



THE SALT CYCLOPEDIA OF COMPARATIVE MYTHOLOGY

380+ building blocks for the aspiring mythopoet

White Marble Block

By R. James Gauvreau

Dedicated

To Messrs. Mircea Eliade and Hugh Nibley,
Who introduced me to comparative mythology;

To Lord Dunsany and Mr. H. P. Lovecraft,
Who pioneered the art of literary mythopoeia;

And

To Messrs. M. A. R. Barker and J. R. R. Tolkien,
Who taught us that master worldbuilders must be referred to by three initials and a last name.

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Introduction

There are three things that are worth talking about before we get into the meat of this book.

I'd like to clarify, before we get further, what makes this book different from most other books that have to do with mythology.

I want to explain how this book is organized and what you can expect in each section.

Lastly, because this is a revision of a previous book, I think that I should explain why it's been revised and exists in this form.

Why this book?

You may already have a comprehensive book on mythology. You might even have several. What is this book doing supposed to do, that the others don't?

Here's the difference: Those books that you have will tell you who Hades was. Maybe it'll be an incredibly in-depth book and inform you of every variation of every myth that ever featured him. You'll know a lot about Hades after you've read that book, and after you read the entries on another dozen or so death divinities, you'll have a pretty good idea of their common traits.

This book approaches the matter from the complete opposite direction. It tells you about death divinities as a class, and then it casually mentions Hades as one of a number of examples.

Mythologies are built out of tropes called mythemes. Just as in literature, Tropes Are Not Bad. If divinities of a given type generally act in a certain way, then by all means write your own divinities of that type in the same way. Tropes Are Not Good, though. They're pretty amoral.

What they amount to is how you do or don't play with them and why that's so. If you aren't familiar with the building blocks that you're using, then you

can't make any intentional decisions at all. You will be locked into repeating patterns without realizing it, and any innovation that you make will be accidental.

This book is meant to facilitate a kind of freedom, then.

What's in this book?

Some mythemes are very common, but do not appear to be universal. Many examples of this can be found in mythologies descended from Proto-Indo-European (PIE) culture, whose descendants can be found everywhere from Great Britain to India. To ignore them would be to leave out valuable and interesting information, but to include them alongside more universal mythemes would be misleading.

To avoid erring on either side this book includes a variety of mythemes that are less than universal, but lists them separately from the rest.

Mythemes that appear to be genuinely universal¹ are in the first section, *General Mythemes: From Ancestor Veneration to Writing*. Because there were a few of them, PIE mythemes get a very short section, *Proto-Indo-European Mythemes: From Battles Against Titans to Wild Hunts*. Other local but significant or interesting mythemes, as well as a few common symbols, are grouped together in the third section, *Miscellany: From Acosmism to Year-Kings*.

Cross-references that refer to entries in a different section from the one that the main entry is located in are color-coded: **red** for General Mythemes, **blue** for Proto-Indo-European Mythemes, and **purple** for Miscellany.

There are also four appendices attached to this book:

Appendix A: Examples of divinities with portfolios that you might not expect them to have, but which

examples in at least *three* disparate culture groups, or in at least two of the following: (1) Afro-Eurasia, (2) Australia and Oceania; (3) North and South America.

¹ I'm calling a mytheme "universal" if I can find examples of it in at least two disparate culture groups (e.g. Proto-Indo-European and Chinese). I will mention that this identification is tentative unless I can find

in hindsight seem completely reasonable, and why you should consider doing the same in your constructed mythologies.

Appendix B: What names can tell you about a divinity.

Appendix C: If the main entries concern themselves chiefly with ideas *of* religion and mythology, then this appendix concerns itself chiefly with ideas *about* religion and mythology.

Appendix D: A list of phrases like “Once upon a time” and “They lived happily ever after” that are traditionally used to open and close stories in different languages. They’re especially useful when you want something with a fairy tale feel with which to open (or close) your story, but are tired of the two that I have just mentioned.

In the first edition of this book, there was a fifth appendix. It can no longer be included because it was first published on Rolang’s Creeping Doom at rolang.com, and this second edition does not meet the license requirements. If you would like to use this material, then go to tinyurl.com/godrolang for random tables on building new gods. If nothing else, it can be a fun exercise in justifying random portfolios and that kind of thing.

Finally, this book closes with *Selected Sources and Recommendations*, which is just what it sounds like. I cannot list every source that I used (among other things, I did not keep notes from the first edition) and for that matter I do not want to. This is not a scholarly resource, and adding a thorough list of my sources would only bloat this book. Instead, you get a list of books and scholarly articles that go a bit deeper into a single mytheme or group of mythemes than I might have been able to do here.

Why a second edition?

This is not the first time that I’ve assembled a cyclopedia of comparative mythology. The first

edition was published in January of 2014, and it became fairly popular—there were more than 15,000 downloads before I took it down about a year and a half later, and to my knowledge it still pops up from time to time on some 4chan file sharing threads.

Despite its popularity (and I still get requests to put the book back into circulation), I am not entirely satisfied with what I published. This is my chance to do it better, with two more years of writing experience and some actual design sense.

I mean, the title was in Comic Sans. Comic Sans! *What was I thinking?*

The first edition was slapped together in Microsoft Word as quickly as I could write the text. Publishing a revised edition is an opportunity to release something that’s better-written, looks professional, and has more information than before. Major changes include a limited selection of sources, expanded material, improved organization, and the removal of some irrelevant entries. As always, there is more that I could do, but as it is said: the perfect is the enemy of the good. If I didn’t set a deadline for myself, then this book would never be released.

For those of you who have a copy of the first edition of this book, I hope that you will find this revision to be worth your money.

You can contact me at callmebrotherg@gmail.com, or find my current fiction project, “Heroes Save the World,” at heroessavetheworld.wordpress.com. If you’d like to support more projects like this one, then check out patreon.com/WMBsaltworks, where you’ll also be kept up-to-date on what I’m working on, or go to my store at DriveThruRPG, where I’m listed as [WMB Saltworks](http://WMBSaltworks).

General Mythemes: From Ancestor Veneration to Writing

Ancestor veneration (*ancestor reverence, ancestor worship*) is the propitiation of one's ancestors in order to receive their aid or avert their curses. It serves to enforce kinship values. The ancestors may be approached because, as former humans, they understand their descendants better than would other divinities (which is especially useful if most or all other divinities are TRICKSTER DIVINITIES). They generally persist in a state of existence that can be made better or worse according to the actions of people in the PHENOMENAL WORLD, just as the ancestors can interfere in order to make life in the phenomenal world more or less difficult. In fact, offerings may be made to them not in return for anything but simply because they are so dependent on the intervention of their descendants.¹ Veneration of the saints is probably an outgrowth of ancestor worship that puts the saints in the position of (adopted) ancestors to all humankind. Despite the common term "ancestor worship," few if any religions with this practice actually believe that their ancestors have or ever will become gods. Examples include traditional Chinese religion, the Igbo, Pueblo Amerind culture, and Roman cults of the family.

Animal cults come in a number of basic types. *Pastoral cults* refrain from harming the species and may pay homage to particular members of the species. *Hunting cults* ritually kill members of the species but also honor it, either before or after its death. *Dread cults* perform rituals to pacify the spirit of individual members of the species after they are slain (or sometimes to pacify the whole species), out of fear of retribution. *Embodiment cults* believe that the species houses virtuous human souls and treat them accordingly. *Ominous cults* view the animal as an omen. *Magical cults* associate the animal with some style or tradition of magic, possibly as a source for ritual ingredients. Especially in the last two instances, it is common for the cult to create a

divinity that is associated with the animal in some way; often, members of these species are seen as representatives or incarnations of that divinity. See BEARS; BIRDS; DONKEY WORSHIP; HORSE WORSHIP; SACRED BULLS.

Apotropaic magic is that which is used to ward off or otherwise protect against evil powers, harm, and misfortune. Amulets with the likenesses of certain divinities, blown glass ornaments called "witch balls," gargoyles and similar figures² (generally placed at thresholds), mirrors, particular varieties of wood, phallic representations,³ shiny objects,⁴ wands, and WATER (especially poured) may all be used. "Apotropaic wands" are especially associated with expectant mothers, birth, children, and things associated with children, and are usually used to draw a circle around that which was



¹ Political conservatives have yet to suggest that their ancestors are growing dependent on handouts and just need to pull themselves up by their bootstraps and get spirit jobs.

² The figures that are carved in pumpkins (and, in earlier times, turnips, beets, and other vegetables) are part of the same class.

³ Evil spirits are well-known for having parental issues, but had no way of resolving these until Sigmund Freud died.

⁴ Under the assumption that magpie spirits would seek them out and protect whatever was around, one presumes. Except, magpies were actually *anti*-apotropaic in the British Islands, so someone or another has the wrong idea about them.

intended to be the focus of the protection. It is often difficult to tell the difference between purely apotropaic magic and magic that is intended to attract good luck rather than repel its opposite. Examples include offerings to the chthonic Averting Gods (Greek), rituals to Taweret and Bes (Egyptian), and dreamcatchers (Ojibwe Amerind).

Axes mundi (*cosmic axes, world waxes, world pillars, columna cerului*) are the center of the world in their respective mythologies and/or the place where the PHENOMENAL WORLD is joined to the OVERWORLD and/or the UNDERWORLD. They are the place where the gods live and where the four compass directions come together. They may be crosses, lighthouses, maypoles, minarets, mountains, obelisks, pagodas, pillars, rockets, ropes, skyscrapers, smoke columns, spires, staircases, stalks, steeples, temple mounts, TOTEM poles, TREES, vines, etc. The home can serve as a personal axis mundi or as an extension of the common one.⁵ They are “the place that is sacred above all”⁶ and represent the place that is known and settled, the organized universe in microcosm in contrast to the CHAOTIC MATTER that lies outside the universe. Insofar as a people move from the axis mundi and settle new lands, they are co-participants in the act of creation by extending the limits of the organized universe. The concept is viewed as a primarily feminine one. Because the term brings together a number of related ideas, a culture may have several axes mundi. Examples include Kunlun Mountain (Chinese), Wacah Chan (Maya), and Yggdrasil (Norse). See COSMIC SUPPORT; GARDEN OF THE GODS; WORLD’S NAVEL; WORLD TREE.

Bear worship (*arcolatry*) definitely dates back to at least 70,000 BC, but may predate anatomically modern humans. Evidence of Paleolithic BEAR cults comes chiefly from the discovery of bear bones set in naturally impossible arrangements, such as bear skulls arranged together in perfect

circles.⁷ Regardless of the age of these cults,⁸ the bear is regarded by many to be the oldest European divinity. It appears to have been connected to hunting rites. One known ceremony from the Upper Paleolithic (as gleaned from archaeological remains) called for a bear to be shot with arrows, killed with an arrow to the lungs, and then buried near a clay bear statue covered with bear fur, the skull and body being buried separately. Examples include the Ainu religion, Artemis (Greek), Bear Mother (Nivkh, Haida, and others), and Matunos (Celtic). See URSA MAJOR.

Bed burials are interments that feature the inclusion of a bed with the deceased (who is placed upon it). They point to the use of sleep as a metaphor for death. In some cultures, it was strongly associated with women, usually of the upper class. They are found chiefly in Anglo-Saxon graves, but also among the Kerma of ancient Sudan.

Benevolent moon stories are a variety of ORIGIN-OF-DEATH MYTH that associate death (or rather its potential end) with the MOON,⁹ whose waxing and waning suggested to some that it was possible that humans could return from death, or that they should have been able to. The moon may petition other divinities to allow humankind to be capable of resurrection, resurrection people on its own, or be the place to which a divinity is exiled after resurrecting people too often. They are most common in the Pacific region, with examples in such places as Fiji and Australia, but can also be found among the Khoikhoi of Southern Africa.

Bird divination (*augury*) is the practice of using the flight patterns of BIRDS to divine the past, present, or (most often) the future. Birds are used so often for DIVINATION because they can exist both on the ground and in the sky, where the gods (especially SKY FATHERS) are reputed to dwell or with which they are associated. Generally, only particular

⁵ As illustrated by the practice of feng shui in China and the importance of the tent pole in nomadic cultures around the world.

⁶ Eliade, Mircea. *Images and Symbols: Studies in Religious Symbolism*. New York: Sheed & Ward, 1961.

⁷ Scholars no longer support the hypothesis that this is actually a case of ancestor worship by the bears themselves.

⁸ In some Chinese CREATION MYTHS, the CREATOR DIVINITIES are described as wearing bear-skins.

⁹ In these stories, death may generally be seen as a default state out of which one is transformed by the MOON, but they are classed as origin-of-death myths because, in the end, they explain why people do not live forever.

species of bird may be used. Their species, number, and direction and rate of movement may all contribute to the interpretation. The practice is most commonly mentioned in connection with Rome and Greece, but also existed in Central America, India, New Guinea, and elsewhere.

Blood rituals are defined by involving the intentional release of blood. They are generally symbolic of death and rebirth.¹⁰ Blood brother rituals involve the intermingling of blood between multiple people (usually male) in order to unite them as a family. Especially when deliberately performed in such a way as to release blood, body piercing can serve as a RITE OF PASSAGE or provide magical protection. They are most strongly associated with Mesoamerican religions but are present elsewhere, such as Italian culture and some forms of Sufism. See **BLOOD BURNING**^(M); **HUMAN SACRIFICE**.

Calendrical and commemorative rites are rituals that mark certain times of the year or fixed periods since a particular event. They give a social meaning to time by creating a number of recurring cycles: daily, weekly, even generational. They may be attached to seasonal changes or solar or lunar cycles. They impose order on the unordered world and aim to transform the natural world, as embodied in the passing of time, into something controlled by humankind.

Cardinal directions and colors are often associated with each other. These colors frequently appear in place and divinity names.¹¹ North has been represented by black, blue, white, and yellow. East has been represented by blue, green, red, white, and yellow. South has been represented by black, blue, red, white, and yellow. West has been represented by black, blue, green, red, white, and yellow. The cardinal direction of “Center,” where it exists, has been represented by blue, green, and yellow. The cardinal directions may also be associated with the seasons. Winter is associated with the north (where the culture is north of the equator) or with the south (where the culture is

south of the equator), the opposing direction is associated with summer, and then autumn is usually associated with the west and spring with the east.

Celestial oceans (*celestial rivers, world oceans*) surround the entire universe, not only the PHENOMENAL WORLD but also the OVERWORLD and the UNDERWORLD. Examples can be found in Quechua, Hindu, and Greek mythology.

Chained Satans are a kind of SLEEPING HERO whose future return is seen in a negative light. They may be malicious or their awakening may have inevitable and undesirable consequences (e.g. the world is their dream). They may have been chained through trickery. They may be tormented by a **BIRD** or snake, which usually devours them or their source of nutrition. They may be kept just out of reach of **WATER** (which may be drunk by the tormentor). All other characteristics of the sleeping hero apply. Examples include Artavasdes II (Armenian), Hobbomock (Quinnipiac Amerind), and Loki (Norse).



fantasy literature, was anciently regarded as identical to magic powered by people's souls.

¹¹ Belarus means “White Rus” or “White Russia.” Xipe Totec was also known as Red Tezcatlipoca, because of his association with the East.

¹⁰ Blood magic is generally seen as abhorrent because blood is so often equated with the soul, so that blood magic, though it is generally seen as being powered by a mere bodily fluid or general “life force” in today's

Chaotic matter is the formless state that was in place before the creation of the universe. This matter may be described as vapor or **WATER**, as being without characteristics of space, and/or as being salty or muddy. It generally moves in a way that makes one think of a stormy ocean, if it is described as moving at all. Examples can be found in just about any mythology that posits a “before” to the present universe.

