

# Call for Papers

## Myth in Contemporary American Literature and Culture

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Isaac Asimov once claimed that “[w]e know what a ‘myth’ is; it is a tale that is fanciful, usually of unknown origin, a tale that is tied in with religious beliefs and that serves to explain the origin or purpose of some natural or social phenomenon” (Jewett and Lawrence xiii). However, works by the “giants” of myth theories, such as Bronisław Malinowski, Franz Boaz, Jane Ellen Harrison, Edmund Burke, Mircea Eliade, Roland Barthes, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Sigmund Freud, Carl Gustav Jung, George Frazer, and Ernst Cassirer, reveal that there is more to myth than Asimov’s fairly accurate and yet somewhat simplified definition of the term. Theories of myth offer a wide range of definitions, approaches, and ways of contextualization. Some scholars have postulated the existence of ONE myth – a monomyth – which has been retold in seemingly diverse mythical tales. Edward Burnett Tylor, Johann Georg Hahn, Otto Rank, Lord Raglan, and Vladimir Propp all searched for a unified narrative structure underlying all myths or fables, to which Joseph Campbell ultimately applied the term “monomyth.”

Academic interest in concepts of myth does not fade away. In recent years, a number of publications on related topics have appeared, e.g. Robert A. Segal’s *Myth Analyzed* in 2021 and John Karabelas’s *The Historical Value of Myths* in 2023. Aside from general theoretical ponderings on myth, there have been important academic studies which focus on America and its [uses of] mythology, to mention Christopher Leise’s: *The Puritan Myth in Contemporary American Fiction* (2017) and William Grady’s *Redrawing the Western: A History of American Comics and the Mythic West* (2024).

Regardless of one’s understanding of the concepts of myth, ritual, and monomyth, their contemporary persistence as remediated phenomena is undeniable. There are numerous examples of films, TV series, novels, short stories, poems, songs, graphic novels, video games, paintings, and other forms of art and entertainment, which are all myth-bound.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century alone, one has witnessed an explosion of mythical tales that retell classical myths (2004 *Troy*), reinterpret them (Madeline Miller’s *The Song of Achilles*) offering feminist and queer readings of classic myths, or use them to comment on contemporary society and culture (2009 *Avatar*). Then, there have been myths in the making. Isn’t *The Handmaid’s Tale* a cautionary myth of a totalitarian America? Isn’t Michael Jordan’s story a modern-day song of an American Achilles? And what about Childish Gambino’s “This is America” music video or Kendrick Lamar’s Super Bowl LIX Half-Time Show performance?

We invite contributions that explore the complex notions of myth and monomyth as employed in contemporary American literature and culture. Exemplary topics include:

- Theory of Myth and Monomyth
- American Mythology/ies
- American myths (Frontier, Exceptionalism, American West, etc.)
- Myth and Ritual in America
- Adaptation and Transformation of Myths in contemporary American culture.
- Reimagination of classical myths
- Comparative Mythologies
- Visual Representations of Mythology
- Mythology in American Popular Culture
- Mythological Archetypes in Modern Cultural Artefacts
- Gender and Mythology
- Queer Readings of Mythology
- Feminist Readings of Mythology
- Multimodal Approaches to Mythology
- Eco-Mythologies
- Mythological Narratives in Non-Traditional Media

**Important dates:**

Deadline for abstract submissions: 31 January 2026

Deadline for final articles: 31 January 2027

Publication date: Autumn 2027

**Submission guidelines:**

Full articles should be approximately 6,000-7,000 words (including references and footnotes).

Current MLA, Times New Roman, Font Size 12, Double Spacing.

Please include a brief author bio (150 words) with your submission.

All contributions will undergo peer-review.

**Publication:**

*Polish Journal for American Studies* is a yearbook of the Polish Association for American Studies. *PJAS* publishes scholarly work in such fields of American Studies as literature, culture, the arts, the media, history, politics, foreign affairs, social sciences and others. *PJAS* appears in print format as well as a free-access on-line publication. Copyright by the authors. Articles published in *PJAS* are Open-Access and are distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0).

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## **Editors:**

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**Tomasz Jacheć** is an assistant professor at the Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures at the University of Warmia and Mazury in Olsztyn, Poland. His research focuses on US popular culture and contemporary American mythology. He is the author of *The Myth of Michael Jordan in Popular Culture* (Routledge 2024) and he has also published a number of scholarly articles on American popular culture, comedy, and sports.

**E. Lol Fow** is the Area Chair of Mythology in Contemporary Culture at the Popular Culture Association's yearly national conference in the United States. She is also Deputy Chair of English at the Borough of Manhattan Community College, City University of New York. Her scholarly and creative interests lie in re-envisaging Joseph Campbell's hero's journey for the female hero, the inherent mythologies of colonization, and community college pedagogy.