



REPRESENTING THE EVOLUTION OF HEROIC ARCHETYPES IN KUNG FU PANDA 4 THROUGH MODERN MYTHMAKING

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Abstract

This research aims to uncover the archetype of Heroes in the characters in the film Kung Fu Panda 4 by Mike Mitchell. Meanwhile, the character that is used as the object of research is the character Po, and the hero archetype that exists in the character of Po is the main theme in this study. At the same time, this study will use a descriptive qualitative method. The data source for this study was taken from the film Kung Fu Panda 4 by Mike Mitchell, while the research data was in the form of dialogue and narrative taken from the conversations and actions of the characters in the film. This study uses a literary analysis with a focus on basic Jungian archetypes and Joseph Campbell's ideas, especially the archetypes of heroes. The results of the study show that the hero archetype emerged and transformed the character of Po from the classic heroic model by aligning mythical storytelling with modern cultural values such as departure, initiation, and return, which became a transformation journey for the character Po. Therefore, this study concludes that the hero archetype appears in the character Po with the forms of actions, behaviors, and thoughts that influence him.

Keywords: heroic archetypes, Kung Fu Panda 4, literary analysis, myth-making

INTRODUCTION

Literature is a collection of texts that are used as an introduction to communication, ranging from lyrical poems, feature films, and television series. Literature also conveys knowledge, moral and social lessons, new ideas, recording revolutions, and cultural values to readers and audiences (Analysis et al., n.d.). Thus, literary analysis is an activity of analyzing a literary work to understand the message that the author wants to convey. Film is one of the literary works included in popular literary studies, which is used to entertain and provide knowledge to the audience (Ally & Woro Kasih, 2021). Literary analysis can relate to several components, we can define it into three main components, namely, aspects of the text (theme, style, social aspect, context, etc.), approach, (literary history, ecocriticism, narrativeology, sociology, etc.), corpus (types of corpus, its characteristics, stages of handling the corpus, the main problems it faces, etc.), aspects specific to texts and theatrical performances (definition of literary texts and genres, dialogues, stage direction, makeup, costumes, music, etc.) (Hébert & Ferguson, 2022). Therefore, it is important to comprehensively critically analyze the research with a literature review (*Writing the Literature Review – Strategies for Conducting Literary Research*, 2e, n.d.). Literary analysis means reading carefully critically and deeply, not only what is written or imaged but also the literary intent and purpose it uses (*Literary Analysis – Music in Your Words*, n.d.).

Most feature films are based on a mythological theme known as the quest for heroes. In the process, the hero finally discovers his previously unknown identity. Mythologist Joseph Campbell asserts that the hero's journey is not about discovery but rediscovery. Whatever is manifested as a result of the search has been in the hero's heart all along. What is also important is that the search we make in our own lives, even if it takes place in the outside world with real character and concrete conditions, is actually about the inner journey that we need to make into the depths of our soul (the Greek word for "soul") to grow. In short, life is the work of the soul (*The Hero's Journey in Film: A Mythic Reading of Twelve Hollywood Movies - Richard Dance - Google Books*, n.d.).

The archetype as the source of emotion in the narrative, which is primordial, universal, and ahistorical, that resides in the subconscious, is referred to as the collective subconscious according to Jung. This image emerges from the subconscious to the conscious level. The creation of mythological stories is considered to be the first expression and an archetypal image. Myth is a narrative created from initial rationalisation that turns archetypes into ideas and turns impressions of archetypes into words (Luiz, 2021). According to Jung, archetypes are images within themselves that are formed from all human experiences from the beginning. The self-image consists of reactions and talents that live and determine the life of individuals in an invisible way. This is called an a priori historical condition, which is also the source of instinct. Archetypes are also a dynamism that makes itself felt in the numinosity or psychic energy and attractive power of the archetypal image. Archetypes not only spread through tradition, language, and migration, but they can also arise instinctively (Uytman & Jacobi, 1962). In ancient Greece and ancient Rome, archetypes created the basis of myths, where they were illustrated as gods and goddesses. These gods, along with other gods from ancient civilisations, conveyed some specific information related to the 12 archetypes. Although the actors in today's mythical stories are ordinary humans, not gods, the same plot remains impressive (Ummah, 2019). According to Jung, the archetype containing psychology has been passed down from generation to generation, which can influence thoughts, emotions, and behaviour and help shape a person's personality (Panahi et al., 2024).