Chariot burials are places of interment which include a chariot among the GRAVE GOODS. They are typically in above-ground tombs rather than graves. HORSES are almost always among the grave goods in a chariot burial. Examples can be found in China, Italy, Russia, and elsewhere.

Color symbolism is a common motif whose particulars can vary wildly from culture to culture. Colors that are commonly symbolic include black,¹² blue,¹³ green,¹⁴ red,¹⁵ white,¹⁶ and yellow.¹⁷

Common taboos include or involve abortion; adultery; bestiality; bodily functions; corpses; food and dining; graves; homosexuality; incest;

infanticide; intermarriage or miscegenation; masturbation; necrophilia; pedophilia; and restrictions on or ritual regulation of hunting and killing. Breaking taboo can lead to a loss of ritual purity. Especially strict and insisted-upon taboos can sometimes hint at a now-unknown past in sort of “the lady doth protest too much” manner.¹⁸ See TABOOS AGAINST NAMING THE DEAD; TABOOS ON FOOD AND DRINK.

Corpse roads (*lych gates, bier roads, burial roads, coffin roads, lykes, corpe ways*) are roads used for the transportation of corpses to burial grounds. They are often associated with LIMINAL DIVINITIES and GHOSTS. They usually pass through liminal locations such as FORESTS and rivers. They are most common in Britain but can also be found in the Netherlands, Sweden, and pre-Columbian Costa Rica, and something of this nature was employed during certain Chinese dynasties, albeit for high-ranking individuals only.

Correct action (*orthopraxy*) was often perceived as being the most necessary quality in ancient religions. Only rarely was “correct belief” or

¹² Meanings [black] include asceticism, authority, change, cold, death, disorder, elegance, endings, evil, experience, functionality, independence, law, magic, misfortune, mourning, mystery, new life, night, power, royalty, secrets, the supernatural, violence, water, and winter.

¹³ Meanings [blue] include affluence, cold, confidence, culture, death, distance (and infinity), distinction, divinity, drunkenness, excellence, faithfulness, friendship, happiness, harmony, GHOSTS, glory, intellectualism, labor, loyalty, mourning, naivety, nobility, optimism, reliability, sadness, science, the sky, spirituality, sympathy, torment, villainy, and water.

¹⁴ Meanings [green] include death, envy, gambling, good fortune, hope, hunting, fairies, freshness, hope, immortality, inexperience and immaturity, life, love (especially if it is fresh or growing), misfortune, nature, peace, power, prosperity, prostitution, rebirth, renewal, royalty, safety, sexuality, sickness, spring, strength, toxicity, vivacity, and witchcraft.

¹⁵ Meanings [red] include activity, anger, beauty, blood, celebration, ceremony, Communism, courage, danger, death, dignity, dynamism, fertility, good fortune, happiness, health (the color was even considered by some cultures to be capable of curing illnesses or casting out demons), the heart, heroism, hospitality, fire, joy, love, loyalty, marriage, martyrdom and sacrifice (in which case it can also symbolize innocence), mourning, passion, prosperity, prostitution, purity, resistance

against evil, seduction, sexuality, sin, success, summer, virtue, war, warning, wealth, well-being, and wisdom.

¹⁶ Meanings [white] include beginnings, civic virtue, cleanness, death, detachment, disaster, divinity, esteem, exactitude, fertility, ghosts, goodness, good fortune, gratitude, innocence, joy, lights, marriage, monarchism, mourning, neutrality, newness, peace and nonviolent resistance, perfection, purity, reincarnation, sacrifice, and serenity.

¹⁷ Meanings [yellow] include asceticism, ambivalence, amusement, caution, celebration, civic virtue, contradiction, courage, cowardice, crime, betrayal, divinity, duplicity, envy, glory, gold, happiness, health, keys, nobility, optimism, pleasure, reason, royalty, ripeness, sacrifice, sexuality, science, the sky, virtue, warmth, wealth, and wisdom.

¹⁸ It can be easy to take this too far, though, and infer fire from what appears to be smoke but is actually just very fine dust that has been blown in the air. The ancient Greeks were convinced that their ancestors had performed human sacrifice, and for a long time so did scholars. It has, however, been established more recently by Dennis D. Hughes (*Human Sacrifice in Ancient Greece*) that while it is certainly possible that this is true, the evidence is by no means conclusive and it is just as probable, if not a little more probable, that the situation was otherwise.

orthodoxy the only necessary quality in a person and in many cases correct action was of such importance that the actual belief or intent behind it was totally irrelevant. So long as the rituals were performed correctly, the gods didn't care if your neighbor was a heretic. See RITES OF AFFLICTION; RITES OF EXCHANGE AND COMMUNION; RITES OF FEASTING AND FASTING; RITUAL PURIFICATION; RITUAL SLAUGHTER.

Cosmic egg myths (*world egg myths, mundane egg myths*) are CREATION MYTHS that describe the creation of the world from a preexistent egg, which may be laid and/or incubated by a more preexistent being (usually a BIRD or snake). The egg hatches, and out comes the world, world parents, or a single world parent. The egg may be resting on the PRIMORDIAL OCEAN. Examples include the egg that released Coyote and Cat to create the world (Kuupangaxwicheh), the proto-world Avaiku (Cook Islander), Pan Ku (Chinese), Protogonus (Greek), and, technically, the Big Bang.¹⁹

Cosmic supports hold the world and/or the sky aloft. There are usually either one or four. They may be animals, cords, giants (where there is one, usually male; where there are four, usually young women), mountains, or pillars. Where animals are the cosmic supports, they are most often fish, frogs or toads, tortoises or turtles, or serpents—all creatures that are associated with WATER. As serpents, they may encircle the world rather than support it from below. They may be derived from WATERY DEMONS, as the two are often conflated; this would have interesting implications if true. Examples include Atlas (Greek), the four dwarves at the corners of the Earth (Norse), the Great Turtle (Lenape Amerind), and Jormungandr (Norse).

Cosmogonical myths (*creation from chaos myths*) are CREATION MYTHS that describe the creation of the world through its organization from a chaotic or unordered state to an ordered state. CHAOTIC MATTER is seen as predating creation in these myths. They often tell of the eventual end of the world (or else allow for its possibility if CORRECT ACTION is not taken) through the world's



dissolution into or overcoming by chaotic matter. The Genesis creation account is cosmogonical despite later interpretations and translations that suppose that it describes the creation of the world EX NIHILO. Examples can be found in Greek, Hawaiian, Inca, and Japanese mythology.

Creation myths are narratives that describe how the world began. They have plot and characters. They are generally set in the dim and distant past, and characters who appear both then and in the context of recent history are usually considered to be gods.²⁰ They are the most likely of any myths to be understood symbolically by the cultures that created them. See CHAOTIC MATTER; COSMIC EGG MYTHS; COSMOGONICAL MYTHS; DUALISTIC CREATION MYTHS; EARTH DIVER MYTHS; EMERGENCE MYTHS; EX NIHILO MYTHS; FIRST HUMANS; FOUNDATIONAL MYTHS; GOLDEN AGES; ORIGIN MYTHS; WORLD COUPLE MYTHS; WORLD PARENT MYTHS.

Creator divinities are the protagonists of CREATION MYTHS. They may be animals, brother divinities, the FIRST HUMANS, or a divinity in the form of an old man (especially with a staff) or old woman (sometimes made out of stone or earth).

¹⁹ Not a reference to WORLD COUPLE MYTHS.

²⁰ Some may have become gods in order to justify or explain their presence in both ages, which are otherwise perceived as distinct from each other.



They may attempt to devour (with mixed or no success) one or more of their children, who figure more prominently in the mythology. They may be followed by “transformers” who finish their work or change it from their intended product to something that is more amenable to inhabitation by humans. Their most common occupation, where they have one, is potter. They may regret making certain things, or even all things. They may depart to the UNDERWORLD or go to create an entirely different world after they are done. In relation to their role as antecedents to the primary divinities of a mythology, see PROTO-DIVINITIES. Examples include Coatlicue (Aztec), Pangu (Chinese), and Viracocha (Inca).

Crones are old women who, as characters in mythology, are associated with magic and the supernatural. They may be disagreeable, helpful, malicious, obstructive, or sinister and delight in being all of these at once. The crone is made into the Other and marginalized by being outside of the normal reproductive cycle. For this reason, her home is usually a liminal location (e.g. FORESTS,

islands, forests on islands). Crones derive their occult wisdom and magical prowess from their proximity to death. They may be child-eating demons. Examples include Baba Yaga (Slavic), Elli (Norse), Spider Woman (Amerind), and the witch from *Hansel and Gretel*.

Cult images (*idols*) are crafted objects that are venerated or worshiped. A cult image may be representative of a divinity or group of divinities, or be the physical embodiment of a divinity. Despite the injunction against “idol worship,” cult images nevertheless exist in Christianity in the form of icons, or “venerable images.”

Culture heroes are heroes specific to some group (e.g. cultural, ethnic, religious) who change the world through invention or discovery. The list includes but is not limited to: agriculture, civilization, fire, law and order, religion, and songs. They may be associated with rivers, especially in making or change the courses of rivers. There may be two culture heroes who engage in creation via their opposition (friendly or otherwise). They may be progenitors of the people. One may encounter and fight his son without learning the other’s identity.²¹ They may be exiled for a crime (usually falsely attributed to them) or because of a prophecy, only to return at a later time. They are often accompanied by animal companions, usually one or more dogs or horses. They may be renowned for their prowess in hunting. They may be capable of shapeshifting. They may mature miraculously quickly or exhibit one or more adult qualities too early for their age. They may banish demons or monsters, especially in the guise of snakes, and may spare certain of them for the good of the people and/or out of pity. They are usually long-lived. They often have daughters, who are usually virgins and/or give birth to important sons. The death of a culture hero is usually significant, both in its manner and in the very fact of the hero’s death. See CULTURE-GIVING DIVINITIES; THEFT OF FIRE MYTHS; TRICKSTER DIVINITIES.

Culture-giving divinities (*craft divinities*) teach the arts of civilization to humans. These arts include

²¹ This habit makes one wonder about the possible stories that might have once circulated around characters such as King Laius, who could be said to have been in conflict with Oedipus when he bound the boy

and left him to die from exposure, and definitely when he argued with Oedipus on the side of a road years later and was killed.

butchery, fire-making, law, medicine, plowing, religious rituals, smithing, and **WEAVING**. They are generally apart from the main pantheon of deities in some way, especially by being part of an older order (e.g. Loki is a giant, Prometheus is a titan). They usually die or get tortured by the other gods for their trouble but get better later on.²² They are often poets or musicians in some manner. Examples include Pramanthu (Hindu), Spider Woman (Navajo Amerind), and the Watchers or Grigori (Abrahamic). See **THEFT OF FIRE MYTHS**; **TRICKSTER DIVINITIES**; **WRITING**.



²² Some scholars believe that Loki and Prometheus have a common origin because, among other things, both are connected to fire, are among the most cunning of divinities in their respective pantheons, and are involved in the dividing-up of a bull which must be shared with an eagle (or Zeus, who can be represented as an eagle). For a more in-depth treatment of the idea, read Timothy J. Stephany's *The Theft of Fire: Prometheus and Loki*. If it's true, then it really makes you wonder if Loki got

Death divinities collect or rule over the dead. They are not necessarily **PSYCHOPOMPS**. They may be associated with resurrection. In religions with multiple death divinities they may be arranged into a sort of bureaucracy with each one overseeing a different aspect of death or area of the **UNDERWORLD**. There are frequently one or more judges over the dead who live in the underworld rather than in the **GARDEN OF THE GODS**. Psychopomps may be imprisoned in a bottle, shell, **TREE**, or other container, causing the cessation of death until their captor is forced or convinced to release them. They may split their time between the underworld and other worlds, and may serve as **DYING-AND-RISING DIVINITIES** and/or as **FERTILITY DIVINITIES** in the process. They may have been warrior-kings before dying and making or taking over the underworld. Death may be seen as an “erotic embrace” with the death divinity. Examples include Izanami (Japanese), Mors (Roman), Supay (Inca), and Tuoni (Finnish).

The **descent to the underworld** (*katabasis*, *nekiya*) involves an upper-world being (either from the **OVERWORLD** or the **PHENOMENAL WORLD**) journeying to the **UNDERWORLD** and returning. The ability to enter the underworld while still alive (and return!) is proof of supernatural power. Divinities and heroes that complete this process (rather than staying in the underworld) represent the defeat of death and immortality. The ascent is called *anabasis*. Descents to the underworld can be found in the Epic of Gilgamesh (Sumerian), Odyssey (Greek), and the Popul Vuh (Maya).

Divination is the practice of particular rituals in order to learn of the past, the present, or (most frequently) the future through magical means. As categorized by Julian Jaynes, the four basic types of divination are: omens and omen texts, which are based on peculiar occurrences and usually develop into a detailed documentation of them²³; sortilege

sentenced to getting snake venom dripped on his face for eternity because of some helpful thing that he did for humanity, which the other gods didn't like and subsequently covered up.

²³ For example, the development of astrology into astronomy. Needham suggested that the kernel of modern science is to be found in this documentation of omens.

or cleromancy, which is the casting of lots²⁴; augury, which is based on the appearance and behavior of natural phenomena; and spontaneous divination, which is a broad generalization of previous types and a rough catch-all for practices that don't fall anywhere else.

Divine attendants are minor divinities who serve the ruling divinities. Some roles that are often specifically filled by one or more divinities are: accountant of morality or action-recorder; camp follower; cupbearer; doorkeeper; scribe; soldier; spokesman; and watchman. They may have been created from drops of **WATER**, fire, light, stones, or a combination of elements (e.g. fire, snow, and water).

Divine food is associated with divinities in some way and is usually grown specifically for their use. The label does not generally apply to all examples of its class (i.e. the golden apples grown in the GARDEN OF THE GODS may be a divine food, but that does not mean that all apples have the property of being divine food). It may be the source of immortality. Its theft from the ruling divinities is usually the subject of at least one myth. It is frequently alcoholic, in which case it was probably bestowed upon humankind,²⁵ possibly through theft. There is often a divinity associated with it, especially if it is alcohol. It may be stolen by a monster and have to be rescued for the sake of the gods. Mortals who eat it may not be able to return to their land, especially if the food is associated with the UNDERWORLD or with LIMINAL DIVINITIES.

Golden apples are a particularly common food divine food. Other examples include ambrosia and nectar (Greek), the cocoa bean²⁶ (Aztec), mead (Norse), the peaches of immortality (Chinese), and soma (Hindu).

Divine right (*mandate of Heaven*) refers to the idea that the ruler has been authorized to act in *zir* position by a divinity from whom such authorization could conceivably flow. This usually means the divinity in charge of the universe, or at least of the pantheon, but could also mean nothing more complicated than a divine thug who, while certainly not the biggest power around, has staked out a small claim over here that nobody is (successfully) contesting.²⁷ Either way, the ruler's legitimacy is ultimately not because of blood or any action on *zir* part (though these and other factors can contribute) but because the ruler enjoys the favor of this divinity. This favor could be lost if the ruler acts improperly and be handed to someone else, and successful revolutions could be smoothed over with a culture-wide assumption that the usurper's success was proof that the previous ruler had lost favor. Natural disasters could also be taken as signs that the ruler had lost favor. One variation of divine right, such as was most often found in European kingdoms, held that the divinity would never withdraw its favor from the ruler, which removed the protection against abuse that is provided by the standard concept.²⁸ *Tlatocayotl* was the Aztec concept of divine right, in the status of any ruler (from national to local) as a representative of the gods.

