In times of hardship and distress, the need for heroes becomes strong. In history, all cultures have responded and represented the origin, the life and death of the hero, as a calling out to deal with insecurity, precariousness and downright danger. In ancient times, the hero or the heroine was a warrior both skilled in the art of war but also possessing an outstanding moral compass and selflessness. The heroes were considered both idols and ideals and stood for the pinnacle point of the human ability to be more than mere humans. Thus, heroism can be used to describe a part of culture and society that strives to be better for the collective good. Tina Turner may have sung “We don’t need another hero” in George Miller and George Ogilvie’s Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome (1985). In the desert sand of the dystopian future Turner’s cry for “no hero” gives rise not to the hero that the people want, but to the hero the people need. This theme was also the punch line of Christopher Nolan’s Batman: The Dark Knight (2008). The dark caped crusader flees on his ingenious Bat-bike into the night for a crime he has not committed, but a crime to which he needs to be blamed for the good in the urban people to shine bright. But as a society, as indi-
individuals, as citizens we do need heroes. We need them so much that we create an abundance of them to keep the hope of justice and the hope of a future bright.

In ethnography, social anthropology, leadership and organizational studies, history and cultural studies the hero is considered the protagonist that will help good vanquish evil (Franco et al. 2018; Frisk 2019; Jayawickreme & Di Stefano 2012). But as modern popular culture has demonstrated in novels, movies and comic books the hero or heroine is walking on the line of being an antagonist to the same people, he or she intended to protect. Thus, the notion heroism is an ambiguous one. The hero or heroism reflects what is good and best in human beings and their collective, but this reflection has flaws, cracks, and even distortions. The hero is a liminal character, walking the line between-and-betwixt good and evil, here and beyond. As liminal being the hero can be turned, but will only remain or renew his status as hero if the hero turns back.

So, how can “heroism” be understood as a cultural phenomenon? One that both can be ancient and hypermodern, but also can be as enigmatic like the uncompromising “hero” Rorschach in Zack Snyder’s Watchmen (2009). How are we to understand the mythical tales and everyday press stories of heroism considering our present time of individualization, individualism, and constant connectivity?

This issue of Academic Quarter calls for contributions on the theme of “Heroism” from a broad range of studies of history, philosophy, culture, community, audiences, fans, literature, media, movies, comics, computer games and toys. But the theme of heroism is not confined to the realms of fiction and realism. All heroes or heroines do not wear cowls, capes, spandex outfits or use ancient artifacts or fancy tech-gadgets. Browsing the social and content sharing network site YouTube results in many representations of “everyday heroism” from all over the world. Videos presenting firefighters and paramedics saving lives, citizens helping senior citizens in difficulty or distress, and healthcare personnel selflessly working beyond their call and duty (Scheipers 2014; Jordanova 2014). These videos function as both a recognition and a celebration of what Michel de Certeau called “the everyday man” (de Certeau 1984). Heroism is among and amidst us every day, and this reminds us that heroism is a title that society or groups of citizens attribute to certain individuals that stand for that which we consider admirable and good. As
Thomas Carlyle’s *On Heroes, Hero Worship and the Heroic in History* (1841/2013) portrayed so-called great men or heroes and their roles in history, whereas e.g. Karl Marx and Herbert Spencer adapted a wider scope to the forces forming history.

The theme of heroism, however, is massively represented and reflected in the vast (re)production of superheroes. During the 2000s and the 2010s some of the biggest box office successes in the world of movies are narratives and visualisation of superheroes, and gendered aspects of heroism have become manifest as “superheroines” have taken the scene. The representation of the superhuman and was born in the 1930s with the emergence of the superhero as an independent character. Though the history of the superhero dates much further back than the advent of the heroes of *Action Comics* and *Detective Comics*, in the 1930s the world of superheroism was created in times of economic and social depression (Coogan, 2006). The superheroes were both alien and from earth, and their domain was the growing cities and the constant waves of crime and disorder. The Second World War presented the superheroes with the ultimate foe: Nazis. The fight against human evil became the defense for values of individualism, freedom, national identity and patriotism. In the 1960s the superheroes looked to the stars and were confronted with intergalactical beings and aliens and heeded the call to fight for humanity and human rights. In the more recent superhero movies and streaming series meta-humans and super-beings explore precisely what defines to be human as the basis of heroism (MacDonald et al, 2018). Or in the words of late Stan Lee’s web wielding teenager, Spider-Man: With great power comes great responsibility!

This issue of *Academic Quarter* invites journal article contributions from the scholarly areas of, but not exclusive to, literature including comics and graphic novels, art, film and media, ethnography, anthropology, cultural studies and management and organisational studies. The theme of the articles can be subsumed under these headings within the following themes:

- **Heroism and diversity**: Gender, ethnicity, alienism
- **Heroism and remediation**: From book to movie, from comic to digital content, podcasting on heroism in popular culture
• **Heroism and narrative**: Origin stories, myths, news reports and discourse
• **Heroism and commercialization**: Merchandizing, learning programs, coaching
• **Heroism and belief systems**: Religion, values, utopia, the divine in man

**References**
Plan
Abstracts in app. 150 words in either Danish or English must be submitted by September 15th 2019 to guest editor Tem Frank Andersen (tfa@hum.aau.dk). The contributors will receive answer as soon as possible. Accepted articles must be sent to the guest editor no later than November 15th 2019. The article can be between 15,000-20,000 keystrokes (app. 3,500 words, spacing included), and must use the Chicago System Style Sheet (www.akademiskkvarter.hum.aau.dk/pdf/AK_word_template.docx). The submitted article will be sent to double blind peer-review. The authors will receive the anonymised reviews during January 2020. The final and revised article must be returned by March 1st 2020, and the issue will be published June 2020.

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