In classic movies and literature, a hero is usually a brave protagonist who understands the power of their instinct and continues to accept great challenges to change their lives. These archetypes are strong heroes capable of taking on challenges, taking risks, breaking the rules, and changing their lives. The stories in today's children's movies also contain a lot of heroic characters, but in more subtle forms, and also fascinate adults (Ummah, 2019). There are various stories about the hero, but usually in each story, the hero wins over a crime, difficulty, or a big challenge, thus motivating the audience. The character of the heroes with their enemies, the calcique villains, fits in well with the image of heroes such as John Wayne, John Glenn, Susan B. Anthony, James Bond, and the Mission: Impossible Team. On the dashboard, all the superheroes like Superman, Wonder Woman, Batman, etc. In a warrior, there is a Hero who aims to save the victim or defend the truth. The usual environment for Heroes is one where there are difficulties or challenges waiting for acts of courage and passion. The hero wants the world to be a better place. The fear that arises is caused by failing to survive and win to achieve the goal. This archetype helps develop energy, discipline, focus, and determination. By the time Heroes appear in individuals, they will be ambitious and eager to take on challenges. The hero also feels angry at the injustice and reacts quickly and decisively to difficulties. On the contrary, there are negative possibilities in the hero archetype, from the worst a hero can become arrogant and oppressive. Heroes who like to conquer can also be terrible bullies. At the lowest point, the hero archetype only wants to win, so the opponent is treated like an enemy or someone who deserves to be a victim. For this reason, if this happens, one should stop, look at what they see, and correct the direction of the destination (Ummah, 2019). Therefore, this study will analyze the hero archetype in the figure of Po using the theory of Carl Gustav Jung initiated by Campbell. In addition, in literary works, the author uses a film by Mike Mitchell entitled *Kung Fu Panda 4* (Rahayu & Suprayogi, 2023).

This film contains the life journeys of the characters, especially the main character, Po. On the other hand, a more in-depth explanation of the Hero archetype of the character Po can be seen in the movie. In this story, the plot is also the same with an orderly plot, namely from exposition (introduction), rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution, which also shows the archetypes of heroes from departure, initiation, and return that are interrelated with each other (Suhendra et al., 2022). In the introduction, Po will get a call from a problem or challenge, then from there, there are signs of heroism in Po. At the initiation stage, Po will be accompanied by his colleagues in facing challenges. The hero's archetype will emerge during Po's journey to the challenge, which will influence his attitude, behavior, and actions towards the characters around him, based on the challenges he faces. Later, on his way, he meets mentors, who will influence the mentor side in Po. And in the return stage, Po will be a character who has a heroic side. Researching hero archetypes can provide very meaningful benefits for understanding yourself and others better. Thus, the author will analyze the attitudes, behaviors, and emotions shown by the characters through the hero's archetype. Not only that, this research is expected to be able to be one of the images of understanding, wisdom, and critical thinking about how the character of Po in the film *Kung Fu Panda 4* reflects the depiction of heroes (Rahayu & Suprayogi, 2023)

METHOD

This research uses literary analysis, especially Jung's archetypal theory of heroes. Some of the research that helps the author in understanding the theory of hero archetypes is Asnawi, Amalia Latifah Putri (2024), about the concept of hero archetypes in the main character in the film *Shirley* (2022) (Latifah & Asnawi, n.d.).

Then, research from Fothrotin, Siti (2022) analyzes the journey and archetypes of heroes in the main characters in Disney film *Mulan (1998)* (*THE ANALYSIS OF HERO'S JOURNEY AND ARCHETYPE TOWARD THE MAIN CHARACTER AS REFLECTED IN*, n.d.). Then, the research by Homam altabaa and Nor Ainun Barieah binti Zahari (2022) also examines the analysis of the archetypes of heroes' journeys in the story of Hansel and Gretel (*View of THE HEROES' JOURNEY: AN ARCHETYPAL ANALYSIS OF HANSEL AND GRETEL*, n.d.). Therefore, with these studies, this analysis intends to reveal the archetype of the hero in Mike Mitchell's film, *Kung Fu Panda 4*.

The method of literary analysis is one of the methods to analyze cinema, especially in film. This film medium is interesting for textual study because film records spoken words and images like books (Delfina Fatihayah & Marudut Bernadtua Simanjuntak, 2022). Then, this study uses qualitative research to reveal the heroes in the film *Kung Fu Panda 4* (2024). The qualitative approach focuses on understanding the research question as a humanistic or idealistic approach. Qualitative research is used for the process of thinking, analyzing, and estimating problems from an in-depth perspective (Tisdell, 2025). The source of the data is taken from the movie *Kung Fu Panda 4* by Mike Mitchell. So, the next stage is to analyze, evaluate, and deduce from the data to achieve the results desired by the author (Rahayu & Suprayogi, 2023).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The author will discuss how the main characters emerge and develop through their actions and behaviors when faced with challenges, which affect the way they interact and interact with others. In addition, based on the life experience with the various challenges faced by Po's character, the author will use the narrative or dialogue from the movie "*Kung Fu Panda 4*" as evidence and references to support their arguments and with this in-depth analysis, the author hopes to provide a better and deeper understanding of the archetype of the hero in Mike Mitchell's film "*Kung Fu Panda 4*" (Rahayu & Suprayogi, 2023).