²⁴ Playing cards and board games appear to have developed from sortilege. Even after they were separated as a class from divination, individual games were frequently recombined, as demonstrated by Enochian chess. It makes one wonder what sort of divination could be attempted by playing rounds of *Betrayal at House on the Hill*.

²⁵ The name for one or all kinds of alcohol (usually ethyl alcohol where there's a distinction) frequently translates to "water of life," regardless of where you are. Examples include aquavit, vodka, and whiskey.

²⁶ In one myth, it was said that Quetzalcoatl stole the cocoa tree from the other gods, gave it to humanity, and told them how to care for it and turn its pods into a drink that made people wise. Fermented drinks may qualify as a kind of inverted divine food, as pulque (fermented sap) was given by the other gods as a sort of punishment in response to the theft.

²⁷ This could actually be the reality even for divinities that claim to rule the entire universe. You're a short-lived, powerless mortal; how are *you* going to confirm that the Jade Emperor is sovereign ruler over every inch of the cosmos? It's like living in a divine Oceania that may or may not just be restricted to Airstrip One. This is, in fact, the idea behind many strains of Gnosticism. The Demiurge is Big Brother, and the only thing that's clued us in to its lies is that God and God's emanations have slipped us some information through the cracks.

²⁸ A middle-of-the-road version, such as was taught by Calvin, supposed that favor could be lost and a government rightfully overthrown, but that this change of powers could only come from within, via magistrates and others, rather than from a general rebellion of all the people.

Divine twins may have any number of origins but are usually the first at something (e.g. the FIRST HUMANS or the first to die) and usually get something out of this deal (e.g. if they die then they rule the UNDERWORLD, which I guess works out). They may be considered halves of a soul or otherwise represent completeness. They may each have a different father²⁹ (which is usually the explanation for one twin being divine and the other being mortal). They may be in opposition to each other, even from the womb. In some mythologies they are not born together but become blood brothers at some point in life.³⁰ The second “twin” may even be formed from a body part of the twin at some point after birth. Examples include the Hero Twins (Maya), Romulus and Remus (Roman), and even Elros and Elron (Tolkien), who preserve the essential characteristic of one twin being divine and the other human. See **FETCH** for another take on doubles, and **HORSE TWINS** for a version of this mytheme that is unique to Proto-Indo-European mythology.

Domestic divinities. See **HOUSEHOLD DIVINITIES**.

Dualistic creation myths are **CREATION MYTHS** that describe the universe as having been created through the opposition of one or more **CREATOR DIVINITIES**. In a less antagonistic case, creation may have been carried out by a married couple whose members are showing off to or competing against each other. In either case, the divinities may be **DIVINE TWINS**. Examples can be found in Chukchi mythology, Fuegian mythology, and Nenets mythology.³¹

Dying-and-rising divinities (*life-death-rebirth divinities*) differ from **DYING DIVINITIES** in that they return from death through either resurrection or literal rebirth. They are often associated with the year cycle, especially with regard to the growing of food, and represent the permanence and continuity

of life. Some are mortals before dying and experience apotheosis in the completion of their return to life. Examples include Jesus Christ (Christian), Ishtar (Babylonian), Osiris (Egyptian), and Quetzalcoatl (Aztec). See **SLEEPING HEROES**; **VEGETATION DIVINITIES**.

Earth diver myths are **CREATION MYTHS** that describe a diver who brings up matter (usually sand or mud) from the bottom of the primordial ocean. This matter then becomes land. The diver is usually an amphibian or a **BIRD**. It is usually sent by someone as opposed to acting to fulfill its own designs. There may be many preexistent beings, in which case they are usually asleep and the diver is the first to awaken. There may be a number of prior failed attempts, tried either by a single persistent diver or by a series of preceding divers. The other divers fail because they cannot reach the bottom of the ocean or because they do not properly use the matter that they bring up. The earth diver may die in the process of bringing up land for others. These myths are believed to have a common origin in the east coast of Asia, but examples are widespread and can be found in Hungarian mythology, Maori mythology, Seneca Amerind mythology, and Yoruba mythology.

Earth mothers (*Mother Earth, Mother Nature, Mother Goddesses, Magna Dea*) are divinities that represent motherhood, fertility, creation, and/or the bounty of the Earth. They may be associated with the birth of the **FIRST HUMANS** and/or the fertility of the Earth. Earth Mother images date back to at least 10,000 BC; the concept is probably connected to the development of agriculture. They may be associated with animals that were thought to be good mothers, including lions, cows, vultures, and cats. They may also be associated with nurturing and life-sustaining or primordial and life-preceding principles such as **WATER**, the sun, the night, and the Earth. There are several groups of divinities that each may or may not have been related to or

²⁹ Possibly awkward...

³⁰ An excellent example of nonconventional divine twins is found in Gilgamesh and Enkidu. Gilgamesh is two-thirds divine while Enkidu is completely mortal, and they begin in opposition but later pledge undying loyalty to each other.

³¹ From what I can tell, most myths of this type can be found in the circumpolar region of the world, but Tierra

del Fuego is about as far away as you can get from there. I have found a reference stating that A. M. Zolotarjov wrote that this mytheme can be found on every continent, but I can barely find other English references to him, let alone an English version of his book, so the Fuegian example will have to stand alone.

lead to the Earth Mother concept, including a class of **BIRD** and snake **WATER DIVINITIES** and a “stiff nude” class of **DEATH DIVINITIES**. In some cultures, such as the Greek, the various goddesses appear to have developed mostly as variations of a single Earth Mother that gradually became independent of each other. The barren months of the year may be caused by the Earth Mother’s death or sorrow. Examples include Ki (Sumerian), Mut (Egyptian), Mula Prakriti (Hindu), and Papatuanuku (Maori). The pairing of **SKY FATHER** and Earth Mother may be reversed for a Sky Mother and Earth Father, as is found in some traditions of Egyptian mythology (Nut and Geb). See **MISTRESS OF ANIMALS**.

Elements are forms of matter that believed to be the basic building blocks of the universe by ancient philosophers. In Greek thought, for example, all things were thought to be reducible to air, earth, fire, and **WATER** (and sometimes quintessence or aether, which was star stuff). Some philosophers took this further and supposed that these were also reducible into just one element. These systems were generally well-grounded in the science of the times: in the Greek system, air corresponded to gases, earth to solids, fire to plasma, and water to liquids. The Babylonians had two systems (which probably inspired the Greek system): one was based on earth, sea, and sky, and the other added fire and wind to these three. The alchemical system that was developed in the Middle Ages originally had the four basic Greek elements plus sulfur, which represented combustibility, and mercury, which represented metallic properties. Paracelsus later revised it to sulfur (flammability), mercury (volatility), and salt (solidity). The Indian system was based on air, earth, fire, water, and space. The Chinese system was earth, fire, metal, water, and wood. The Japanese system was air, earth, fire, water, and spirit (“things not of our everyday life”). In some systems, such as the Indian and the Chinese, each element was responsible for creating or sustaining the next (e.g. water nourishes wood, which feeds fire).

Ex nihilo myths are **CREATION MYTHS** that describe the creation of the world from nothing. The created universe appears according to the thoughts or words of one or more divinities, or is a dream or bodily secretion of one or more divinities.³² The creator may exist upon or be surrounded by the primordial ocean but does not use this to create the **PHENOMENAL WORLD**. Ex nihilo myths are regarded as distinctly masculine in this way, as contrasted with feminine creation myths like **EMERGENCE MYTHS** and balanced creation myths like **WORLD COUPLE MYTHS**. The creation account found in the Quran is an example of an ex nihilo myth, as contrasted with the **COSMOGONICAL MYTH** of the Book of Genesis. Other examples can be found in Mesopotamian mythology, Bantu mythology, and Maya mythology.

Fairies are a class of divinity which share various attributes and occur frequently in mythology. Their most important characteristic is that, whether they are malicious or not,³³ they must be protected against.³⁴ Bread is the most common form of **APOTROPAIC MAGIC** (either to ward against or placate them), with bells coming in next. They are often referred to by euphemisms such as Fair Folk (from whence cometh the term “fairie”), Good Folk, or People of Peace. Nobody believes these euphemisms but they are necessary for keeping eavesdropping fairies from being angered. Physically they usually fall into two groups: tall and radiant or short and wizened (sometimes so short that they can ride ants); they may be able to change size. They may also have green eyes, wear green clothing, or be associated with green in some other way. Within the context of a given culture they may be considered to be beings who took no side in the **BATTLES AGAINST THE TITANS**, enchanted humans, or spirits of the dead. Anthropologists believe that they may have developed from divinities of earlier belief systems, **GHOSTS**, malevolent spirits, or stories of conquered and scattered peoples who had previously inhabited the

³² Creator divinities may create the world from their bodily fluids by bleeding, coughing, engaging in some sexual act (with or without partners), spitting, or sweating. Incidentally, this at least indirectly makes all other beings humorous divinities.

³³ Some are mischievous or simply helpful but lacking in understanding of human affairs.

³⁴ This idea is sometimes lost as time goes on but is always present in the older stories.



land.³⁵ They may have their own world or country, called Elfland or Fairyland.³⁶ They may abduct children and/or the elderly and may leave other fairies or enchanted but inanimate wooden replicas in their place. The latter is often an explanation for deaths with no apparent cause. They may be responsible for other sicknesses, especially tuberculosis or those suffered by animals. Names are often important to them in some way. They may be classed according to behavior, most often with regard to moral behavior or social organization. Where magic is concerned they are most often associated with enchantments and illusions, such as invisibility or leaves turned to gold. They generally prefer tokens of a promise rather than one's mere word, and give the same.

Fate divinities like to come in threes, at least in European mythology. They usually create the

³⁵ These people may have remained extant for some time in the more remote areas of their former land, such as forests and mountains.

³⁶ It is typically in these cases that the links to the dead and the UNDERWORLD are clearest, and most if not all

destinies of humans and even the gods but sometimes they only monitor the situation. They are usually female. They may be **WEAVING** divinities. They may be associated with frogs, spiders, or snakes. Examples of triple-bodied fate divinities include the Moirai (Greek), Norns (Norse), and Ursitoare (Romanian). Examples of other fate divinities include Manu (Chaldean), Mixcoatl (Aztec), Ori (Yoruban), and Thoth (Egyptian). See **FEMALE NONUPLETS**; **TRIPLE DIVINITIES**.

Fear of bears is called arctophobia.³⁷ See **BEAR WORSHIP**.

Fertility divinities are associated with birth, fertility, pregnancy, and sometimes sex. Rather than grant some special benefit they may be propitiated

of the rules of the latter may be assumed to apply to the Fairyland of any given mythology. Burial mounds, too, were typically assumed to be fairy hills.

³⁷ The literal translation from Greek is "common sense."

as divinities of sterility and famine³⁸ in order that their wrath and powers may be withheld. There may also be fertility divinities associated specifically with wild plants and weeds, who are similarly worshipped so that they will refrain from acting. They may also be LOVE DIVINITIES, WAR DIVINITIES, or WATER DIVINITIES. Examples include Akna (Inuit), Dilga (Karadjeri), and Sowathara (Thai). See CORN MOTHERS; EARTH MOTHERS; FERTILITY RITES; FERTILITY SYMBOLS; VEGETATION DIVINITIES.

Fertility rites are rituals that enact sexual acts or recall aspects of the CREATION MYTH (sometimes both). Animal sacrifice or HUMAN SACRIFICE, for example, may be performed in mimicry of the dismemberment of the WORLD PARENT. They are typically CALENDRIAL AND COMMEMORATIVE RITES.

Fertility symbols are objects used to represent fertility, most often in associated with FERTILITY RITES. They include representations of animals such as frogs and intertwined snakes, tokens that are representative of HIEROGAMY, rivers, and the maypole.

Fire worship (*pyrodulia*, *pyrolatry*, *pyrolatria*) may predate the rise of anatomically modern humans, if we assume that religious sentiment has a similarly ancient pedigree. The oldest confirmed controlled fires date back almost 800,000 years ago, and remains at Wonderwerk Cavern suggest that controlled fires existed a million years ago. As far back as Proto-Indo-European culture there was a division between animate fire (*egni-) and inanimate fire (*paewr-). Fire may also be divided between hearth-fire and forge-fire. Because it cannot be polluted and can be used to refine other materials, it may be associated with purity. It is often associated with the chief divinities of a pantheon. The highest forms of sacrifice are

performed with fire. Zoroastrians are not fire worshipers.

The **firmament** is the sky, conceived as a ceiling or other solid substance. In ancient thought it was most often regarded as being made of metal.³⁹ It may be eternal because it changes its skin like a snake (possibly through the cycle of day and night). The concept of the sky as a firmament was present among the Australians, Chinese, Egyptians, Greeks, Indians, Mesoamericans, Mesopotamians, and others.

First Humans (*protoplast*) are distinguished by being humans that are created directly by divinities in the time predating humankind (which is heralded by the First Human). If there is only one such being, then the First Human is typically a combination of both sexes. They may also be represented by one or two couples. They are often placed in a SACRED GARDEN and/or in proximity to a TREE OF LIFE, which they may actually be created from (as in Norse myth). They may be undeveloped, even like crude clay figurines, in comparison to their descendants. They may be preceded by a series of experiments that either went nowhere or produced certain animals or demons. They may also be created from ASHES (Hindu), clay or stones (Abrahamic, Chinese, Egyptian), blood or a blood-clot (Jewish, Melanesian, Samoan), bone (Jewish, Inuit), seeds (Inuit), wood (Indonesian), or a number of different elements⁴⁰ (German, Jewish, Siberian).

Flood myths (*deluge myths*) are stories of a divinely-caused flood with few survivors, one of them usually being the patriarchal head of the others. The flood is usually global. Giants or another form of monster (usually primordial) are often slain.⁴¹ The people most often survive via boat, but other options abound. Mesoamerican flood myths are perhaps unique in that sometimes there are no

³⁸ Solar and summer divinities are especially popular in this role.

³⁹ As demonstrated by the Hebrew עֲרָרָה or raqa, meaning to beat or spread out, specifically in reference to hammering metal.

⁴⁰ Generally, four (usually the CLASSICAL ELEMENTS) or eight (their body from earth, their bones from stones, their veins from roots, their blood from water, their hair from grass, their thoughts from the wind, and their spirit from the clouds).

⁴¹ In Inca mythology, Viracocha unleashes a flood to kill the giants. These were the product of a failed attempt at creation predating humanity (whom they tormented). In the Book of Enoch, the flood was intended to wipe out the Nephilim, hybrid giants born of humans and angels. In Norse mythology, when Ymir was slain his blood poured out in such quantities that the world was covered and almost all of the giants drowned.

survivors, and the gods start off from scratch. In PIE-influenced mythology the sons of the father often go on to found three particular lines.⁴² Examples of surviving patriarchs include Deucalion (Greek), Manu (Hindu), Noah (Abrahamic), and Utnapishtim (Babylonian).

Forests are liminal places that can both threaten danger and offer refuge. They may be enchanted or in possession of magical qualities, or they may merely be a place where magic can be found and where transformations will occur. Particularly large forests, of which there were many (even into relatively modern times) were effectively national borders. Most people did not travel too far into the forest, which was a place for the Other to reside.⁴³ A greater proportion of German fairy tales take place in the forest than any other country's fairy tales. The Black Forest, which was actually called Mirkwood by different peoples at different times in

history, was thought capable of posing a danger even to the gods that traveled through it.

