

The Redemption Archetype

by

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Background to the Problem

The idea for the study stemmed from an episode of *Stranger Things* (3x08) that I was watching where one of the characters (Billy Hargroves) who had been portrayed as the villain throughout the season ends up redeeming himself by fighting the demon that had taken control of his mind to save the girl (Eleven) whom he had intended to kill. It brought to mind the idea of the character arcs based on the 'Redemption' archetype. This archetype is often linked to the 'Rebirth' story archetype which is believed to be one of *The seven basic plots* (Booker, 2004). Often, it is also confused for the 'Hero' archetype, however they are more closely linked to the 'Villain' archetypes who often go through some changes to redeem themselves. The transformative journeys of such characters often make us sympathise (or empathise) with them, they give us hope, of the power of light over darkness -- and in doing so, they dramatically change your views about them. Sometimes they are bound by sacrifices, like in the case of Billy Hargrove, in *Stranger Things 3*, who gave his life fighting the *Mind Flayer*, or in another case, like the character of Prince Zuko in *Avatar: The Last Airbender* who had to give up the hope of being loved by his father in order to unite the nations under Avatar Aang as the peacekeeper. But all such characters share the common characteristic of being *longed for* as explained by

psychologist Carl Jung who explored the longing for redemption as an innate characteristic in human beings.¹

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to examine the characteristics that define the Redemption Archetype in Film/Tv by borrowing from Jung's psychological approach to primordial archetypes.

According to Jung, these archetypes are innate and part of the collective unconscious mind of human beings. I am interested in examining how this specific archetype has evolved from pre-existing archetypes, what amalgamates it, and what factors contribute in enabling that redemption. I will be analysing one example of the Redemption Archetype to understand the journey they take for their transformation, how they deal with the change taking place and what are the ways in which change takes place for them. This change can take place internally with the battle between the Self and the ego, as well as externally with the influence of another being (mostly a child) or magical procedures . I will also be looking at the way that audiences perceive such characters, the kind of prompts that elicit a reaction in them to create a connection with them.

Theoretical Framework

This study is an investigation of the 'redemption archetype' in Film/TV and its characteristics in relation to the "Rebirth" archetype which is one of the primordial archetypes pointed out by

¹ C.G. Jung, "The Psychology of Rebirth" in *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung, vol. 9, Part 1: Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, trans. R.F.C. Hull, 2nd ed., (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1968), 116

many theorists². The theoretical framework stems from concepts surrounding Jung's theory and employs a psychological understanding of his ideas of "Rebirth" and "Transformation". The study also examines the visual or vocal prompts that define the reaction of audiences and causes them to relate to it in the current times and how they are able to have an emotional response to film/TV and in turn, these characters.

Significance of the Study

The significance for this study lies in the fact that the Redemption archetype has not been precisely described in the past by theorists as it is somewhat a modern kind of character that we find. By this I mean that the personality traits of these characters cannot be defined through the basic or primitive nature of characters since archetypes are mostly defined as Heroes villains and may exist as binaries. However, this type of a character may borrow from both story lines and therefore is a much more complex archetype. This, in turn, also makes these characters, in my opinion, much closer to real life, as we lead complex lives which are not perfectly good or perfectly bad. Thus making them more relatable and to be perceived with emotion. This study can also help those who are trying to research the type of journey a character makes on the road to redemption.

² Jung, "The Psychology of Rebirth," 116 **and** Michael A. Faber, John D. Mayer, "Resonance to archetypes in media: There's some accounting for taste," *Journal of Research in Personality* 43, no. 3 (June 2009), 308

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

If redemption is to be seen as a rebirth then we can say that it is a transformation that occurs only after the death of a character. Most of the time, this death is considered a metaphorical one or as Booker describes in *The Seven Basic Plots* it can also be considered as the protagonist being stuck in a state of living death, the “flow of life frozen in suspension.”³ where they can only be released with the help of their male/female counterpart, by a child who can act as the voice of reason, or sometimes even in the form of a wise old man.

The death, or the state of living death can also be defined by a dark power taking control of the Hero/Heroine, and sometimes it is possible that they may never be able to come out of it⁴. Booker claims this is because of the limited awareness of the hero/heroine. This is also explained by Jung who talks about Transformation through the diminution or enlargement of the personality where a successful transformation can only occur if the being (protagonist) is willing to accept the change and is capable of absorbing what is incoming at the same amplitude to balance it⁵.

Chris Broodryk further analyses Jung’s theory and compares the process of transformation to that of alchemy⁶, the most stark comparison being that it is a time-consuming process and may take many years, or a longer while than one can imagine. Growth eventually occurs when the

³ Christopher Booker, “Rebirth” in *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories*, (London: Continuum, 2004), 231

⁴ Ibid., 244

⁵ Jung, “The Psychology of Rebirth,” 120

⁶ Chris Willem Broodryk, “*The Moving Image: Contemporary Film Analysis and Analytical psychology*,” (MA diss., University of Pretoria, 2007), 87-90

psyche is out of its psychological darkness, when a balance is achieved between the psychological and physical realities of oneself. This process is defined by Jung as ‘individuation.’⁷ Individuation is a process by which transformation takes place in a natural manner and can occur through a process like a dream and is a transformation and rebirth of a being into another being that occurs within them. It is the inner part of oneself that they have never attained to, yet always know of its existence. It is the greater part that has been maturing over time and the transformation/redemption process strives to make both these parts in approximation to one another to which our conscious always shows resistance because of its strangeness and uncanniness.