Arketipe Pahlawan

According to Campbell, J. (1949) who in his attempt to identify archetypal patterns, he continued the work of Carl Gustav Jung by analyzing religion, myth, and folklore from the perspective of archetypes. In the book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces (1949/2008)* Campbell explains the main actions that are part of the hero's archetypal pattern, such as departure, initiation (to an unknown place), and return. These main actions are very important because they show the changing form of the character who has the archetypal pattern of the hero (Energy & Technology, 2022). At the departure stage, Campbell said that the call to adventure occurs, then the Hero will receive assistance such as supernatural protectors, companions, etc. Then, at the initiation stage, it occurs when the Hero enters an unknown place or another part of the world. In this stage, the Hero fights various challenges that force him to develop abilities as well as virtuous actions. And at this stage, the Hero will gain and find strength or wisdom from within his soul. After the Hero completes the initiation stage and gains the main knowledge of the structure of existence, traditional or modern myths make the Hero now have to start his hard work in order to be able to bring back the wisdom he has gained. After performing these main stages, the hero gains mastery such as time, skill space, and self, resulting in individuals who have self-control over their personal limitations, privileges, hopes, and fears. Therefore, the author includes an analysis of the archetypes of heroes in characters through the analysis below (*THE ANALYSIS OF HERO'S JOURNEY AND ARCHETYPE TOWARD THE MAIN CHARACTER AS REFLECTED IN*, n.d.).

Hero archetypes in the Po characters

1. Departure

Po is a dragon warrior who has the task of protecting and leading the world of Kung Fu. At the same time, he was told by Master Oogway to continue as the leader of the Valley of Peace, and continue the duties of master Oogway with a scepter of wisdom.

*"You will rise to the highest level of all kung fu, the spiritual leader of the Valley of Peace."
"Your identity will always be a part of you in the future."*

This shows that the heroic side of Po already exists, but he refuses, because he feels he doesn't need it.

Then, Po must find and choose the next dragon warrior successor. However, Po has no choice, and he feels that he is the one who deserves to be a dragon warrior forever.

"Dragon swordsman! That's me!"

This shows that Po is very aware that he deserves to be limited only to being a dragon warrior.

Then, the appearance of Tai Lung, who is from the Chameleon magician, messes up and wants a dragon warrior and Oogway's wand. When Po found out, he had to solve the problem, but Master Syifu forbade it because it was not his job, however, Po did not obey it.

"They are not here, and there is something to protect the Valley of Peace."

This indicates that he received a travel call.

2. *Companion initiation*

To Po's surprise, when he was in the Valley of Peace, he saw an intruder named Zhen. Which will guide Po towards the challenge. Po refuses to believe that Tai Lung is back, but with information from a fox intruder named Zhen, he finally fights his fear and curiosity.

"Alright, lead me towards The Chameleon..."

Later, Po travels with Zhen's help to the city of Juniper, where the chaos originated. During the journey, Po encounters strangers, and most of them are enemies.

"Are you sure there is a captain in there?"

"At the right price, those criminals will take us anywhere."

This indicates that the character has passed the first threshold. Then, Po faced the enemies with the kindness he always brought.

"Don't stealing."

This shows the benevolent side of the hero.

Challenge after challenges that Po goes through during the journey make it a responsibility and a strength. Eventually, he reached the tower in the city of Juniper, where he came face to face with the Chameleon. At the same time, he instead handed over Oogway's scepter to Zhen, but Zhen betrayed him. Eventually, Oogway's wand fell into the hands of the Chameleon, and Po was pushed from the tower. Po is rescued by both his fathers, and Po is very remorseful, mentally shaken, he becomes depressed, and almost gives up.

"I'm so messed up." "I

mistrust people."

"I should have obeyed Master Shifu's to stay in the Valley of Peace."

This shows that Po's character is on the verge of destruction in fighting the enemy, and finds himself in his greatest fear.

3. *Return*

After an inner battle between despair and resistance, finally with unanimous determination and courage, Po finally experienced the resurgence of the hero in him, he fought the Chameleon, and he achieved victory.

"Besides, how can a peach seed become a tree if you don't give it a chance to grow?"

This shows the ability to win and an inseparable hero side.

When fighting Chameleon, Po exerted all his power and Kung Fu. With his ingenuity as well, he was able to teach something that made Zhen choose to be the next dragon warrior. Po was eventually also recognized and respected by the previous spirits.

"Maybe Oogway is right about you (Po). It turns out that you're still useful."