Foundational myths (*charter myths*, *mythomateurs*) explain the origins of a particular city or people and give that group a sense of purpose. The philosophy and ethics of the people are usually justified or elaborated on in the foundational myth. They can be a bridge between the mythic age and the historical age. The rights of a chosen people were rooted in their foundational myth, where certain divinities typically dealt with their progenitor and entered into a covenant with or expressed favor for the progenitor. They may be divided into *civilization stories*, which consider the founding of the people or city and the subjugation of nature to be a good thing, and *degradation or pollution stories*, which consider it to be tied to a fall from grace with a subsequent despoiling of nature.⁴⁴ See HOMELAND EXODUSES; LEGENDARY PROGENITORS; PREDECESSOR PEOPLES.



⁴² Aeolus, Dorus, and Ion in Greek myth. Ham, Japheth, and Shem in Abrahamic myth.

⁴³ This was not merely superstition. In Europe, for example, the forest was where bandits, bears, boars, and wolves dwelt.

⁴⁴ Cf. Allen, John, Doreen B. Massey, and Michael Pryke. *Unsettling Cities*. London: Routledge, 1999.

Funerary cults are a type of ANCESTOR VENERATION that focuses on the tomb. Examples are most common in Egyptian, Greek, Mesopotamian, and Roman culture, but the Moai of the Rapa Nui are also relics of an ancient funerary cult. See HERO CULT.

Gardens of the gods are divine paradises inhabited by the ruling divinities and their servants. They are generally implied to be attached to palaces and/or temples. The TREE OF LIFE is usually here. The first human usually lived here. As actual gardens they are most common in Mesopotamian mythology but more broadly appear elsewhere. The ruling divinities may also dwell inside caves or hills, in a “cloudland,” in a FOREST, under the ground, on a (possibly flying) island, on the Milky Way, on the Sun and/or the MOON, under the sea, or in a volcano. Examples include Brahmapura (Hindu), Olympus (Greek), Tamoanchan (Aztec), and Takama-ga-hara (Japanese). See DIVINE ATTENDANTS; SACRED MOUNTAINS.

Ghosts are spirits of the deceased. They may appear as barely visible wisps, exactly as they did in life⁴⁵ (at any point), or anywhere in-between, and may bear the wounds that killed them. They may also be invisible or appear in a nonhuman form, such as an animal (especially a BIRD), a ball of fire, or smoke. They often return to or stay in the PHENOMENAL WORLD for a specific purpose.⁴⁶ They often can be physically interacted with. They may need to be propitiated with food and drink or other items or otherwise be interceded for. They may cause sickness (most often afflictions to the senses, fever, respiratory problems, or stomach or intestinal problems) or possess the bodies of the living. Some situations (e.g. death by fire, death in the desert) may prevent someone from having any kind of ghost at all (and possibly any kind of post-mortem existence). See ANCESTOR VENERATION; HUNGRY GHOSTS; SHADES; VENGEFUL GHOSTS.

Golden ages are mythical periods of exceptional harmony, peace, prosperity, and stability for a people or for all humankind. They usually appear immediately following the creation of humankind. The gods may have lived among humans during

this time. There may have been no death and/or sickness during this time.

Grave goods are artifacts that have been buried in a place of interment along with the deceased. Their usual purpose is to aid the deceased during his or her journey to the afterlife and/or upon arrival. Extant grave goods are usually inorganic but this seems to be mostly due to the difficulty that organic substances would have in remaining intact to the present day. Humans may be interred and included among the grave goods. ANCESTOR VENERATION may have developed from some particular understanding of their purpose and in this respect



⁴⁵ It sometimes happens that a ghost's nature is given away not by its appearance but by its behavior.

⁴⁶ The most curious case, in my opinion, is *excessive mourning*: the dead may come back if you're too sad in order to try to make you not-sad.

they are similar to Hell bank notes. They may have been discovered even in some Neanderthal graves.⁴⁷

Health divinities are associated with childbirth, health, healing, and wellbeing. They may be WAR DIVINITIES in the light of waging war on sickness. They may be EARTH MOTHERS. Examples include Fufluns (Etruscan), Ixchel (Aztec), and Zywie (Slavic).

Hearth divinities. See HOUSEHOLD DIVINITIES.

Hierogamy (*hieros gamos, sacred marriage*) is a ritual marriage between two divinities, performed by proxy (generally through the SACRED KING and a priestess). It typically occurred as part of the New Year festival. These “doubled unions” of god and man in one were sometimes thought capable of producing half-divine children. Examples in scholarly thought include the sacred marriages of Sumerian kings and Inanna (through her high priestesses) and the ritual coupling of the Queen of Athens and Dionysus (through either his priest or the king himself). It also has parallels in the bridal theology of the Bible. Hierogamy is most common in Mesopotamian culture but can also be found in such places as India, Mesoamerica, and South Africa. See SACRED PROSTITUTION; SPIRIT SPOUSE.

Holy wells (*sacred springs, holy-boles*) are small bodies of WATER with religious importance. They are especially important in cultures that easy and plentiful access to water. They may be associated with particular WATER DIVINITIES and/or with the UNDERWORLD, either collectively or each well on its own.

Homeland exoduses are a common form of myth, and are often rooted in some kind of fact (in nothing else, a former period of nomadism). They tell of how the people came from a different land before they settled in their present surroundings. A sign is usually given to tell them where to stop, or

the sign leads them from the beginning. They complement EMERGENCE MYTHS. Examples include the departures from Aztlan (Aztec), Ergenekon (Turkic), and the Exodus from Egypt (Biblical).

House blessings (*house healings, house clearings, house cleansings, space clearings*) are rituals that are performed in order to protect the household from misfortune. They may be either preventative or corrective in nature. They are found throughout the world.

Household divinities protect the home. They may protect the entire household or only certain members. They may be a single divinity (usually female) or a class of divinities. If the former, then they are called hearth divinities or domestic divinities. Household SHRINES are often dedicated to them. They are generally more resistant than other divinities to the attempts of invading cultures to stamp them out. Some scholars believe them to be derived from ANCESTOR VENERATION, especially where they are worshiped as a class. Examples include Anito (Filipino), Chantico (Aztec), the domovoi (Slavic), Ekwu (Igbo), and the tomtes (Swedish). See SPIRITS OF PLACE.

Human sacrifice (*ritual murder*) is usually performed in order to appease or support divinities or to send people on to the afterlife in a particular manner (e.g. delivering them to a particular afterlife or as the servants of a departed person⁴⁸). The practice is closely related to animal sacrifice. It can be performed for divinatory purposes. It can be performed to enhance societal bonds, because nothing gives you a dose of community spirit like knocking back a couple of beers at the annual head-chopping festival.⁴⁹ Entombment is a common method of human sacrifice in eastern Asia. The Binding of Isaac is thought to have originally been a story that told of a transition from human sacrifice, much in the same way that Christianity taught of a transition from animal sacrifice without

⁴⁷ It is currently in dispute whether pollen found in these graves is a remnant from intentionally placed flowers or got there later via burrowing mice.

⁴⁸ This is called “retainer sacrifice.” It has appeared everywhere from Mongolia and Scythia to Mesoamerica to Egypt.

⁴⁹ Sadly, and horrifyingly, “it brings the community together” is legitimately used by some Christian Dominionists as a reason to bring back public stoning.

repudiating its previous practice.⁵⁰ See INFANT SACRIFICE; **MEDICINE MURDER**; YEAR-KING.

Humorous divinities are born from fluid, usually bodily fluid, usually from a divinity or (most often) PROTO-DIVINITY. Among other possibilities they may be born from blood, spittle, sweat, or **WATER** (usually contaminated or otherwise affected by the corpse or body part of a divinity). Examples include Aphrodite (Greek), the Erinyes (Greek), Hainuwele (Ceramese), Kvasir (Norse), Raktabija⁵¹ (Hindu), Ushas (Hindu), and the various divinities born from Izanagi's ritual washing and purification (Japanese). Many humorous divinities were derived from a Proto-Indo-European dawn divinity with both SOLAR DIVINITY and LOVE DIVINITY aspects.

Hungry ghosts are SHADES that are characterized by a specific hunger or need which they cannot satisfy. They may be present in the afterlife or among the living. Examples include the gaki and jikininki (Japanese), krasue (Cambodian), and pretas (Buddhist), but more broadly many (but by no means all or even most) creatures that are commonly classed as "vampires" in modern analysis.

Idle divinities (*deus otiosus*, *deus absconditus*) are CREATOR DIVINITIES that have separated themselves from and no longer interact with humankind, usually immediately after completing creation but sometimes after humankind (or another divinity) commits some grievous offense. There may be a number of intermediary divinities which are still be called upon to aid humankind and even petition the idle divinity on their behalf. Examples include Bondye (Vodou), Uranus (Greek), and the God of Deist thought.

Infant exposure. See INFANT SACRIFICE.

Infant sacrifice was usually performed as an extreme form of sacrifice during a disaster which no other sacrifices seemed to be alleviating. It was usually done through infant exposure, most often

on a mountain or by sending the child on a small boat on a lake, river, or sea. Sometimes that exposure was to fire rather than the open elements but a shared element was the reluctance to directly spill the child's blood. The slain were usually accorded a great honor. The exposure is symbolic of a second birth, and it can be part of a MIRACULOUS BIRTH myth. In such cases it usually highlights the tension between the parents and their heroic child and sets them as the child's first foes. Examples include the capachocas (Inca) and sacrifices to Moloch (Canaanite). Other cases of infant exposure include Gilgamesh (Sumerian), Moses (Abrahamic), Oedipus (Greek), and Siegrid (Germanic).

Knowledge divinities are associated with intelligence, knowledge, and wisdom. They are often associated with flowing **WATER** and may develop into WATER DIVINITIES. Examples include A'as (Hittite), Anahita (Persian), Quetzalcoatl (Mesoamerican), and Thoth (Egyptian).

The **law of contagion** is an idea often found in religion and magic, which holds that a magical link is formed when two things come in contact with each other. The link is beneficial or dangerous depending on the benevolence or malevolence of the things being linked and the likelihood that they will be used for good or for ill by a third party. Some sort of banishing ritual is generally necessary to break the link.

Law of similarity. See SYMPATHETIC MAGIC.

Law of sympathy. See SYMPATHETIC MAGIC.

Legendary progenitors make their appearance in FOUNDATIONAL MYTHS as the common ancestors of a people or dynasty. They may be the FIRST HUMANS. It is important to be able to trace one's lineage back to the relevant legendary progenitor in order to prove a claim on that heritage. Examples include Atahensic (Iroquois Amerind), Fosana

⁵⁰ It is also held by some scholars that in the original version of the Binding of Isaac, Abraham was not prevented from carrying out the sacrifice, and this is why Isaac ceases to be relevant in the account as soon as the angel appears, and Abraham walks down the mountain on his own.

⁵¹ Raktabija had the curious situation of being his own progenitor as a HUMOROUS DIVINITY. Each drop of blood which he spilled developed into a fully-formed copy of himself.

(Mali), and Wurugag and Waramurungundi (Gunwinggu).

Libations are the pouring of liquid as an offering to divinities. The most commonly used liquids are olive oil and wine. They may be poured onto an altar or other significant object, or onto the ground (which itself may be of significance, depending on one's location). The vessels that carry the liquids and from which they are poured often have a sacred character as well.

Liminal divinities are associated with thresholds, gates, doorways, crossroads, etc. They cross boundaries and thus cannot be fit into discrete categories like other beings can. They may be two-faced, shapeshifters, of ambiguous sex, genderfluid, etc. Where they cross the boundaries of a binary state (e.g. female and male), they represent the unity of opposites. They are often present in RITES OF PASSAGE. They are those who have "left one set of classification and have not yet entered another." They have the potential to both hurt and help,

usually based on how they are approached. They often combine two physical states in one body (e.g. centaurs, sphinxes, Hel). They are commonly superb mentors. Examples include the half-incubus Merlin (Arthurian), the human-and-plant **GREEN MAN**, and cyborgs. Together, certain DIVINE TWINS may be liminal divinities, one being divine and the other human. See **CROSSROADS**; FATE DIVINITIES; **LOATHLY LADIES**; PSYCHOPOMPS; SHAPESHIFTING AQUATIC ANIMALS; **TRIPLE DIVINITIES**.

Love divinities are associated with sexual love, lust, or sexuality. Examples include Aphrodite (Greek), Sukkamueli (Finnish), Tlazolteotl (Aztec), and Xtabay (Maya).

Lunar divinities are associated with the MOON. They are slightly more likely to be male but regardless of sex they are almost never the same sex as the SOLAR DIVINITY. They may have killed one or more children of the solar divinity or deceived it in some other way. They may have stolen



something from the GARDEN OF THE GODS (which may be the reason for their exile from the world). Examples include Avatea (Polynesian), Pah (Pawnee Amerind), and Wadd (Arabian).

Male circumcision is generally performed in the context of a RITE OF PASSAGE. It may occur at any point from a few days after birth to puberty. In rare cases it may be performed in adulthood, such as when it was received by Abraham as a new commandment.⁵² It may be performed as part of a FERTILITY RITUAL or in order to ensure virility, to aid hygiene, to set the people apart from their neighbors,⁵³ as symbolic castration to humiliate slaves and captives and/or humble the people before divinities, to imitate a leader who naturally lacked a foreskin, and/or to demonstrate a resistance to pain. Evidence of male circumcision goes as far back as 2400 BC, in Egypt.⁵⁴ As a religious practice it is found among such groups as the Australian aborigines, the Dogon of West Africa, Jews, Muslims, and the Xhosa of South Africa. Seeing as it is present on every inhabited continent, it seems most likely that the practice of male circumcision developed before the spread of early humans out of Africa, and that those cultures without the practice of circumcision did not fail to develop it but instead dropped it at some point.

The **Man in the Moon** is not *quite* a LUNAR DIVINITY. He lives on the MOON, and is to be distinguished by divinities that *are* the Moon. He may have been banished there for a crime.⁵⁵ He may be a rabbit, or have rabbit companions. He may be fond of drinking. He may be using a mortar and pestle. He may be associated with the elixir of eternal life. Examples include Gekkawo (Japanese), Hina-i-ka-maloma (Hawaiian), and Yue-Laou (Chinese).

Megaliths are large stones making up a structure which is thus described as “megalithic.” They may stand alone or with other megaliths or smaller

stones in circular shapes or rows. They are generally interlocked together without mortar or cement. They are generally hewn to fit their purpose. Megalith structures like those at Stonehenge are called triliths or trilithons. They can serve as boundary markers, recall past events, or be religious centers. They may symbolize divinities. It was once believed that all megalithic structures had been constructed by a single, global megalithic culture, and later that there was a single European megalithic culture. Both theories have since been disproven. See **CONCENTRIC STONE CIRCLES**; **MENHIRS**.

Menhirs (*standing stones, orthostats, liths*) are large, upright-standing stones. They may be found singly or in groups. Generally, they are unevenly and squarely shaped and taper toward the top. When found in groups they are generally arranged in circular, oval, henge, or horseshoe formations. They may have been thought of as places of HUMAN SACRIFICE, territorial markers, and early calendars. Some of them were carved with art. Stone rows may have been erected over generations as a sign of their builders’ continued presence in the land. In the Middle Ages they were believed to have been erected by antediluvian giants.