At the same time however Victoria Schmidt compares the process of rebirth to that of a snake shedding its skin; in the way that the snake is letting go of the ‘Self’ and allowing a greater force to pull it along and it is a journey that they must take alone.⁸ Success is achieved once the hero/heroine (or the snake) comes out the other side as a changed person (animal). However, tragedy befalls if they come out on the other side but ultimately do not survive it, or become more damaged in the process.

She highlights that this transformation requires acceptance, as most people avoid change because it is unpleasant and would be traumatic in this case. It is upto the hero/heroine to see it as either a positive challenge or a negative pity episode. It is viewed by other characters as something that

⁷ Jung, “The Psychology of Rebirth”, 130

⁸ Victoria Lynn Schmidt, “The Snake: Transformation, Death & Rebirth” in *A Writer's Guide to Characterization: Archetypes, Heroic Journeys, and Other Elements of Dynamic Character Development*, (Cincinnati: Writer's Digest Books, 2012), 165-166

makes them uncomfortable since they don't want to see someone else going through something traumatic.⁹

Schmidt's comments on 'change,' as a successful vs. tragic resolutions of this archetype, that you can either embrace or reject entirely,¹⁰ can once more be compared to Jung's explanation of Transformation through Enlargement of Personality where he says "...a man grows with the greatness of his task. But he must have within himself the capacity to grow; otherwise even the most difficult task is of no benefit to him. More likely he will be shattered by it."¹¹ This also shows the dichotomy of the characters and battle that occurs within them. According to Broodryk, this process is dependent on achieving a psychic equilibrium between the psychological and the physical realities of oneself. He claims that every individual has the potential to do so through subjective meaningful contact with the *Self*.¹² While referring to film he says that in film, once heroes and heroines admit a psychological change in their personality, they are driven toward the archetype of the *Self* to which a relationship can only be made through a process of individuation¹³ i.e a natural transformation which can be considered as the redemption of the protagonist.

According to Booker, when the hero is on the road to redemption, he enters uncharted territory, he finally sees the world as a whole and allows him to be selfless and finally as he moves to a new centre of his personality, he experiences the extraordinary liberation of being linked to this

⁹ Ibid., 167

¹⁰ Ibid., 167

¹¹ Jung, "The Psychology of Rebirth", 121

¹² Broodryk, "The Moving Image: Contemporary Film Analysis and Analytical psychology," 90

¹³ Ibid., 91

new world.¹⁴ However, for him, if the hero/heroine is unable to relinquish the grip of the darkness then this would be considered as a ‘Tragic’ story, rather than a plot about ‘Rebirth’. But this can also be interpreted for archetypes.

According to Jung, our primordial affirmations are based on archetypes where Rebirth is one of those affirmations and they are unlined by psychic events that must be explored through psychology.¹⁵ He believed that the characteristics were *longed for* by humans as an innate process.

But many consider his theories to be outdated and are claimed to be characterized as “mainstream American psychological thinking” by Michael Faber & John Mayer in their study. They instead introduce the the “Neo-Archetypal” theory which implies that archetypes possess five key-characteristics: (i) Archetypes can be represented even in an abstract or thematic context because they are generic characters in a story defined by a set of traits that can be thematically represented even in music or a sculpture. (ii) They are viewed as mental models as described through social psychology and contemporary personality. People are able to learn and characterize through them very quickly similar to characterizing people in ‘personality types’ such as extroverts and introverts. (iii) They elicit a powerful emotional response once triggered because they are the mental constructions of our minds. This is because of one's previous emotional encounter with a similar character or idea in life that determines their psychological reaction for the future. (iv) They have an automatic operation which means that people sometimes have an automatic non-conscious reaction to mental models about themselves or

¹⁴ Booker, “Rebirth”, 252

¹⁵ Jung, “The Psychology of Rebirth”, 121

others and this affects how they make judgements, form attitudes, or interpret moods and emotions. (v) Archetypes are learned conceptualizations in comparison to being inherited (as Jung proposes) which means they are acquired through learning and more importantly can be learned through culture rather than biology.¹⁶

Faber & Mayer focused their study on finding if people can ‘resonate to archetypes’ unconsciously and identify them if provided with certain associations. In their study, they developed the RCAS (Rich Culture Archetype Scale) which gave proof that people could successfully identify archetypes and that people with a set of personality traits do tend to resonate more with the archetype consisting of the same traits, however this was not always the case.¹⁷ But this implied that people are more likely to resonate with archetypes that they can relate to on a personal level unconsciously for example Men will relate more to the ‘Ruler’ & ‘Outlaw’ whereas Women would relate more with the ‘Creator’ & ‘Lover.’ This also establishes a connection between tastes and personality traits and could be used to further draw connections with their religious afflictions, their spiritual associations or something as simple as their relationship with someone in their life. Though, this is a relatively surface level evaluation.