This shows proof that Po's character is worthy of being a hero and a leader.

Upon returning home, Po finally accepted himself ascending to a higher level that was the spiritual leader in the Valley of Peace. Then, choose Zhen as the next dragon warrior, and train him in the basics that dragon warriors must have, with the help of the Furious Five. This shows that the heroic side is always present in each character, but the main one is the character Po.

Modern Myth Making

Modern mythology is a legacy of ancient mythological themes, images, motifs, and plots. It plays an important role in creating new narrative models that can reflect the current values, ideas, and challenges facing society in the 21st century. Mythology traces the archetypal patterns of ancient mythology that originally carried cultural and folk traditions. Mythology has a general meaning and reflects the basic principles of human nature and culture, and can give depth and meaning to stories. Ukrainian mythology has become the foundation of a unique way of thinking through personalized stories that provide an endless source of inspiration and a strong sensitivity to the works of Ukrainian cultural sensations. Modern myths are a reflection of the traditions and rituals, as well as the religious beliefs of the Community. (Naumovska et al., n.d.).

Mythology is primitive symbolism, and the spiritual constant of man synthesizes myths, which helps with common ancient images, plots, and representations. The essence of mythology is mythical thinking in a literary work, provided by imaginative means, mythological schemes, images, motifs, as well as allusions, additional tones, and meta-linguistic constructions (Tsepka, 2021). Mythology in the creation of modern myths embodies a rich cultural, historical, social, and spiritual role, shaping symbolic concepts of community values and preserving national traditions. The wide selection of plots and characters allows the mythology to continue to adapt while reproducing moral and ethical rules, social relations, and political and religious ideologies. The elements of myth-making make up a vast and vibrant treasury of human society and culture, which depicts the concepts of time, space, life and death, good and evil, nature, magical powers, and the universe (Naumovska et al., n.d.).

In the modern mythical film, it is seen from the heroism of the character Po. Po highly upholds honesty, like when he fights criminals in Bahagia's rabbit shop, and thwarts Zhen when he wants to steal. With respect for parents and teachers, Po greatly appreciates and cherishes his parents, because they have cared for and advised Po to the pinnacle of his work, and Po has great respect for his teacher, Master Syifu. Even though he sometimes rebels, he still respects Master Syifu and always remembers his advice. Never giving up, it is seen when Po regrets and almost gives up when Oogway's wand falls into the hands of the Chameleon, with the help of both his fathers, he finally rises. Fighting crime, Po, with the previous series of films, has also always fought against crime. This proves that this modern myth is still relevant today, and continues to develop, however, it does not eliminate cultural values and politeness.

On the other hand, his contemporary myths, shown by Po's relaxed attitude and behavior, although a dragon warrior, he is never arrogant; he even blends in and sometimes acts funny. His mind was as open as when he had chosen Zhen as his next dragon warrior, even though Po knew that Zhen was from the streets and a former thief or fugitive. The film also shows that the political problems and power struggle carried out by Chameleon already exist and also occur in the real world, such as corruption and bribery. We can mingle with anyone regardless of background, which is also relevant to real life. The Kung Fu Panda 4 movie is essentially relevant to modern myths and contemporary myths, so it is suitable for all ages.

CONCLUSION

Based on the explanations that have been presented, the author concludes the film's findings and discussions about dialogue and narrative. The author concludes that Kung Fu Panda 4 is represented as the archetype of the hero. This can be seen from the actions, behaviors, words, and dialogues explicitly and implicitly in the film, especially in the character of Po, who depicts archetypes. In this study, the author identifies and explores the archetypes of heroes experienced by the character of Po in the film *Kung Fu Panda 4* (2024). This film reveals the character Po, who experiences archetypal experiences in himself, especially in the form of the archetype hero with modern mythology. In the character Po, he experiences the archetype of a strong hero within him. The characters are always seen to show the ideal hero side according to modern mythology, but there is still a hero

side that fits contemporary mythology. With this hero archetype, Po deserves the title of leader and rises to the next level. However, even though he is already a leader, he remains himself, not fixated on the rules of modern mythology about heroes. This shows the relevance of this film to the times, both ancient and modern.

Film *Kung Fu Panda 4* (2024) describes the character of Po, who undergoes a challenging archetypal journey and self-development. Po's character has a strong desire to solve problems and face any challenge. The negative side of heroes is also present in the archetypal journey. The uncertainty in choosing between choosing to stay in the same zone, or facing challenges that make him rise to a higher level. The challenges faced during the journey are an important process for the growth and development of the characters in this film, which makes the characters bearable, strong, and spiritually meaningful in life. Therefore, this study describes how behavior, actions, and thoughts through dialogue describe the conditions that characters experience by using the archetype of heroes through modern mythology.

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