Menstruation is generally perceived as being a source of or vehicle for power. Menstruating women are regarded as magically powerful and religiously sacred, and depending on culture are supposed to be able to do such things as destroy their enemies through magic (Cherokee) or ward off hailstorms and lightning when naked (Roman). Menstrual blood was perceived as a crucial ingredient in sorcery (Maya) and in both destructive and purifying magical charms (African). Despite this, menstruation was often seen as a punishment, as in Maya and Jewish mythology.⁵⁶

Miraculous births often presage divinities and great heroes. They may involve such things as

⁵² Jewish legend recounts the time that Ishmael boasted to Isaac that he loved their father so much that he submitted to circumcision even though he was an older lad (whereas Isaac was circumcised shortly after birth). Isaac replied that he loved their father so much that he would allow himself to be sacrificed if their father asked it of him. So God decided to make him prove it, and the Binding of Isaac followed thereafter.

⁵³ One would imagine that wearing funny hats might have done the job equally well.

⁵⁴ The self-circumcision of Ra was responsible for the creation of a pair of divinities, according to one myth.

⁵⁵ According to one tradition he was even Cain the Murderer, which is referenced in Dante’s *Inferno*.

⁵⁶ The former for “violating the social rules governing marital alliance,” and the latter for eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.



astronomical signs, divine intervention, and/or unusual hardship (such as abduction, the child massacre of Bethlehem, or even being born after the mother has died). They may be accompanied or replaced by miraculous conceptions, such as by a divinity or an animal (especially reptilian), or peculiar occurrences in between (such as being able to speak even before birth). Examples include Dionysus (Greek), the Hero Twins (Maya), and Jesus Christ (Christian).

Miraculous conception. See MIRACULOUS BIRTH.

Missing sun myths deals with the disappearance of the Sun, possible as a SOLAR DIVINITY. They may be tied to eclipses, the shortening days of winter, and/or nightfall. They may involve the death, exile, or imprisonment of the solar divinity, and often involve a DESCENT TO THE UNDERWORLD. They may also be the result of the Sun's willing seclusion from the world, usually out of embarrassment or because the Sun cannot bear to watch the horrors that happen in the world. A common myth is the Sun's imprisonment in or behind a stone, which is broken by a divinity to free it (who may have to fight a dragon). In Kwakiutl Amerind mythology, the heavens themselves consumed the sun. In Korean mythology eclipses occurred when dogs tried to steal the sun or MOON. The Batammaliba said that eclipses occurred when the sun and moon were fighting each other.

The **Moon** is a major figure in most mythologies, either as a LUNAR DIVINITY or an object. Most languages share the same root word in reference to the Moon and to MENSTRUATION. Many cultures had calendars that were dependent on the moon, but these were lunisolar calendars, meaning that they also relied on the Sun. There may have been a Moon before there was a Sun. It may be an object (especially a mass of WATER) that was thrown into the sky or an anvil or grinder for a CREATOR DIVINITY. Its markings may be scars or tattoos. It may be a place where demons or DEATH DIVINITIES sit and watch over the world. The Moon may be a former or half-finished Sun or be the next world (either the afterlife or a world to be inhabited after this one is destroyed). See THE MAN IN THE MOON.

Moon rabbit. See THE MAN IN THE MOON.

Multiple suns are commonly thought to have existed in the past, either sequentially or all together. Where they existed together, they are usually four of them and they frequently came out one at a time. Either from the beginning or later on they decide to come out at once and the world grows too hot, so a CULTURE HERO kills all but one of the suns in order to save the world. In some myths only one sun ever existed but the CREATOR DIVINITY originally planned to have more than one before being talked out of it by another divinity. The reason for this intervention may be benevolent (it was understood that multiple suns would mean

too much heat) or malevolent (multiple suns would have saved the world from having to deal with the night). They may have existed in succession, each sun marking the existence of a different world and its disappearance heralding that world's end.

National mysticism (*nationalmystik*) bestows divine status on the nation. It is most often associated with Germanic mysticism but could be argued to have examples in antiquity as well, most especially in Mesopotamia.

Nature divinities are commonly thought to exist in large groups of similarly-typed individuals. They usually come in distinct male and female versions like some kinds of Pokemon do. Examples include huldra (Germanic), satyrs and nymphs (Greek), veles and leszi (Slavic), and Nidoran ♀ and ♂ (Japan).

Nature worship (*Earth religion*) is the worship of natural phenomena. It includes any system that holds FERTILITY DIVINITIES at the head of its pantheon. Gimbutas theorized on the existence of Proto-Indo-European cultures that were nature worshippers, and that existed in small-scale, family-centered communities with matrilineal succession and pantheons ruled by a divine mother. James Weir theorized that all religion began as a worship of that which early humans could experience. See NATURE DIVINITIES; PLEASANT PLACES; SACRED GROVES; SACRED PLANTS.

Night divinities are associated with nighttime, the night sky, and darkness. While SOLAR DIVINITIES are almost always associated with the daytime, LUNAR DIVINITIES are not so guaranteed to be associated with nighttime. Examples include the aptly-named Lords of the Night (Aztec), Ratri (Hindu), and Zorya (Slavic).

Occulting demons are responsible for eclipses, generally by devouring the celestial body in question. This is only temporary (unless it causes the end of the world). There are often two of them, each one responsible for either solar or lunar eclipses. They are often serpents, toads, or wolves. They may be the children of the SOLAR DIVINITY, who devoured them. They may be UNDERWORLD

DEMONS. Examples include Apep (Egyptian), Rahu and Ketu (Hindu), and the Tzitzimimeh (Aztec). In Norse mythology, Skoll and Hati are foretold to eat the Sun and the MOON at Ragnarok. See MISSING SUN.

Origin myths (*etiological myths, aitions*) are myths which attempt to explain the origin of some aspect of the world, natural or otherwise. Many times, origin myths are the basis for ritual and even day-to-day behavior because the people perform these same actions in conscious imitation of how it was done in an origin myth. See CREATION MYTHS; FOUNDATIONAL MYTHS; ORIGIN-OF-DEATH MYTHS.

Origin-of-death myths are pretty popular, probably because everyone was in agreement that this “death” thing was a crap idea and they wanted to know which idiot to blame for it. One of the less common stories is that the world is the inferior of two creations that came out of a contest between two divinities, and that all things in it come to an end as a result.⁵⁷ See BENEVOLENT MOON STORIES; SKIN-CHANGING STORIES; TWO MESSENGERS STORIES; WAXING AND WANING MOON STORIES.

Otherworldly rivers are associated with the AXIS MUNDI, the GARDEN OF THE GODS, and other worlds. Though they may also be located in the PHENOMENAL WORLD, their source, if it is not at one of the first two locations, is in another world. There are most often four⁵⁸ rivers associated with this source. They may need to be crossed in order to reach a particular world. Examples include the Élivágar (Norse), the rivers of Hades (Greek), the river of blood in Mictlan (Aztec), and the rivers of the TREE OF LIFE (Jewish).

Overworlds are supernatural worlds that are believed to be inhabited by supernatural and/or morally superior beings, and/or to physically exist in a space above the world. They almost always have multiple levels (usually three to five).

Phenomenal world is a term for the world which we inhabit, exclusive of the OVERWORLD, UNDERWORLD, and any other worlds or planes of

⁵⁷ Maybe we could find out who the other one was and move to that divinity's world.

⁵⁸ Sometimes one or three. Less often, five. Very rarely, two or more than five.

existence that might exist in a culture's cosmology. It is that which we can directly experience, which nobody but a student of **ACOSMISM** would deny (at least for day to day purposes).

Pleasant places (*loci amoenus*) are idealized places of safety and comfort. They may come in many forms, even as a group of islands, but must have **TREES**, grass, and **WATER**. They are usually remote from population centers, in order to be symbolically removed from time and mortality. They may have flowers and be associated with regeneration, sexuality, spring, and **FERTILITY DIVINITIES** and **LOVE DIVINITIES**. See **TREACHEROUS GARDENS**.

Power animals (*assistant spirits, helping spirits*) are animal familiars or **TUTELARY DIVINITIES** that are attached to a **SHAMAN**. They empower and/or protect the shaman. The number of power animals that a shaman has can correlate with the shaman's magical power. They are especially useful when a shaman undertakes a journey to the spirit world. They may enter the shaman's body but are generally able to be expelled at any time that the shaman finds their presence undesirable. This possession may be referred to as "becoming animal," and in this case the possession is also transformation: by sharing space with the animal soul, the shaman's soul *becomes* that very soul. Visiting the afterlife may be impossible without the assistance of power animals.

Predecessor peoples are groups which preceded the present culture in their occupation of the land. They are often remembered in the mythology as either defeated human nations or divinities of some kind. The Irish Mythological Cycle, for example, records the coming of six peoples in turn: The Fomorians, the people of Partholon, the people of Nemed, the Fir Bolg, the Tuatha De Danann, and finally the Milesians.

The Princess and the Dragon is a scenario where one or more people are imprisoned (in a tower, in a cave, by being tied to a rock, or even simply by being unable to abandon their homes) and under peril from some threat, usually a monster. This may be the first time that the threat has made itself known or be the latest in a series of perils. The threat generally kills a single person every time that it comes and may demand tribute (or cause



additional destruction as a mere side effect). If a woman is sacrificed, then she is usually of high rank relative to those that are sacrificing and/or saving her. Often, the hero will defeat the threat while away from other people and another person will falsely claim to have been the victor and claim the reward, only for the hero to produce physical evidence of *z*ir story. Examples include Andromeda and Cetus (Greek), the city Ekachakra and Bakasura (Hindu), and the Earthly Deities' Daughters and Orochi (Japanese).

Proto-divinities are beings that predated the other divinities and may be ancestral to them. They are often, but not always, **CREATOR DIVINITIES**. They may be sea creatures or **BIRDS**. There are often two generations of proto-divinities, the latter of which may have very little importance at all in comparison to their parents and to their children (who are the primary divinities of the mythology). The divinities may be born from incest, especially father-daughter and brother-sister. When they have children, the most common pattern is for the head (sometimes sole) proto-divinity to have **DIVINE TWINS** or a son who then has three sons of his own. Examples include Atum (Egyptian), Coatlicue (Aztec), and Ymir (Norse). See **COSMIC MEN**; **IDLE DIVINITIES**.

Psychopomps (*midwives to the dying, end of life doulas, fetch-lives*) are divinities that are responsible for conveying the spirits of the dead to the afterlife or to the place where they will be judged for their deeds. Animals which they are associated with include crows, cuckoos, dogs, harts, horses, owls, ravens, sparrows, and whip-poor-wills. Shamans may serve as psychopomps. More rarely, psychopomps may also convey unborn souls to their bodies as birth. Examples include Hermes (Greek), the Valkyries⁵⁹ (Norse), and Xolotl (Aztec).

Rites of affliction are APOTROPAIC MAGIC rituals which are meant to prevent misfortune and/or determine its cause and then undo or reverse it. The misfortune may be individual or affect a group as large as the whole people.

Rites of exchange and communion are rituals which involve sacrifice and serve to placate, please, or praise divinities. They involve the giving of a gift, but these gifts are almost always given in the hope of reciprocity. The offering is usually destroyed in order to fully set it aside for and transport it to the divinities that it has been given over to.

Rites of feasting and fasting (*rituals of rebellion*) are rituals through which the members of the community declare their allegiance to the values of that community. Victor Turner describes them as “social dramas” that enable social stresses to be worked out in a symbolic fashion.⁶⁰ Because they are temporary releases that center on the effect rather than the cause, however, they must be performed again and again in order to prevent such social stresses from disrupting society.

Rites of passage are rituals that mark transitions in life from one position or state to another. Examples found in modern society include MALE CIRCUMCISION, Christian baptism, high school graduation, and marriage. They are not necessarily religious in nature. They are divided into three phases as denoted by Arnold van Gennep: preliminal, being the casting off of one’s present

identity and status; liminal (or threshold), being one’s subsequent existence in a sort of void state⁶¹; and postliminal, being the acquisition of a new identity and status.⁶² Emphasis is on the third step. The first and especially the second may be vestigial to the point of invisibility or even nonexistence in some cultures. No matter the details, they are fundamentally moving from one state of existence to another.

Ritual clowns (*sacred clowns*) fill the social role of the trickster in society. They break or outright ignore social norms and exhibit what could in other contexts be considered antisocial behavior. Their purpose may be to educate, point out flaws in how everyone else is doing things, serve as scapegoats, humble the prideful, support social cohesion, and/or provide catharsis. They may be organized into “clown societies.” They may have a particular mode of dress, which is generally an extreme or improper form of normal dress. They may have to undergo rituals of initiation prior to becoming ritual clowns. They are interpreted by some scholars as being a Dionysian safety valve in otherwise Apollonian societies.⁶³ Examples include heyoka (Lakota Amerind), jesters (European society), and reverse warriors (Plains Amerind). Greek comedy and satire originated from ritual clowns.

Ritual purification is required before certain activities, especially the direct worship of divinities, can be performed. Ritual impurity is not to be confused with physical uncleanliness, although the one could often be caused by the other. Some scholars suppose that ritual purification practices may have arisen from primate grooming behavior. See ATONEMENT; SIN-EATERS.

Ritual slaughter is the slaughtering of animals for food purposes in a ritual context. The primary purpose of the slaughter is for food, which distinguishes ritual slaughter from animal sacrifices, but it is still believed that the slaughter must be performed in a particular manner.

⁵⁹ As “choosers of the slain,” Odin and Freyja were technically Valkyries themselves.

⁶⁰ Turner, Victor. *Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1974.

⁶¹ Van Gennep calls these “threshold people.”

⁶² Cf. Van Gennep, Arnold. *The Rites of Passage*. Chicago: U of Chicago, 1960.

⁶³ Cf. APOLLONIAN AND DIONYSIAN in Appendix C: Meta-Theory.

Sacred geometry is the idea that there is sacredness in certain “basic patterns of existence,” such as circles, which make up all things.

Sacred groves (*sacred woods*) are gardens, most often collections of **TREES**, which are revered as having power or religious significance. They are attended to and protected by priests. They serve as refuges from physical, spiritual, and/or societal concerns. The dead may be interred here. They may be located on temple ground.

Sacred kings (*sacral kings*) are kings in which are invested the additional roles of high priest and judge. It is not that he rules because he is a high priest but that he is a high priest because he rules. This can be a crap deal because he’s responsible for the prosperity of the people (and, more important to his health, the lack thereof). In the case of disaster, the sacred king is usually sacrificed, and sometimes he’s just sacrificed at the end of a given period. This kind of king is generally thought of as the being the shepherd of his people⁶⁴ and is a mediator between the people and the gods.⁶⁵ From this concept we get rulers that style themselves with such titles as “deputy of Ishtar” and “vicar of Christ.” Examples can be found in the Ashanti, Javanese, and Mesopotamian cultures.⁶⁶ See **DOLOROUS STROKES**; **ROYAL TOUCH**; **YEAR-KING**.

Sacred mountains are central to the religions that feature them. They are believed to be the places closest to heaven, and the local sacred mountain is usually regarded as being the highest in the world and/or the **AXIS MUNDI**. Temples such as ziggurats are attempts to create artificial mountains. The sacred mountain (or all mountains) may have a class

of divinity unique to it. They are often connected to **ANCESTOR VENERATION** and may be the place of the afterlife or the means to reach it, and may be a place for the interment of the dead. They are often not permitted to be climbed at all, or may only be climbed under particular circumstances. Mountains are more likely than any other terrain feature to be uniformly sacred as a class, and their relationship to life-giving rivers only adds to their sacred importance. Monasteries tend to be on mountains. Humans may become gods at the peaks of mountains. Examples include the Sacred Peaks (Navajo Amerind), Mount Etna (Greek), Mount Kirinyaga (Kikuyu), and Mount Sinai (Abrahamic). See **THEOPHANY**.