Malcolm Turvey’s analysis was based on the spectator’s emotional response to fiction films and how this is aided by the mental faculties of imagination and thought. For him, the most important factor is the medium itself.¹⁸ It is suggested that spectator’s don’t respond emotionally to cinematic representation, rather they respond emotionally to the ‘thought’ or the ‘imaginative

¹⁶ Faber & Mayer, “Resonance to archetypes in media: There’s some accounting for taste,” 308

¹⁷ Faber & Mayer, “Resonance to archetypes in media: There’s some accounting for taste,” 313-320

¹⁸ Malcolm Turvey, “Seeing Theory: On Perception and Emotional Response In Current Film Theory,” in *Film Theory and Philosophy*, ed. Richard Allen & Murray Smith (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 433

scenario' produced by it. However, this can be made implausible because it relegates the spectator's sensuous perception of cinematic representation. This is proved because responding to the 'thought' of film is responding to an abstract entity as opposed to the way one normally responds with their sensuous perception of the concrete cinematic image which is in front of them e.g being saddened by a film, and not the 'thought' of the film. Furthermore, he distinguishes between "physical perception" and "mental imagination" as separate entities since perception is based on visual prompts, however imagination can be dominated by even verbal prompts and does not have to be limited to the medium.¹⁹

This in turn can be applied to archetypal theory as they provide certain prompts that elicit a response and as well as make room for imagination. This will be discussed further in the next chapter as I break down a key character; Prince Zuko from the series Avatar: The Last Airbender in relation to this literature.

¹⁹ Ibid., 435

CHAPTER 3: Methodology & Findings

Methodology

This qualitative study will be carried out with an interpretive approach where I will be interpreting and understanding the data collected. For this study, I will be collecting data with the main purpose of conducting a document analysis by exploring the “Redemption Archetype” in literature from the past and interpreting it in comparison to Film & Tv of the 21st century.

I will first be looking at different characters from a collection of Films and TV series and observing their character arcs. These include Prince Zuko from *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, Professor Snape from the *Harry Potter* series, Theon Greyjoy from the *Game of Thrones* TV series. Then I will interpret them in the context of the audience, in terms of how their character arcs are perceived by audiences. From these sources, I will be doing an in-depth investigation on one of these characters for this paper, namely Prince Zuko from *Avatar: The Last Airbender* (ATLA) series, where I analyse his journey from villain to hero, and the transformation he went through to gain his redemption.

The document analysis can be combined with an interview conducted to provide a more holistic study. The interview will be conducted with *Amar Alam*, visiting faculty at BNU who teaches the course ‘The phenomenology of Fairytales’ and has a firsthand experience with storytelling and character arcs.

Findings

I

For this paper, I will be analyzing the character of Prince Zuko from the ATLA TV series in the context of my theoretical research and try to apply some of that theory to his storyline while trying to identify characteristics that enable us as viewers to emotionally respond and resonate with the character.

To summarize the storyline:

ATLA is a story centered around a 12-year old child named Aang, who is the Avatar and is born with the destiny to restore balance in the 4 nations of the world, along with the help of his 3 friends: Sokka, Katara and Toph. The four nations are namely, the Fire Nation, Earth Kingdom, Water Nation and the Air Temples. Prince Zuko is the exiled prince of the Fire Nation who can only restore his honour and return home once he captures the Avatar. He is accompanied by his wise Uncle Iroh and his biggest nemesis is his sister Azula who often tries to accomplish this task before Zuko so that he does not get a chance to return home. The series also entails the bending of the four elements, where gifted individuals are able to control the properties of those elements, once they are taught. Zuko and Azula are firebenders, Katara is a water bender, Toph is an earth bender and only the Avatar (Aang, born an airbender) can master all four elements.

Zuko's arc begins such that we see him with only one goal in mind. However, as the storyline progresses, his objectives and priorities are seen to change. The series is divided into 3 parts (or seasons), *Water, Earth & Fire* and as we approach the middle of *Fire*, we see that Zuko has entirely changed allegiances and eventually helps Aang and his friends to restore balance in the world, which actually entails defeating the Fire Lord, i.e his father.

There are many complexities that cause this change within him. But the most important influence is that of his uncle, Iroh. Iroh can simply be defined as the ‘Wise old man’ archetype in Jungian terminology. He is the guiding father figure that Zuko lacks elsewhere, often the voice of reason that stops Zuko from making decisions he would regret. But Zuko’s futile attempts in the beginning are often seen as due to his ignorance for his uncle’s words and their significance.

His transformation is gradual with many events leading to the self-realisation that eventually hits him. It is often met with his constant battle to regain honour and a chance to return to his home, but is often sabotaged by his own sister, Azula who time and again betrays his trust upon the word of their father, yet Zuko is unable to see through this.

The last of these attempts occur when Azula convinces him to betray his uncle as well as Aang and Katara (who recently had helped him escape death) in the hopes of returning home a hero who saved the honour of his nation. However, Iroh is immediately imprisoned and thus begins Zuko’s realisation that he has done something drastically bad. This can be considered the beginning of his individuation in Jung’s words.²⁰

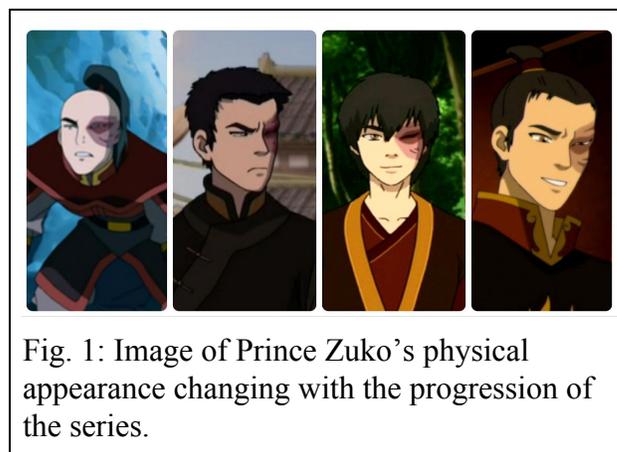
From this point on, he sets out to do everything in his power to right all the wrongs he has done. But he is not easily forgiven by the other characters and his work is cut out for him. This can be understood by Schmidts characterization of Rebirth where she describes how the person going

²⁰ Jung, “The Psychology of Rebirth”, 130

through this transformation must do it alone as it is in the nature of humans to avoid others going through such a process.²¹

His agony is seen as he deals with sleepless nights and moments of self-realisation for how much he sacrificed to regain his father's respect, to reach no means. He strives to make amends with each character that he has wronged, and eventually gains the trust of Aang and his friends and later his uncle too.

