa's essay, "The Need for an Integrative Model of Myth Making" brings in a viewpoint from a Psychiatrist and Psychotherapist to demonstrate that myth offers a "novel environmental stimuli" which provides participants with a degree of ontological security within their cognizant environment and offer templates for organizing life, assisting during life crises and self-discovery. They may deliver psychological healing and directs human consciousness through various life stages, and for mitigating the potential for psychological fragmentation. Myth narratives play a part in arousing sub-cortical levels in the brain's limbic areas which coordinate affective states. In this sense, myth serves as a neural model for its motor expression ritual.

Shaweta Nanda's paper, "Listening the Unheeded: Women Appropriating and Re telling Myths of Maddened Cassandra and Murderous Medea", explores the possible reasons for and multiple ways in which contemporary women writers engage with classical myths in their works. According to J. Fetterley, myths no longer seem sacrosanct as women writers become "resisting readers" who seek to appropriate, re-vise, re-tell, re-write these "grand" patriarchal narratives from the feminist / 'womanist' point of view. In doing so they radically "novelize" the myths by making them "dialogic" in nature by inserting polyphonic voices and accounts that intend to disrupt hierarchy of the Greek male narrative.

Shilpagauri Ganpule's essay, "Myths of the Origin of Language in World Mythologies" discusses the varied myths relating to the origin of language in different civilizations

and people of all the continents and substantiates how these myths decipher the mystification and perplexity involved in the inscrutable secret of the origin of language.

Paradox of Life and Death

Simi Doley's essay, "Dr. Brian Weiss' *Many Live Many Masters* and *Only Love is Real*" explores the reincarnation myth in these two texts which were based on the author's clinical records. It expounds reincarnation as based on the creative / spiritual evolution of the soul through numerous lifetimes. The mythopoetic descriptions of the author's communications with the highly evolved spirit entities called the Masters provide a subtext for the speculation on the deepest human experiences, needs and aspirations.

Modern Myth Making Process

Abdul Hameed in his essay, "Nathuram Godse in Perspective: The Cult of an Assassin in Indian English Writing" discusses the figure of the assassin whose victim was Mahatma Gandhi. He argues that the assassination of Gandhi, for historical reasons, is linked with the partition of India, for, it was because the partition was there that the Indian government had to share the Reserve Bank balance and it was because Gandhi compelled government to hand over to Pakistan its due of the 55 crores through his fast unto death, that Nathuram Godse and Narayan Apte decided to assassinate him for they believed that Gandhi was delivering "His paternal duty not to India but to Pakistan" Through a reading of selected fictional and nonfictional texts from Indian English Writings and contextualizing them in the historical context, the paper attempts to explore the representation of Nathuram Godse in the said literary corpus.

Biju M.A's essay, "Myths and Legends from Netherworld in Mamang Dai's Novel *The Legends of Pensam*", focuses on the myths and legends of the Adi tribe. He shows how their different beliefs, rituals, ceremonies and shamanism give meaning to their lives in the face of their sense of fear and awe before the great mystery of being. The novel he maintains is powerful enough to evoke a mythical consciousness of the pristine and primeval bond of human beings with nature in the wake of the disturbing human condition of scepticism and the consequent absence of myth in this age.

Sucharita Sarkar's essay, "Ovid's *Metamorphosis* and the Internet: The Myth of Transformation and the Cult of Personality in Blogs", uses Ovid's *Metamorphosis* as a base to deal with the issue of transformation and shows how in the present century, internet-writing offers the most interesting, diverse and startling workings-

out of the myth of transformation. She argues that our online identity is like a re-imagination of the self. Through Facebook profiles and Twitter tweets, Online Chat rooms and Gaming portals one assumes online personas that partially or completely transforms the real self.

Suchetana Banerjee's essay, "*The Bacchae of Euripides, A Communion Rite: Bi o s'enia, imale o si* : If humanity were not, the gods would not be" deals with the dramatic text of Soyinka'. The focus of this analysis is on Soyinka's attempt to translate rituals between cultures and investigate certain political and mythic elements, of the Yoruba as well as the Greek tradition. She also discusses Wole Soyinka's tendency of appropriating his cyclical view of history derived from the Yoruba belief and demonstrates how these myths lead him to the formation of his play world and how ritual enables him to transfer this into drama.

Together the essays here remind us how important myths are to us. In trying to understand them we discover ourselves. Joseph Campbell captures the essence when he says, that myth addresses the deepest psychological needs and motivations of the human race and this is why myth is so similar throughout the world. The story in a particular myth addresses themes that are part of the common needs of all human beings and thus reflect the experience of all human beings across a large segment of time and the planet.