Sacred Mysteries are the defining aspect of mystery cults. The sacred mysteries are the knowledge and practices that are kept secret from outsiders and even lower-ranking members of the mystery cult. This essential element of a mystery cult may have been developed almost as quickly as religion itself as **SHAMANS** and other priestly figures laid down increasing layers of separation between themselves (and their knowledge) and the rest of the tribe. A follower of the sacred mysteries may be referred to as a mystes (“one who has been initiated”). Commonly-given examples include the Eleusinian Mysteries,⁶⁷ early Christianity,⁶⁸ the Mithraic Mysteries, and the Orphic Mysteries, but these are by no means restricted to the Greco-Roman world—for example, the kiva groups of the Zuni Amerind people. It is at times difficult to distinguish between a mystery cult and a merely religious secret society, especially in a culture that does not have so much of a distinction between secular and religious matters.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Which is why he is expected to sacrifice himself for the survival of his people, as the good shepherd sacrifices himself for his sheep.

⁶⁵ Which in some cultures is a justification for his death, because it allows his spirit to travel to the home of the gods in order to petition them directly.

⁶⁶ From which we get the concept of a messiah, or anointed one.

⁶⁷ The Eleusinian Mysteries are a pretty good example of the ability of mystery cults to preserve myths and rituals for very long periods of time. They may have lasted for nearly two thousand years, with little to no transmission errors in all that time. After we make allowances for a few cosmetic changes like name alterations to suit the gods that were best known to their adherents, it is

possible for mystery cults like this one to offer us a unique look into Proto-Indo-European mythology. They may not be the mythology itself, but are still (possibly) less-removed from it than other mythologies.

⁶⁸ Considered subversive not because it was closed to the public but because it disallowed practice of all other forms of religion, most especially the imperial cult. Mystery cults were actually popular at this time.

⁶⁹ The Poro of Sierra Leone are a fraternal organization with political and judicial relevance: many of its members are involved in the government, its laws are the laws of the people as a whole, etc. Even with oaths of secrecy, subgroups and ranks, secret rituals, and so on, it isn’t exactly out of place for a secular secret society. On the other hand, it is under the auspices of a supernatural



Sacred plants are of the utmost importance to a culture and can sometimes be said to be the center of plant cults analogous to ANIMAL CULTS. As individual species, plants are more likely than any other feature to be the result of an object or substance being transformed in the time after the world's creation. There may be a divinity associated with the sacred plant. There may be more than one sacred plant. Examples include the cacao tree, maize, and rice.

The **seclusion of girls at puberty** is a common RITE OF PASSAGE. A typical element was a requirement that the girl “neither touch the ground nor see the sun” for the period of her seclusion.

being and its members investigate claims of witchcraft and mediate with the spirit world. How much knowledge, exactly, needs to be granted, or in what amounts, or at which levels, for it to be considered a mystery cult? d

⁷⁰ But always take Frazer with a grain of salt. His primary contribution was more “helping to turn comparative

According to James Frazer, these prohibitions were shared in ancient cultures by SACRED KINGS and priests.⁷⁰ Other common elements included a prohibition on the girl being seen by males, relatives or not, and their seclusion being for the purpose of protecting them from magical threats. Myths may make allusions to this practice in the context of the UNDERWORLD.⁷¹

Shades are GHOSTS, specifically those which are “mere shadows”⁷² of their living selves (as opposed to, say, the complete and vital spirits which are considered to inhabit the Heaven of most denominations of Christianity). They may exist only in a semiconscious state. They are often

religion and mythology into a thing,” rather than actually being correct when he did it.

⁷¹ It has been suggested by Bruce Lincoln that the myths surrounding Persephone are an example. Cf. Lincoln, Bruce. *Emerging from the Chrysalis: Studies in Rituals of Women's Initiation*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1981.

⁷² In Hebrew: תַּלְמָוֶת or tsalmaveth, meaning death-shadow or shadow of death.

“smoky and undefined” in appearance when they are seen by the living. Only a few people are able to escape this fate, which is generally achieved by being brought to live with the gods; the term “hero” can sometimes refer specifically to such a person. Examples include the shades of Homer’s *Odyssey*, and the spirits of the dead in most Mesopotamian afterlives.

Shamans are regarded as having the ability to perceive and interact with spirits. This ability is made possible or supplemented by reaching an altered state of consciousness. Usual characteristics include: ritual trance states; entering the spirit world in order to retrieve needed information about the past, present, or future; leading sacrifices; preserving tradition by storytelling and songs; acting as a PSYCHOMPOMP; and healing physical or nonphysical ailments by treating a person’s spirit. They may use tools such as bells, drums, feathers, horns, pipes, and swords. By operating primarily in the spirit world they effect changes in the PHENOMENAL WORLD and thereby bring balance. They may be leaders or act at the behest of others. They are generally called by dreams or other signs or inherit their status and powers. As befits humans with liminal qualities they must generally undergo a RITE OF PASSAGE involving physical illness and/or psychological crisis that pushes them to the brink of physical death or lasting mental trauma. In some cultures, multiple spirit worlds are believed to exist and shamans are distinguished by which ones they deal with. They may have assistants. In some cultures, status as a shaman is one of degree rather than of kind, and most people exhibit some amount of the characteristics that are associated with shamans. Shamanism has been suggested to be the dominant religious practice of the Paleolithic, and the oldest known shaman was female.⁷³ See HIEROGAMY; TUTELARY DIVINITIES.

Shapeshifting aquatic animals appear in a number of myths. Dionysus turned a group of

pirates into dolphins after they jumped into the sea in fright, to spare them from death by drowning. Dolphins of the Amazon River are believed to be able to change shape and sire children by human women. Selkies are seals or seal-like beings with the power to take human shape.

Shrines (*balls of remembrance*) are sacred places dedicated to a particular figure. They usually contain items associated with the figure (e.g. bones, images, possessions), one of which is usually a focus. They may be located within buildings (e.g. churches, homes) or be buildings themselves. VOTIVE OFFERINGS may be made at shrines. See SPIRIT HOUSE.

Sin-eaters take on the sins and ritual impurity of a household through eating food and drink (usually bread and ale) that is offered to them.⁷⁴ This impurity was often acquired through the death of a relative. They are traditionally beggars or other people who live on the fringe of society. They may seclude themselves from society as a result of their occupation. Their services were sometimes viewed as being necessary to prevent the deceased from returning in some manner. It is considered to be a kind of APOTROPAIC MAGIC. Examples of the traditional sin-eater are found in England, Scotland, and Wales, and also in the Appalachians, but equivalent figures can be found elsewhere in the world, including Tlazolteotl (Aztec), who ate the filth of a soul after its death.

Sky burials are the disposal of corpses by exposing them to the elements and scavenging animals. They usually occur on mountains. Reasons for a sky burial include the desire to offer the body as a kind of alms to animal life and the immense difficulty that may exist in practicing more common means of disposal.⁷⁵ It is today practiced in Mongolia, Qinghai, and Tibet, but almost-indistinguishable practices also exist among some Zoroastrians. In the past, this practice was also found among the

⁷³ Several of the oldest known shamans were female: among them, one was buried during the Upper Paleolithic (c. 28,000 B.C.) at Dolni Vestonice in the Czech Republic; and one was buried during the Epipaleolithic (c. 10,000 B.C.) in the lower Galilee region, and was one of the Natufian people, who were notable for being a sedentary culture prior to agriculture (and may have later invented agriculture).

⁷⁴ The Christian ritual of Communion could possibly be seen as a sort of reverse sin-eating, where sin is taken on by the other party not by offering food and drink but by taking it, making a sort of exchange of sin and consumables.

⁷⁵ In Tibet, for example, the ground is too difficult for graves and fuel for fire is too rare for widespread cremation.

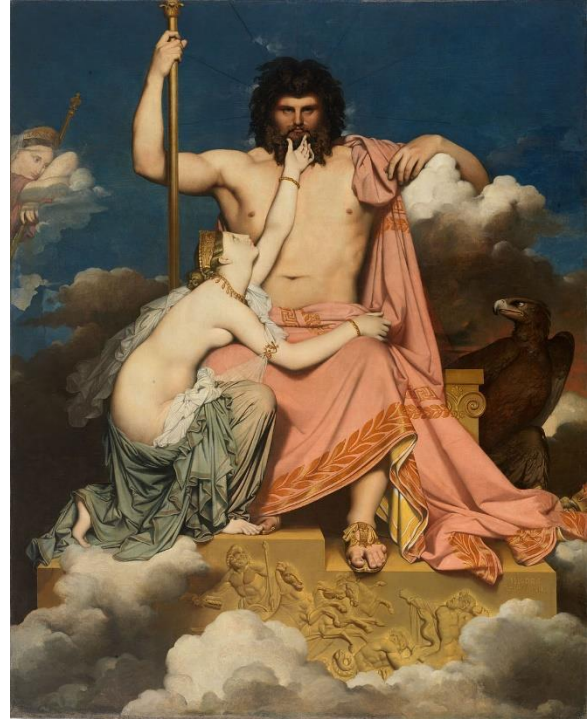
Comanches,⁷⁶ Hawaiians (nobles only), pre-Buddhist Japanese, and in some parts of Europe during the Iron Age.

Sky fathers are sky divinities with a patriarchal position in the pantheon, most clearly distinguished by being referred to as “Father.” They may be the father of the entire pantheon or at least most of it. They may be SOLAR DIVINITIES. According to some schools of thought they are the chief divinities of nomadic peoples, in contrast to the EARTH MOTHERS of settled peoples. They are generally militaristic and concerned with the affairs of their people as a father is concerned with the affairs of his children. Examples include Bochica (Muisca), Jupiter (Roman), and Tengri (Turkic). See HEAVENLY MOTHERS; QUEEN OF HEAVEN; THUNDER DIVINITIES.

Sleeping heroes (*kings in the mountain, kings under the mountain*) are beings who have withdrawn from the world for a space of time after having performed one or more acts of legend. They are generally humans (commonly historical or semi-historical figures) but may be divinities. They are usually warriors. They may be accompanied by servants, who are armed if the sleeping hero is a warrior. They may be secluded in caves, mountains, other worlds, remote islands, or the stars, or even be dead and fated to return through rebirth. If they travel in relation to the cardinal directions, then they most often depart to the east, less often to the west, and barely ever to the north or south. They generally wait in anticipation of a great threat to their people. They may have withdrawn of their own volition or been forced to leave by magic, a serious wound, or being tricked into a shameful act. One or more omens typically presage their return. Examples include Jesus Christ (Christian), King Arthur (Fate/Stay Night), and Quetzalcoatl (Aztec). See CHAINED SATAN.

Solar chariot. See SOLAR VEHICLE.

Solar divinities represent the sun in whole or in part. They and the sun are associated with power and strength. They may be the sun or merely have power over it. Whether they are male or female,



they are generally of the sex opposite to that of the LUNAR DIVINITY. They may be cannibals. They may be bitten by a serpent at some point, and may have lived among humans before this. Examples include Chup Kamui (Ainu), Huitzilopochtli (Aztec), and Shapash (Canaanite). See GOLDEN HAT; MISSING SUN; MULTIPLE SUNS; SOLAR SYMBOL; SOLAR VEHICLE; SUN CROSS; WINGED SUN.

Solar vehicles are a mode of transportation used by the Sun to make its journey across the sky and anywhere else that it goes (such as the UNDERWORLD). They are most commonly a barge (or barque) or chariot. Depictions of solar barges date to the Neolithic and are older than the sun chariot. The first SHIP BURIALS may have been performed in imitation of the solar barge. Examples include the solar barge of Ra (Egyptian) and the chariots of Apollo (Greek) and Surya (Hindu).

Soul dualism (*dualistic soul concept*) is the idea that humans and/or animals have multiple kinds of souls residing in a single body. In systems with only two souls the usual set-up is a “body soul” that

⁷⁶ This suggests that it may be especially common among steppe or plains cultures, but I don’t have enough sources to feel comfortable in saying by to what degree.

animates the body and a “free soul” that is capable of leaving the body. This is seen in the most common concept among the Inuit, which holds that there is a soul associated with respiration and another that exists as one’s shadow. In Chinese thought there were two types of souls, the *hun* (the spiritual soul which left after death) and the *p’o* (the animal soul which remained with the corpse). Despite there being two *types* this did not mean that there were only two souls in a person: one school of thought had it that each person had three *hun* souls and seven *p’o* souls. The Egyptians recognized six souls: *ib*, or heart, which was associated with emotion, intention, thought, and will; *sheut*, or a person’s shadow; *ren*, or a person’s name, which survived for as long as the name was known to mortals; *ba*, which was a person’s unique personality⁷⁷; *ka*, which was the vital essence of a person’s body; and *akh*, which was a person’s intellect.

Spirit animals inhabit multiple realms of existence. Examples include water fowl, which fly in the air and dive into **WATER** (Siberian); and jaguars, which walk on earth, swim in water, and climb in **TREES** (Mesoamerican).

Spirit houses are **SHRINES** to **SPIRITS OF PLACE**. They are usually shaped like houses or temples in miniature. The spirits may be thought of as being capable of or even willing to harm people if not given a place to stay.

Spirits of place (*genii loci*, *anima locus*) are spirits that are centered on a particular...place. They are often **TREES** but may be tied to mountains, rivers, or any other feature of the land.

Spirit spouses are divinities that are ritually married by a human in order to acquire some kind of power. They are found in most expressions of **SHAMANISM**. They visit the shaman in dreams. They can be either male or female and are generally of the sex opposite to the shaman. They may impregnate female shamans and be impregnated by male shamans. Communication with spirit spouses is usually conducted via dreams, where they live. If

they do not have a presence in the **PHENOMENAL WORLD**, then they are generally still able to affect it from another world. The spirit spouse may possess the body of the shaman the shaman or another being. Examples include the *manang* (Borneo), the *loa* (Vodou), the joining to one’s heavenly counterpart in Valentinian Gnosticism, and even, in some ways, the Christian concept of “brides of Christ.”

Star worship (*astrolatry*) includes the worship of planets and other heavenly bodies. It may also refer to the association of divinities with heavenly bodies, which may be originally derived from Babylonian thought. The stars may have been created in order to serve as companions to the **CREATOR DIVINITY**. The stars may be drops of the **MOON’S** blood or transformed lovers. In relation to monotheism it may be referred to as astrotheology. See **LUNAR DIVINITIES**; **MILKY WAY GALAXY**; **SOLAR DIVINITIES**; **STAR PEOPLE**.

Struggles against chaos (*chaoskampf*) are myths that depict the battle of a divinity against a serpent demon (a “chaos monster”). The two figures



time that one’s name would be remembered. Ra, for example, is probably going to be remembered until the Egyptians themselves are forgotten.

⁷⁷ This was part of the reason behind destroying all record of a person’s name (the “damnation of memory”), as was done for Akhenaton. It also encouraged a desire for fame, which would increase the

represent order and chaos. The divinity is usually a storm divinity. The serpent may be reimagined as a dragon. A key element distinguishing it from a normal battle with a serpent or dragon is the act of creation which follows afterward. Creation may be made possible by the serpent's defeat. The serpent may be a WORLD PARENT. Examples include Marduk and Tiamat (Babylonian) Michael and the Devil (Christian), Ra and Apep (Egyptian), Susanoo and Orochi (Japanese), and Zeus and Typhon (Greek), and it is hinted at in the Tanakh or Old Testament through certain references to Leviathan.⁷⁸ Basically, it's everywhere.⁷⁹

Sympathetic magic (*imitative magic*) is based on the idea that a thing which is sufficiently similar to another thing can be used to affect it. Examples include the idea that crocodile teeth (which superficially resemble bananas and were observed to grow back after being lost) could be used to encourage greater yields of bananas, and the idea that a barren woman could cause a barren garden.