As the change occurs in him, we see his character smiling (possibly for the first time) more and more. His earlier appearance is defined by a ponytail (or the top-knot) and the scar on his face (Fig.1), (given to him, by his father, upon being disrespectful). The top-knot is a defining characteristic of the people of the Fire nation and Zuko cuts it off when he is incognito in the Earth kingdom. Perhaps this is visually the first motif that defines his transformation as a person who is impartial of his identity as exiled prince of the Fire nation. These are the visual prompts that elicit a reaction within us.²²



²¹ Schmidt, "The Snake: Transformation, Death & Rebirth," 166

²² Malcolm Turvey, "Seeing Theory: On Perception and Emotional Response In Current Film Theory," 435

Through the process of transformation and redemption, one can visually see his hair change, his clothes change, and his overall stance change also. Once his hair starts to grow, his scar is no longer his defining feature as he sheds off his skin like a “snake”²³, thus his physical transformation is complete.

The Last Airbender is also known distinctly for the way it physically distorts its characters to fit the situation, which is one of the main reasons that a apt live-action recreation has been difficult to direct.

Zuko’s internal transformation can be seen completed once he is met in Agni Kai (Firebending duel between two people) with his sister Azula. As he has always previously lost in battle against her (thus always boosting her ego), this is the first time we see him win and even though Azula attempts to murder Zuko in her rage, he, in turn, decides to let her go when presented with the same opportunity.

Through Zuko’s journey we can see his intrinsic morality striking in, as he starts to appear more and more humanized. Another way that we can see this is through the fact that during his transformation, he also acquires a girlfriend, Mae. Mae is seen to be the female version of Zuko and this makes them seem perfect for eachother. Paired with Zuko’s emergence of emotional feelings and his unseen capability for caring, the audience seems to draw a much closer

²³ Schmidt, “The Snake: Transformation, Death & Rebirth,” 166

connection than before. In Booker's theory, Mae can also be seen as the female counterpart that helps bring out the hero from his state of living death.²⁴

The reason for Zuko being considered a beloved character by many across the world is perhaps because of their ability to resonate with him as a character left all alone in the world, trying to right all the wrongs. As found by Faber & Mayer, we tend to resonate more with archetypes that we share personality traits.²⁵ So Zuko is going through a process that we all have once in our lives.

Another reason that can be applied here is perhaps in accordance to Turvey's study about the cinematic experience. The difference here lies in the medium itself and this is a Television series. Thus the emotional response can be considered to be an even more elongated form of perception, allowing more room for the imagination to grow and thus help the viewer experience the journey week after week, instead of all at once.

II

I also conducted an interview with Amar Alam, from whom I was able to gather much more insight into Zuko's character, as well as the redemption archetype.

Amar believed that "Rebirth" or "Redemption" should not be classified as an archetype as this is a journey that ANY character can have, and they could fall into any of the other archetypes as

²⁴ Booker, "Rebirth," 204

²⁵ Faber & Mayer, "Resonance to archetypes in media: There's some accounting for taste," 317-320

well. Rather, she commented on the process of transformation itself and the ways in which it can occur.

She explained how when a person self-reflects, as we are always reacting to moments in our life, we may realize that we are not who we want to be. This in turn causes a longing for childhood innocence, which is considered the most purest form, the true identity, and thus the journey begins as we try to make our way to it.

An important connection she drew was that since the ‘Child’ archetype can be seen in the light of innocence as the purest of its form, and is defined as what we seek, this archetype exists dually in ATLA as Zuko seeks for his redemption but also in the form of Aang, his nemesis in the beginning. Aang is a 13-year-old child, though Zuko himself is considered to be a teen, but we can see through Zuko’s experience that he seems to constantly be impressed by the selflessness of Aang.

She also brings in the theory of the anti-hero which can be implied to Prince Zuko. Once the transformation is triggered, “that’s sort of where the theme of the anti-hero comes in. Anti-hero is someone who understands- who becomes self-aware and decides to change the way that they’re living and it always involves some level of self-awareness, like you’re behaving a certain way because you are behaving from your own perspective and you think you’re right. But then you see yourself from the perspective of someone else and you realize what you’re doing is wrong and you become self-aware and that’s when you change.”²⁶

²⁶ Appendix

Alam also provided insight to the 'realism' movement and how, towards the end of the 18th Century, characters were no longer looked at as just 'black' & 'white,' they were considered as complex human beings that were capable of change. This is also perhaps the reason Faber & Mayer introduced their Neo-Archetypal theory- because characters could no longer be limited to a single definition.

Much of the learnings from Alam led me to believe that this interview should have been conducted at the beginning of the study, rather than after doing all of the research.

CONCLUSION

To conclude this study, I would most importantly like to talk about something that I discovered near the end of doing all my research. This was, as Amar said, that characters are based on real people and real people are complex human beings. Thus, it was difficult to define the “Redemption” archetype as any single type of character. It is more based on the journey that any character is taking than who they are. But something that I found interesting and that makes sense also, is that we tend to resonate more with characters that we share personality traits with. This kind of insight can even be taken forward to understand people’s affiliations with religion, their socio-political stance, their everyday habits and their preferences in any and everything around them.

In terms of the research & study, I can see this as only the surface of the ocean. This can be considered as a preliminary study for an in depth analysis on characters in the future. Which is something that I might consider pursuing in my studio practice. This paves way for studying other archetypes and storylines in which the characters seek redemption and can even be conducted as a study with a sample of people to generate more authentic and close-to-home results.

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APPENDIX

Amar How would you like to start by telling me a little bit about your work?

Mehmil So I've been researching a lot on redemption, but the way that I'm looking at it for my research is a little bit different from the theory that exists because I'm studying it through Jung's theory. And, you know, he mostly talks about rebirth. And in the background for my study comes from how we see characters on TV that, you know, throughout-like if it's a film, throughout the film, they'll be like, you know, they'll be the bad guy. But at the end, they'll do something, you know, nice.

Amar But have you read any Carl Jung?

Mehmil Yes, I have. Yes.

Amar Because you were referring to archetype and rebirth isn't actually an archetype because archetypes (urdu) ko jis tarhan hum dekhtay hain, like Jung ka jo kaam hai, (English) it's not really taken very seriously in the field of psychoanalytical research right now. And the reason for that is because it was a mystical and very based on symbolism. And so it's used more in literary criticism, film criticism, like storytelling genre (urdu) mein, (english) especially in academic criticism it's used a lot. So the archetypes are, you know, he had- there are actually several hundred archetypes that he referred to but there are four major ones. Four major ones are, the shadow, the persona, the anima animus and the self. So there's also other archetypes like wounded healer, the wise fool- the wise fool archetype, for example, is something that he got directly from Shakespeare, because Shakespeare uses-like comic characters like the court jester-

you know Royal Court-as somebody who's a satirist, who's actually using comedy, to reveal the hypocrisy of society. There are other archetypes that he refers to in his work that are not given as much- the four basics that are the self, the persona, the anima animus, the shadow. These are the four aspects of the self and other archetypes (urdu) hain, usmein (english) there's many, there's the maiden, the hero, the wise old man, the child, the mother, the father. So Rebirth. Maybe do if you want to look at it as an archetype then you could maybe think of the child because the child archetype represents a longing for innocence, for the innocence of childhood and rebirth and salvation-salvation particularly because you know you've become an adult and you face the realities of the world and the world maybe changes you-maybe corrupts you in certain ways but in a character context. **Because if you're looking at this as a character study then being specific- I'm assuming that you have got a specific fictional character that you're looking at. You're looking at a different character perspectives, then if a character faces a moment in their life that forces them to reflect on their life and reflect- because you know in life we're generally just reacting and then there is a moment where the character is like 'oh what have I become and what am I doing?' And that leads to a longing for the innocence of childhood. And so Jung and basically all the Viennese psychoanalysts believe was that the child represents the true self, the uncorrupted, true identity that is unique to every individual before it's obscured by the layers of social facade that the world put on us. So, (urdu) jo rebirth ka concept tha (english) specifically you had like five different forms of rebirth.**

Mehmil Yes, that is like the chapter that I read where he talks about those five different types of rebirth. archetypes.

Amar Yeah. So I think if you're looking at redemption, (urdu) tou uski dou perspectives hosaktay hain. (english) One is the perspective of society. Like a character finds themselves in a social setting, which could be a workplace, which could be their community or it could be their identity group- identity group means people of the same race, religion, city or family. And they find themselves to be ostracized or rejected by that identity group due to their actions or their life choices. And they feel the need to redefine themselves, which is really not the redefining of the intrinsic self, it's more a redefining of social roles and the way you are perceived by other people. Then there's a distinction between that. There is like an event that happens in your life that causes the self to be broken down, to be destroyed, which could be a traumatic event. And then that causes a new self to emerge. That's one form of rebirth. And that's more intrinsic in relation to yourself. And then there's redemption (urdu) jo movies or tv shows mein bohat hota hai (english) like there's a villain who from the beginning of the story is the villain and at some point becomes a more sympathetic character, then you may find out their backstories we may find out why they've become this way.

Mehmil Yes. This is the kind of like the character that I'm looking at more.

Amar If you're looking at that then you're looking at social perspective, and that's less about any real transformation because these stories are about- character development in the perspective of storytelling- like a good story, has some sort of journey for a character on a personal level, like they're different when they began. And they're different when they end because the plot basically functions as something that changes the protagonist in some fundamental way and the audience is invested- that's how we get the audience as storytellers- you get the audience invested in our

story by showing them the transformation. And so there is an individual transformation and there is a group identity transformation.

Mehmil The group identity transformation as I know it is, as you are associated with a group and it is explained ritualistically. You know, you partake in something that the group is doing and that is how you the transformation affects you like the group is transforming and so are you, with it?

Amar Yeah, they can be connected, they can absolutely be connected because the way we relate to the people around us does sort of change- For Jung, he distinguished between the personal and the collective. So they're the personal consciousness, there's a collective consciousness and there's a personal unconscious and a collective unconscious. And so what is your work looking at specifically?

Mehmil In terms of this, specifically the conscious and the unconscious or do you mean over overall?

Amar What is your argument? I'm assuming that this was a research paper. You have some sort of central hypothesis.

Mehmil The research question that I'm working on is based on the characterization of these, the redemption archetype. But that characterization is- I'm studying it through the lens of Jung and after the characterization, I'm also looking at how audiences perceive these characters. Which

kind of is just based on how like, you know, we emotionally react to these characters or, you know, what makes them sympathetic for us and something along those lines of-

Amar But do you have a thesis statement?