Taboos against naming the dead restrict people from repeating the names of the deceased. In some cases, even similar-sounding words become taboo and substitutes will be used. Both taboos may be either temporary or permanent. The punishment for breaking the taboo may be as extreme as death.⁸⁰ Examples of cultures with this taboo include the Australian Aborigines, Maasai, Mbaya,⁸¹ Saharans,⁸² and Siberians.

Taboos on food and drink are a cultural universal, though *what* is tabooed is not. Particular animals or certain of their parts are often taboo (e.g. companion animals). They may have a health and/or symbolic basis. They are usually connected to ritual purity. They may be prohibited only during specific times of the year or stages of life. They may be prohibited only for particular groups of people within the culture (e.g. priests). Association with famine (i.e. status as a famine food) and thus with hardship may make a food taboo under normal circumstances.⁸³ Examples include the principles of ahimsa (Buddhist), Halal (Muslim), Kashrut (Jewish), and the Word of Wisdom (LDS).

Theft of fire myths tell of a divinity who stole fire (or the knowledge to make fire) from beings who sought to keep it away from human (as well as others, possibly).⁸⁴ The divinity is usually benevolent, and steals fire for the good of those who lack it. The fire may be stolen in a trick swap or in exchange for the owner's kidnapped child. The fire is usually kept in the hearth of the divinities, if it is being held by the primary pantheon, or it may be kept in a cave. In some mythologies the tablets of destiny, the book of life, or another sacred book may be stolen, with all the other traits of a theft of fire myth applying to the situation. Examples include Mātariśvan (Hindu), the Grigori (Jewish), Grandmother Spider (Cherokee Amerind), and Rabbit (Creek Amerind). See CULTURE-GIVING DIVINITY.

⁷⁸ Cf. "Yahweh's Conflict with the Leviathan and Sea" for a very long analysis of this interpretation.

⁷⁹ Of special note is the eventual defeat of Thor by Jormungandr at Ragnarok, which would symbolize the overcoming of the world by chaos. So far as it goes, this could mean the revenge of the WORLD PARENT Ymir by proxy. It may be relevant to this interpretation that Jormungandr's dad is Loki, who was of the race of jotuns, who were directly descended from Ymir (whereas the Aesir's progenitor was licked out of ice by a giant cow). This is not how it usually goes down, but Ragnarok is special.

⁸⁰ As it is among the Goajiro of Colombia and Venezuela.

⁸¹ Among the Mbaya, *everyone* in the tribe receives a new name from the chief after someone dies.

⁸² The Saharans refrain from giving family names specifically so that the whole substance of a person's name can be abandoned with that person.

⁸³ On the other hand, it can be permissible to eat tabooed food when the alternative is death, so sometimes the direction of cause and effect is unclear.

⁸⁴ It requires an unforgivable stretch of the imagination, but for *story* purposes it makes interesting material to suppose that theft of fire myths date back to a time before our distant ancestors had the knowledge to *make* fires, but after they had learned how to control fires that arose by other means. In that era, any appearance of fire (assuming it was not too destructive) might be regarded as miraculous and possibly as the intervention of another force on their behalf, on whom they were totally dependent for fire past the point that they could keep it going themselves (the importance of the eternal flame might also be argued to come from this same worldview, albeit just as ridiculously).

Theophagy is the practice of symbolically eating a divinity as part of a ritual. That which is eaten may be seen as the literal substance of the divinity or be understood as only a symbolic representation. Examples include the taking of Communion (Christian), the eating of harvested grain as a reborn VEGETATION DIVINITY, and the eating of animals who are believed to be divine.

Theophany is the appearance of a divinity to one or more humans. The divinity may be seen as it is or in another form (e.g. swan, cloud, pillar of fire). There is frequently the idea that powerful divinities cannot be glimpsed in their true glory by mortals, who would be consumed by their power or killed in some other fashion.

Theophoric names incorporate the name of a divinity as a basic element. The practice (called theophory) is meant to invoke the protection and aid of the divinity, much like naming your son after your boss is supposed to win brownie points for you. Examples include Apollodors (Gift of Apollo), Elijah (My god is YHWH), Knumhotep (Knum is satisfied), Thorstein (Thor's stone),

Totems are beings, objects, or symbols that represent animals or plants, which in turn are the symbol or image of a people. They call back to a recorded ancestry or mythic past which, in reference to the totem, is called a totemic myth. The totem is viewed as a companion or protector as well as a progenitor. Killing and eating the totem is anathematized along with those that perform the act. Durkheim theorized that religion was originally founded on totemism in terms of one's relationship with the group. Possible reasons for selecting a given totem are physical or psychological similarities between the group and the totem and having a rational interest in preserving the species (e.g. the animal is an important food source). See SHAMANISM.

⁸⁵ In Thailand, there are trees which are not permitted to be climbed because their spirits make the activity too dangerous.

⁸⁶ Or, between the presence of the serpent in the garden of Eden, its banishment, and the placing of cherubim to guard the way to the tree of life, we may instead have two groups: chaos monsters in the form of serpents and dragons, who are its initial guardians, and winged beings that are posted to guard the tree of life after it is freed by the forces of order. Or, since a jotun in an eagle's form

Translation of body (*assumption, ascension*) is the conveyance of a human to the home of the gods, there to remain. The human generally becomes immortal or even a divinity. The idea may have arisen as a way to protect the remains of a hero (if everyone thinks that ze is at Olympus, then no-one will look for zir grave). Examples include Enoch (Abrahamic), King Gesar (Tibetan), and Viracocha (Inca).

Tree worship (*dendolatry*) features in many religions. TREES serve as pilgrimage sites and are often dedicated to or are themselves local divinities. As the local divinity it may be the embodiment, abode, or the very incarnation of the spirit. Trees are often oracles, usually by being inhabited by divinities. The animals that live in the area where a sacred tree resides are usually regarded as being sacred themselves. Either because the trees are viewed as sapient or because they are believed to be inhabited, prayers and offerings may be made before a tree is cut down. Some trees are seen in a positive light, others are feared,⁸⁵ and a few fall into both categories. See TREES OF KNOWLEDGE; TREES OF LIFE; WISH TREES.

Trees of life are a source of or are symbolic of immortality. They may also be WORLD TREES or TREES OF KNOWLEDGE. Immortality is usually bequeathed by their fruit. They may be guarded by winged or flying creatures (e.g. cherubim, dragons, the eagle-headed creatures in Assyrian art). Due to the number of serpents and dragons mentioned in association with trees of life, usually as guards, they may generally be representative of WATERY MONSTERS.⁸⁶ They may be connected to the death of a DYING-AND-RISING DIVINITY.⁸⁷ It is often conflated with the tree of knowledge, even in Judeo-Christian scripture.⁸⁸ They are often placed in SACRED GARDENS. They may be the origin of all plant life, as in both Zoroastrian and Serer mythology. Examples exist in Assyrian mythology,

steals the apples of youth in Norse myth (among other examples), perhaps the eagle and other winged beings are also chaos monsters in this scenario—or perhaps I'm stretching things too far.

⁸⁷ The tree of life was used to build Osiris' coffin, Jesus' cross has been referred to as a tree of life, etc.

⁸⁸ "She [wisdom] is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that holdeth her fast." Proverbs 3:18.

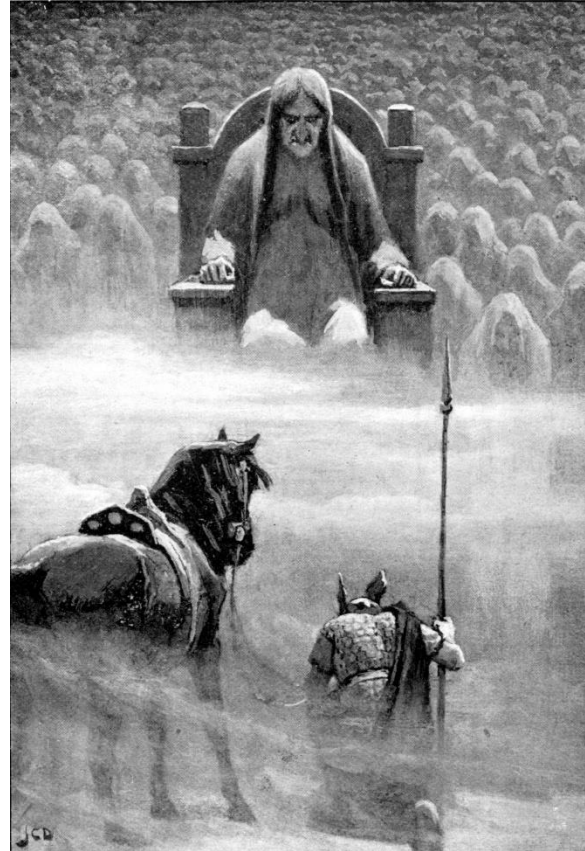
Chinese mythology, Mesoamerican mythology, and Abrahamic mythology.

Trickster divinities subvert and break the rules that have been set by gods, humans, or the cosmos. They may be malicious but the effects are generally positive in the long run (especially if the trickster was acting for benevolent reasons). They are cunning, foolish, or both. They are irreverent. They are almost always male but often demonstrate genderfluid qualities. They are often a CULTURE HERO and are a catalyst for events. Examples include Anansi (West African), Coyote (Amerind), Hermes (Greek), Jacob (Jewish), and Loki (Norse). See RITUAL CLOWN.

Tutelary divinities (*hermetic divinities*) guide, help, or protect individuals or groups. They may accompany a person from birth. Examples include daimons (Greek),⁸⁹ patron saints or patron hallows (Christianity), and the POWER ANIMALS, SPIRIT ANIMALS, SPIRIT SPOUSES, and analogous concepts that exist in various forms of shamanism. See SUPERNATURAL NURSE.

Underworld demons live in the land of the dead. They almost always act at the behest of a DEATH DIVINITY, either willingly or after having been forced into servitude. They may guard the gates of the UNDERWORLD and prevent the dead and/or the living from passing to the opposite side. They may devour the spirits of the unlucky, unprotected, unrighteous, or unwary. Examples include Ammit (Egyptian), Cerberus (Greek), and the supay (Inca).

Underworlds (*netherworlds*) are located beneath the surface of the world. They are usually regarded as being in some important way separate from the PHENOMENAL WORLD even if their location has a physical relationship with it. They often serve as the afterlife. There are usually millers, smiths, and other workers who play some role in the underworld. They are often located to the north or to the west. They usually have multiple levels or areas (usually



three). While by no means a universal motif, they are often associated with WATER.⁹⁰ Examples include Adlivun (Inuit), Mictlan (Aztec), and Uku Pacha (Inca). See DESCENTS TO THE UNDERWORLD; UNDERWORLD DEMONS.

Ursa Major (*the Great Bear, Charles' Wain, the Great Star Beast Waiting to Eat Us*) is a constellation that includes the big dipper. More cultures in the world associate the constellation with a BEAR than do not, which has led many archaeologists to believe that this association dates back further than the first migration to the Americas. Geoffrey Ashe proposed that the constellation was associated with a bear goddess that would later evolve into the Greek Artemis.⁹¹ See BEAR WORSHIP.

⁸⁹ Perhaps the most influential was Socrates' daimon, which he said had guided him from his birth and forbade him from taking certain ill courses of action.

⁹⁰ This can be seen in cases as obscure as the name Persephone Hagne, which referred to her association with the springs of Messenia. What makes the case relevant is that this epithet was specifically used for

Persephone in the context of her role as a chthonic divinity rather than VEGETATION DIVINITY or even in a generic manner. Cenotes are especially associated with the underworld Xibalba in Maya mythology.

⁹¹ Cf. Ashe, Geoffrey. *The Ancient Wisdom*. London: Macmillan, 1977.

Vegetation divinities are DYING-AND-RISING DIVINITIES that embody the growth cycle of plants. They may be FERTILITY DIVINITIES. They are usually dismembered, scattered, and reintegrated. They may be connected to WORLD PARENT MYTHS. They may live in the UNDERWORLD for a portion of the year.⁹² Examples include Dionysus (Greek), Osiris (Egyptian), Persephone (Greek), Tammuz (Sumerian), and Xipe Totec (Aztec).

Vengeful ghosts (*white ladies*) are GHOSTS who have returned from death in order to seek revenge either for their deaths (the ghost's death having been cruel, unnatural, or unjust) or for the mistreatment of their bodies. They generally depart after being appeased, but not always. They are represented either mostly equally by both sexes or predominantly by females. In the latter these female vengeful ghosts are usually said to have been abused and to have died in despair. They are most common in rural areas. SALTING and burning may take place for the body, or the place or means of death, in order to placate or otherwise banish them.

Votive offerings (*votive deposits*) are placed without the expectation that they will ever be recovered or used. They are commonly made in the hope that a wish might be granted. Possible votives include armor, body parts (even the votive-giver's own), coins, and religious symbols. They are usually cast in WATER or in watery places (e.g. bogs, swamps). They may be broken or "killed" before being given in order to ensure that they will not be retrieved. They are often a way to show off to other people. They may be set up in a manner reminiscent of graves, despite no bodies being present (except animals or, more rarely, humans, but in both cases always as votive offerings rather than the "subject" as would be seen in a grave).

War divinities are associated with bloodshed, combat, and war. They may have red skin. They may appear as old men or women (war goddesses are especially likely to have, either generally or under particular circumstances, the appearance of a

hag). They are often also FERTILITY DIVINITIES or LOVE DIVINITIES (especially if female). Examples include Agurzil (Berber), 'Oro (Polynesian), and Tohil (Maya).

Water divinities are associated with WATER in general or with particular bodies of water such as rivers or lakes. A water divinity's importance generally scales in proportion to the importance of that body of water with which it is associated. They are most dominant in civilizations where water is either rare or common but unusually important for prosperity (as it is for maritime traders and fishers). There may be a distinction in the mythology between a general water divinity and a rain divinity. Serpent and/or fish imagery is common in water divinities. They may also be DEATH DIVINITIES and/or craft divinities (because of the various skills that are associated with the seagoing life, such as astronomy, cartography, and shipbuilding, and trade in general). They may be known for seducing humans (whom they may or may not kill), especially if female. Examples include Jengu (Bakweri), St. Peter (Lithuanian folk Christian),⁹³ Suijin (Japanese), and Tlaloc (Aztec). See OLD MEN OF THE SEA; SEA WITCHES.

Watery demons frequently gnaw at or otherwise try to damage the roots of the WORLD TREE or otherwise destroy the world. They generally predate creation and may have been battled by the CREATOR DIVINITY in order to create the world. They are most often serpents of some kind, but can also be frogs, lizards, and BIRDS. Examples include Ahriman's frog (Zoroastrianism), Nidhogg (Norse), the kallikantzaroi goblins (Greek), and the crocodilian water-monsters shown in depictions of Wacah Chan (Maya).⁹⁴ See OCCULTING DEMONS.

White horses are significant in mythology. They may be associated with solar chariots or heroes (especially end of time saviors) and/or be related to fertility (regardless of sex). Both white and grey horses may qualify as white horses in this context.