Mehmil Like my research question?

Amar Well no, I mean, when you write an academic essay you begin with a thesis statement which is your argument, you're arguing something like you have a hypothesis. And then through the rest of the paragraphs of the essay, you're building your argument and in your conclusion, you're going to just be summarizing how you convincingly made your argument. So do you have an argument yet? Or are you just like doing research (urdu) pehlay?

Mehmil I'm not sure, because this is like the first time that we're doing the research paper and I might see it differently from you. I'll just let you know the process that we're following. So first we formed a research question--

Amar What's your research question?

Mehmil My research question is that: what are the characteristics of the redemption archetype and how is it perceived by audiences? That's it. It's short. And this is all basically- this research paper is just based on this semester, this is the study that we've done for the past few months. And so I have my background- this is my chapter one, maybe one of these sections is what you're talking about. So I have the background of the problem, I have my purpose statement and my

theoretical frameworks and my significance of the study. So this is all that we started with and then it's just the research- the literature review.

Amar Okay so did you have a question for me specifically?

Mehmil Yeah, I do have some questions for you specifically.

Amar Sure. Go ahead.

Mehmil Yes. So originally my questions were a little different, but right now, after everything you talked about- you said that, you know, this kind of character should not be looked at through Jung's theory because, you're saying that it's more psychological. And what this is, is more social.

Amar Well no, I'm saying that you shouldn't be calling it an archetype. Because it's not an archetype.

Mehmil Redemption, is not an archetype?

Amar Yeah, archetypes are characters. So the magician, the lover, the healer, the child, the mother. It's a character type.

Mehmil Okay.

Amar Yeah. So we do that a lot in like an analysis of a specific character (urdu) ke ye uss type ka character hai, but redemption tou kisi bhi character ki hosakti hai na, redemption tou failed lover ki bhi hosakti hai, ya villain ki bhi hosakti hai, aur wounded healer ki bhi hosakti hai.

(English) Any character can experience it. Redemption is more an idea and less a character and archetypes are character.

Mehmil Okay. So I guess maybe what I'm looking at more is like-

Amar Oh no, just ask me the questions that you had prepared. I feel like I'm confusing you.

Mehmil Okay. So my first question was regarding, you know, how Jung describes- forgetting whatever you were just saying but just looking at Jung's theory right now- so how he describes these archetypes as primordial archetypes. So like I wanted to know more about how they define characters.

Amar Well, he was building on the idea that- the theory of primordial archetypes is building on Totem and Taboo, which was a book that Freud wrote, which was very much about, you know- Jung was a student of Freud and then he took his theory a step further and Freud's book Totem and Taboo deals with like specifically- you know, he got- like Freud, got a lot from literature. And a lot of these psychologists got a lot from literature so it's very cyclical of the relationship between literature, storytelling and psychology. So psychologists got a lot of their ideas, the initial psychologists got a lot of their ideas from literature and literary critics got a lot of their ideas from psychologists. And, both keep feeding each other (urdu) so jo primordial archetypes ka concept hai (english) that comes from the study of folklore and sort of the oral tradition where- like Freud spends a lot of time talking about cultures- and I've taught a lot of that in my course- that you read fairytales from across the world, across cultures, that at the time that these stories were popular, were not connected- these cultures, these communities were not connected

by trade or by transport. And in some cases, like they didn't even know that the other existed, so people in China didn't know the people in Africa existed. And people in Africa did not know the people who lived in the Americas existed. And yet (urdu) jo kahaniyan hain in cultures ki (english) they have a lot of things in common. There are a lot of things in storytelling that are common and that led Freud to deduce that (urdu) ye jo cheezein jo common hain (english) even though- it's not an influence like you're influenced by a writer if you've read them, if you're not familiar with that writer, you don't even know they exists and yet your writing is similar to them. That shows that there's something intrinsically human that is common to all of us. So like the wise old man archetype, for example, (urdu) woh har culture mein exist karta hai. (english) Stories have three parts: once upon a time. (urdu) aik dafa ka zikar hai (english) that's the construction that exists in almost every storytelling culture in the world. And fairy tales traditionally had a very black and white sense of good and evil. For the longest time in the history of literature. There's a hero and there's a villain and there are people who are on the side of the hero and there are people who were on side of the villain. And it's a very binary sort of sense of good and evil. But in the late 18th till the early 19th century the world sort of changed in the sense of how we look at art and popular culture and stories. And so we became more invested in realism and realism, sort of led the birth of the novel. And the characters of novels are human. They're like us, they're like the audience. They're relatable because they're complex (urdu) aur complex ka matlab hota hai ke woh flawed bhi hain aur woh achay bhi hain (english) and they're capable of kindness but they're also capable of greed. And so the archetype of redemption that you're specifically talking about, I think, is sort of the modern retelling of the traditional villain, you know, devil/angel. And so psychology (urdu) mein bhi ye movement shuru hui. (English)

Like Jung for example said that opposites are two sides of the same coin. And during the time of Jung, the surrealists were also talking about, sort of the same thing. They were dealing with opposites and saying that opposites are generally the same thing. (urdu) iss tarhan ki themes bohat thein surrealism mein like good & evil and fire & ice and they were considered to exist within the same thing. One cannot exist without the other. Light cannot exist without darkness. And so that's sort of where this redemption theme comes from. A villain is not static anymore in the way that we look at stories in the modern context, the hero is not purely good and a villain is not pure evil. Like a villain is capable of redemption and a hero is capable of doing bad things or behaving selfishly.

Mehmil OK. Yes, this is like something that kept coming up in my research too so I might include something-.

Amar Yes, I'm just giving you the history of characters, (urdu) ke characters pehlay shuru mein bohat binary hotay thay, bohat black and white hotay thay (english) Like in the epic, the Greek epic there's a very clear hero and that's the hero and the hero is perfect. And then you have Shakespearean tragedies (urdu) jismein hero ka koi aik flaw hai (english) and then you have realism where the novel emerges. And modern movies and film and TV shows are- (urdu) unki jo antecedence hai (english) they are the- they come from the novel, they come from the genre of the novel and the genre of the novel comes from the realist movement. So realism brought this idea to the world that there's no such thing as a hero or a villain, nobody's purely good or purely evil and that makes characters more relatable and really expands your audience, right?

Mehmil Hmm.

Amar Like as a storyteller (urdu) storyteller ka primary goal hota hai (english) to get as many people listening to them as possible. And people generally are more invested in your story if they can relate to the characters and they can relate to the characters if they're flawed.

Mehmil Yes, it is about relating to it. Okay. So, another question I had was- and you briefly did explain it, but maybe briefly you could explain it again- which is that- so like the transformation itself that occurs, you know- there are many things I read that can cause a transformation within a character that causes them to kind of redeem themselves in life. So, for example, one of the things I read was that, you know, they could have a dream sequence or sometimes it's like a child who is kind of leading that character into, you know, metaphorically into light. So I would like to know a little more about that.

Amar About what?

Mehmil About the transformation, like the journey and ways in which it can occur.

Amar Right, but I think I've talked about it already. There's an individual transformation and there's a collective transformation. So the individual transformation is something that comes from within. So for example, let's say there's a person who- like I'm giving you an example- if there's a person who is a lawyer. Right? And he wanted to be a playwright when he was a child and his parents were like "well playwrights don't make money and you have to have a job." So he gets a job, he gets married, he has kids. He spends his whole life and he's like in his 60s and he's about to retire and then he joins a writing class because he feels like his life was empty and

(urdu) saari responsibilities khatam hogai hain. (english) And then he finds his fulfilment. So Jung was really sort of all about that. Jung believed in the idea of self-actualization and he said that the point of any psychological journey- the logical end of it, is self-actualization and self-actualization is when you've taken your inner self and manifested it to the world. So, that could- like you're a writer or you're an artist or- you know who you are and you're able to communicate it to the rest of the world as well. You're living true to your true self and you're expressing yourself and you're adding to society in the way that only you can. And that's how he did it in his therapy, that's how he treated his patients. That if anything bad happens in your life, like a traumatic event or the loss of a loved one or like a reversal in life like the loss of a job, a setback- all of these things can be used in personal growth. So that's something like- in psychology now we know that the self is always growing and changing and evolving both internally and also in response to what your circumstances are and what your environment is and what's happening to you. We are constantly changing. (urdu) so woh tou aik ongoing psychological process hai. (english) But you know, literature is all about contradictions and the unexpected. All of this is very broad and general. So I would suggest that you select like, specific characters that you want to talk about.

Mehmil Yeah, I have and that is like one of the questions that I wanted to ask if you're familiar-.

Amar That's the best way to narrow it down because this is a very general thing. And there's a sort of stories out there and a lot of different types of characters and a lot of different types of transformations. And so in the pre-realistic era there was a lot of metamorphosis. So Ovid's metamorphoses is maybe something you could look at whether there was literal transformation

not a metaphorical one. Like a character becomes a bird or a character becomes a flower. Like in the story of Narcissus, Narcissus literally becomes the narcissus flower. So that is where the idea of confirmation comes from. That's actually the origin of it and then in the modern world, we interpret it more metaphorically but in ancient mythology, there was a lot of literal transformation.

Mehmil Yeah. And a lot of the literature does come from mythology.

Amar But yeah, I would suggest an interesting resource for you would be Ovid's *Metamorphoses* because metamorphosis literally means transformation. The whole book is sort of about characters transforming- these are literal transformations but there are also origin stories. Like you know, why do the mountains echo and why do birds migrate like they're answering these questions in a non-scientific way. So that would be- a lot of film and TV and pop culture is based on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

Mehmil Okay. So, for the paper, I am doing an analysis of current- because I'm looking at this in really current times I'm looking at film and TV- so the character that I'm analyzing for this paper is from *Avatar, The Last Airbender*, Prince Zuko. If you're familiar-

Amar Yes I am; I've seen it as a child. Like I love that TV show. I mean it is really-

Mehmil Yeah, it's really nice. So if you remember anything- because you know how he was in the beginning: He was the prince who was banished and his only aim was to find the avatar and, you know, to bring him home, to restore his honor. But, you know, throughout the series, there's

like this thing with his uncle who is kind of like, you know, the 'wise old man' maybe. And, you know, eventually he kind of softens up a little bit because he realizes a lot that he's lost and-

Amar Right and the Avatar is a child, the Avatar is two archetypes, like he's the child and he's also the hero.

Mehmil Oh, I hadn't looked at it that way.

Amar You know, he represents innocence and purity, but he also represents heroism.

Mehmil Yes, he does. And so eventually Zuko, you know, through a very weird kind of transformation where he struggles with himself- internally a lot and after that, he eventually apologizes to all the characters and kind of- He's on their side and eventually he helps them fight his own father. And so that is what I'm analyzing: his journey and his transformation. And again, I have to also analyze how we perceive it. So if you have any comments on that-

Amar Yeah, I would suggest that you look at the anti-hero. If we're looking at modern television- have you seen Breaking Bad?

Mehmil I haven't exactly. But I mean, I generally know the characters and generally know the storyline.

Amar Yeah, well, Breaking Bad, is like a show where all of the characters are anti-heroes, they're all drug dealers. They're all sort of behaving selfishly. But they are human, they're fleshed out. They're complex enough that we can understand why they're behaving the way they're behaving on a psychological level. And we can also understand the impact of community right,

where when you're sort of in that social situation where everyone's behaving a certain way, then that's what morality is. Morality is generally on a social level defined by what the collective views as moral. And so it's less about like- If you look at it as having three levels. There's a level of morality in which you can give- for example, in criminal law, morality is quite an absolute thing like stealing is wrong, is always wrong and always punishable. Or on a religious level, that's also where we perceive morality as being something that's absolute. Like this is an absolute truth that is not relative, that is not subject to interpretation. And then there is the morality of the collective which make your community, the collective, which means that the majority of the people in that community believe that a certain thing is moral and certain thing is not. And then there's sort of like an intrinsic morality, which like on a psychological level, we all have a certain level of morality unless you're a psychopath. But true psychopaths are less than 1 percent of the population so for most people to have that sort of general sense of that 'we don't want to do harm to people', for example, but we still can be pushed to, based on our circumstances. And if doing harm to someone in a certain specific way is something that's not perceived as immoral by the collective, that can lead to moral confusion. And I feel like- that's why I keep saying that Jung's theory is a little ill-fitting for your research. I would suggest that you look at like moral philosophers more. I mean, I can send you a few references that you might find helpful. But there's been like- this is a pretty evolving question, I guess. What is morality? How do we define morality? And there's a lot of philosophical debate on that. And it's something that changes over time in any society. So, in any society over time, what is defined as moral and what is defined as immoral- we as a community have to agree in order for people to be held to a certain standard of being human on the social level and on the social justice level. We as a society have to agree

there has to be a collective agreement on what is immoral and what is not. And that's always an evolving concept because it changes over time. So sometimes you find really interesting TV shows that are talking about issues like, for example, a movie that's about LGBTQ people made in the 60s, movies like that, they'll basically show you how characters are transforming. But the transformation of the character is symbolic in how literature does it, like where they would take a personal experience and they will use it to represent a universal theme, So, like the transformation of characters is often used as a way of understanding or exploring how a society is evolving. How, what a society defines as moral is evolving. Someone, for example, who believes that being gay is immoral then have a child who is gay and then, you know, experiences a personal transformation in connection with their relationship to that child- that becomes a collection of society is evolving if that makes any sense. So you could look at that as well because that's always the thing in good TV shows, at least that's what artists do, they try to reflect on what's happening in their time and in stories we do that through characters so a personal experience of the character becomes universal when it's a reflection of how the rest of society is changing.

Mehmil Mm hmm. This was something along the lines of one of my first- kind of hypotheses, which is that whether you redeem yourself or not is just based on the society that is around you. But through my study I kind of dropped the social and moral-

Amar Well, in Zuko's case, it's difficult to do that in the case of Avatar: The Last Airbender particularly. But most redemption in modern films and films that become popular. It's become popular for this reason that they're seeing something that is important that is adding to the

socio-political discourse in a way that is significant. So that's what generally happens, characters who are playing a villainous role- so that's what the idea of the anti-hero is. The anti-hero is someone who is a villain, but they're not a villain because they're intrinsically a bad person, they're a villain because the world has sort of led them to believe certain things that are damaging or dysfunctional or it has led them to act in certain ways that are damaging and dysfunctional. And then that character has- there's an event, there's always an event in life for that character that- dream sequence is a vague term because nobody is transformed fundamentally by a dream but a dream is a selection of- that's really more Freud. Freud believed that dreams are your unconscious mind communicating with your conscious mind. There's something in your unconscious mind that is bothering the unconscious mind. And in order to resolve that contradiction, the unconscious mind pushes into the conscious mind through a dream. So dreams are always a reflection of a contradiction in society. (urdu) Keh society aik baat keh rahi hai aur andar se aapko aik aur baat feel horahi hai (english) and there's a contradiction there and your brain is trying to resolve that contradiction in terms of the Self. So dreams are less like the cause of the transformation, they are more like an indication that a transformation is happening or about to happen.

Mehmil Yeah, that does make more sense.

Amar So the transformation is sometimes triggered by a singular event sometimes it's triggered by a series of events, sometimes it could be triggered by- something major could happen or a series of small things could happen or just a frustration that is small but then it builds and builds until the character reaches a breaking point and realizes that they can't live this way anymore.

And so that's sort of where the theme of the anti-hero comes in. Anti-hero is someone who understands- who becomes self-aware and decides to change the way that they're living and it always involves some level of self-awareness, like you're behaving a certain way because you are behaving from your own perspective and you think you're right. But then you see yourself from the perspective of someone else and you realize what you're doing is wrong and you become self-aware and that's when you change. That can reflect how society is changing, that can reflect a social contradiction. And, you know, writers and storytellers don't like to- you know, people who write essays and articles and philosophies and non-fiction books create theories about a society in a very clear, straightforward way. Storytellers like to do it in a more subtle way so they use characters to be representative of social forces.

(pause)

Amar Is there anything else you'd like to know?

Mehmil I think that's kind of it, because you did answer a lot of the other questions that I had already so I think that's it. I think that that's a lot for now for me to digest. So thank you. Thank you for your time. And thank you for your knowledge.

Amar You're welcome.