⁹² This may correspond to winter, but not always. Summers in Greece were oppressively hot, so winter was the season of growth and Persephone's descent was originally associated with summer.

⁹³ Specifically, over the rain. He was thought to frequently misunderstand God's directions, which was

why rain could fail to come when it was needed and why it could sometimes come in amounts that were far too great to handle.

⁹⁴ Sometimes these water-monsters are identified as Chac. Other times they are simply "water-monsters."



They often have multiple heads or limbs. They may bear warning of danger or tragedy. As the hero's steed it has a ceremonial status and represents triumph over negative forces. It is often born from the sea or other liquid (such as blood or milk), from a lightning bolt, or in some other fantastic manner. Seeing them in a dream may be regarded as an omen of death. They may be PSYCHOPOMPS. Examples include kelpies (Celtic), Pegasus (Greek), Sleipnir (Norse), the horse ridden by the Horseman of Conquest (Christian), and the horse ridden by Aisoyimstan (Blackfoot Amerind). See HUMOROUS DIVINITIES for white horses born from liquid.

Winged suns are symbols of divinity, power, and royalty. They are found most often in the Near East but also in South America and Australia.

Wish trees are an element of TREE WORSHIP. They may be wish trees because of their species, location, or appearance. Objects⁹⁵ may be hammered into or hung on TREES in order to establish a relationship between the giver and the tree, usually for the purpose of healing, bewitching, bestowing luck, winning love, or acquiring a different kind of wish. Animal or HUMAN SACRIFICE may also be made at the tree, whether the killing simple takes place on site or the subject is actually killed with the tree (e.g. hanging). They may be located near HOLY WELLS. Examples include banyan trees (Hindu), Christmas trees, and the Argentinian tree called Walleechu.

Witch doctors are healers that treat ailments caused by witchcraft, or malevolent magic. They are not witches themselves.

World couple myths are CREATION MYTHS which tell of two primordial beings that got on with each other like rabbits. They are usually the SKY FATHER and EARTH MOTHER. Sometimes they need to be pulled apart from each other in order to leave some space for everyone else. Genealogical lists of

divinities are big in cultures with these myths, and most everyone can in some manner trace their lineage back to the world parents, either as descendants of their children or creations of their children. One might be able to argue that accounts of the FIRST HUMAN which tell of a first couple are tied to this kind of myth. World couple myths are regarded as distinctly neutral in gender, as contrasted with masculine creation myths like EX NIHILO and feminine creation myths like EMERGENCE. Not to be confused with WORLD PARENT MYTHS. Examples can be found in Kumeyaay mythology, Mingyong mythology, Polynesian mythology, Zuni mythology, and elsewhere.

World folk-epics are epics which form an integral part of a given people's WORLDVIEW, just like and complementing their mythology. Indeed, they cannot be formed except in tandem with a people's mythology, and it must be the *writer's* mythology, which ze both knows intimately and *accepts* (genuine epics are not made by mocking their souls). The oldest examples (and, some would argue, the only authentic examples) were originally oral literature.

The **world's navel** (*omphalos*) is the place regarded as being where the world began.

World Parent myths are CREATION MYTHS that tell of a single primordial being that was sacrificed to create the universe. Maybe its blood becomes the sea and its bones become mountains and squicky stuff like that. It may sacrifice itself, first create other beings that then sacrifice it, or have a peer who sacrifices it (usually a twin sibling⁸⁰). Another common element is a cosmic bull (less often a space cow) which almost always doesn't kill anyone. This is the most likely of any kind of creation myth to be combined with another one.⁸¹ Examples include Aztec mythology,⁹⁶ Celtic

⁹⁵ Usually coins, rags, ribbons, or wreathes, but also cigars, clothing, hair, human nails, meat, etc.

⁹⁶ The gods slay the primordial leviathan Coatlicue, then form the land and sky from parts of her body.

mythology,⁹⁷ Lithuanian mythology,⁹⁸ Nez Perce mythology,⁹⁹ and Norse mythology. See **SACRED BULL**.

World trees are a type of **AXIS MUNDI**.¹⁰⁰ Typically their roots reach into the **UNDERWORLD** (represented as either earth or **WATER**) and their branches (inhabited by **BIRDS**) extend into the **OVERWORLD**, connecting these realms to each other and to the **PHENOMENAL WORLD**. In the Old World the concept is strongest in Norse mythology, but they are also present in Mesoamerican mythology, where there may be four world trees at each of the cardinal directions, extending down into the underworld and up into the overworld. Their branches are sometimes theorized to have been clouds or the visible **MILKY WAY GALAXY**. Some scholars believe that the world tree concept is a product of our evolutionary past, implanted in the collective unconscious because of our millions of years of development among the trees, which for that time were most of our world, but this has to be taken tentatively at best.¹⁰¹ See **WORLD TREE UNITY**; **TREE OF LIFE**; **WORLD TREE PILGRIMS**.

Worldview (*weltanschauung*) is the way in which an individual or society perceives or understands the world, and perhaps the medium through which this is achieved. Mythology is an indispensable part of a people's worldview to the extent that they have it, and to the extent that they do not we may learn something else (something sad, in this author's opinion) about their worldview. It has been argued that worldview is unavoidably bound by the restrictions set by language, a basic point of the Saphir-Whorf hypothesis. See **SELF-CENTERED WORLD**; **WORLD FOLK-EPICS**.

Writing allows the development of greater and more detail in religion than had been seen before. The doctrines and practices of a religion no longer had to be limited to that which could be readily remembered after writing was invented, which

quickly led to an explosion in complexity. Early writing is inseparably linked to religious concerns; besides recording myths and rituals it was also widely used to keep records, and the first records were religious in nature (e.g. tithes, temple storehouses). Theories about the beginning of writing ascribe its origins to musical notation or marks of ownership, among others. See **DIVINE LANGUAGE**.



⁹⁷ There are two bulls and no people. One of the bulls gets a hankering for steak and rips apart the other.

⁹⁸ There is a star maiden, who decapitates a bull and three cows, the latter of which proceed to transform into her sisters.

⁹⁹ Coyote kills a monster and forms various tribes from its body parts.

¹⁰⁰ In some legends the Bodhi tree, in whose shade Gautama Buddha reached enlightenment, had been planted at the first place in the world to exist.

¹⁰¹ Indeed, it is mentioned more because it is interesting than because it is probably fact. Still, if you're interested: Burkert, Walter. *Creation of the Sacred: Tracks of Biology in Early Religions*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1998.

Proto-Indo-European Mythemes: From Battles Against Titans to Wild Hunts

The Proto-Indo-Europeans are a curious group. On the one hand, they are arguably one of the most influential groups in the world. Their mythology is so pervasive that it is easy to mistake its mythemes as universal rather than merely very widespread. On the other hand, we know of them primarily through linguistic reconstruction rather than archaeology. These reconstructed terms are marked with an asterisk to signify that they are reconstructed rather than explicitly known.

Battles against titans (*titanomachies*) are myths which tell of a conflict between the ruling divinities and the **PROTO-DIVINITIES** which preceded them and held power until losing the conflict. These battles are often part of the culture's **CREATION MYTH**. They may represent the conquering of the land's **PREDECESSOR PEOPLE** and their gods. Rexamplified include the wars between the devas and the asuras (Hindu), between the Olympians and the titans (Greek), between the Fomorians and the Tuatha De Danann (Celtic), and even between the Aesir and the Jotuns (Norse). The war between the Aesir and the Vanir may be of a similar type (but probably isn't).

Horse twins are a subcategory of **DIVINE TWINS**. They are both male. They either have a horse form or one of them is a horse all of the time. One of them is divine (and the special one who gets all of the credit) and the other is fully human. They are brothers to the **SOLAR DIVINITY** (usually female) and sons of the **SKY FATHER**. They may have another (mortal) father as well. At least one of them has a name that means "horse." They have close relationships with other human beings. They are associated with fertility (and assist at births), dance, and swans. They found cities, wage war, are possessed of magical healing abilities, and lend their aid to both the cornered general and the storm-tossed sailor. They enforce oaths. They may follow the **SOLAR DIVINITY** around. They are possibly based on the planet Venus in its aspects as the morning star and the evening star. They first originate in Proto-Indo-European mythology; the further you get from this starting point, the more distorted the concept becomes. Examples include Lel and Polel (Slavic) and Polydeukes and Kastor (Greek). There is possibly a trace of it in the birth of Sleipnir (Norse).

Horse sacrifice is a common ritual. Though its forms of expression and purpose varied, it appears to have a single origin in Proto-Indo-European culture and is usually associated with the death of the king, in which case the horse is buried with him.⁴³ The horse may be divided into pieces and may be eaten afterward. Mallory and Adams suggested that it ultimately dates back to a PIE myth about the coupling of a king with a divine mare, who gave birth to **DIVINE TWINS** and/or the suckling of divine twins by a mare (reminiscent of Romulus and Remus being suckled by the wolf). It usually happens in the spring. Examples include the October Horse ceremony (Roman), the inauguration of Blot-Sweyn (Norse), and the Ashvamedha (Hindu).

Horses sired by or born to divinities are weirdly common. Examples include Arion (of Poseidon and Demeter in Greek myth), Sleipnir (Loki in Norse myth), and some **HORSE TWINS**.

Horse worship is primarily a phenomenon of Proto-Indo-European culture and its descendants. Horses in these systems are seen as divine. They are commonly associated with the king (often through his descent from the **HORSE TWINS**) or warriors in general. Horses can represent the sun and **SOLAR DIVINITIES** and be steeds or confidants of the gods. **WATER DIVINITIES** were often portrayed as horses. **FERTILITY RITUALS** involving horses (which were common) included **HORSE BURIALS**, the consumption of horse meat (especially by the king), horse fights, and **HORSE SACRIFICES**. See **HORSES Sired or Born to Divinities**; **RIDERLESS HORSES**; **WHITE HORSES**.

Lords of the Animals (*masters of animals, lords of the forest, lords of the mountain*) are male divinities with a close relationship to animals, similar to the **MISTRESS OF ANIMALS**. Both archetypes are believed to originate from a Neolithic hunting deity. In contrast to the **MISTRESS OF ANIMALS**, who is most often associated with the **BEAR**, the Lord of Animals is most often associated with the wolf. They may be **WAR DIVINITIES**. Medieval reports of trials against "werewolves" often mentioned a Lord of the **FOREST**. Examples include Shiva (Hindu).

Mistresses of animals (*potnia theron*) are female divinities strongly associated with animals. They are often associated with the **BEAR** in some manner⁵³ or with bees, bearing the title “Queen of the Wild Bees.” Examples include Artemis (Greek), Inara (Hittite-Hurrian), and Ninhursag (Sumerian). See **LORD OF THE ANIMALS**.

Parturition myths are like **COSMIC PARENT MYTHS** except that what is created is specifically an ocean or really important river. Examples include Danu (PIE).

Thunder divinities (*lightning divinities*) personify or generate thunder and lightning. The depictions from culture to culture are among the most mutable. In PIE-derived cultures they are almost always either the head of the pantheon or a close relation thereof. The highest realms of the afterlife (where the dead can rest in more than one place) are usually associated with them but they may also be thought to dwell below the ground. They may be clothed in lightning. They may have unusual facial features relative to the rest of the pantheon. They are frequently associated with lightning, arrows, or items that may be derived from the shape or use of an arrow (such as a long rod). They may make lightning and thunder with drums. They may have previously been humans. Where there are a number of them, they may war against each other and create storms in this manner. They may be associated with **DIVINATION** or direction. They may be giants. Lightning is sometimes seen to be

the divinity itself. Examples include Indra (Hindu), Perun (Slavic), Thor (Norse), and Zeus (Greek).

Wild hunt rituals were conscious imitations of the **WILD HUNT** by humans, seen most prominently in Germanic cultures but with some parallels elsewhere. Their participants might paint themselves black. They may have been used as a **RITE OF PASSAGE** for warriors, similar to the Spartan *krypteia*.

Wild hunts (*wild chases, wild armies, Herod's hunts, Cain's hunts, Ghost Riders, etc*) are hunts by spectral, otherworldly hunters. The hunters may be demons, spirits of the dead, **DEATH DIVINITIES**, or **FAIRIES**. The leader of the hunt, who may be referred to as the Wild Huntsman, may be of either sex. The leader may even be a historical figure. There are usually dogs or wolves, and the hunters usually ride horses (less often, dogs or wolves). All animals are usually white or black. They are thought to presage death, usually for many people in a widespread disaster (ex. famine, pestilence, war). Onlookers may be hunted down or press-ganged into the wild hunt. Willing participants may be rewarded with gold. The wild hunt may be concluded with a feast either in a field or at the hunters' stronghold. Examples also include the periodic hunts of Shiva, who rode a **BULL** (Hindu). See **WILD HUNT RITUALS**.

Miscellany: From Acosmism to Year-Kings

Acosmism is a school of thought that denies that the universe is fundamentally real. This philosophy is most prevalent in East Asian and Indian religions but is also found in Christian Science.

Alatry is a religion practice that involves the recognition of one or more divinities, but with a refusal to worship any of them. This refusal may stem from antagonism toward divinities or a belief that divinities act as they will and are not influenced by the actions of mortals for either good or ill.

Allotheism is the worship of a god or gods from a foreign country.

Animal kings were reputed to exist in some European stories, most often cat kings. These were members of their own species (generally) and ruled them as human kings ruled humans.

Animatism is a belief in a generalized, impersonal power over which people have some measure of control. This power can be found in animals, plants, humans, and inanimate objects. See MANA.

Animism is the belief that the world is filled with intelligences or spiritual essences that inhabit everything from lower animals to rocks and in some cases even shadows, wind, and abstract concepts like words and stories. In animist thought things are generally considered to be not so much entities in themselves as they are *dividuals* or bundles of social relationships.¹ See ANIMATISM.

Apatheism is the position that the a/theism question is irrelevant, and that the person in question would not change even if the question were proved one way or another.

Apeirotheism is a belief in the existence of an infinite number of gods.

Atheism is, most broadly, the rejection or absence of belief in divinities. Sometimes it is used in reference to particular religions (i.e. it's a peculiar Christian who isn't an atheist with regard to Odin and Zeus, and early Christians were called atheists by the Romans for their rejection of other gods). While it is getting rarer, there is still a misconception that atheism is a wholly modern phenomenon. While there is some argument for its existence even earlier in Egypt, atheism seems to have fully come onto the scene in the Sixth Century BC, the height of the Axial Age.²

Atonement is the rectification of a damaged relationship with a divinity, or reparation or forgiveness of transgression. While it is most closely associated with Christianity and Judaism, the concept is strong in Mesopotamian religions and elsewhere.

Autotheism is the belief that one is divine, or that one is possessed by a greater power. See SUTTHEISM.

Ashes may be used to anoint or mark people in religious ritual or express sorrow or remorse.

Bears are really scary. Everything's worse with bears. A group of them is called a *slaughter*, okay? See BEAR WORSHIP.

Birds were most commonly associated with the sun, resurrection, prosperity, protection, and/or the **TREE OF LIFE** or the **WORLD TREE**. They may be the form taken by the CREATOR DIVINITY or be messengers of the divinities. See BIRD DIVINATION.

Blood burning was a particular class of **BLOOD RITUAL** performed in Mesoamerican cultures. A soft body part (e.g. buttocks, ears, penis, tongue) would be pierced and the blood collected on paper,

representations of historical figures. Elisha Ben Abuya declared "There is no justice and there is no judge" and is regarded in the Talmud as either an atheist or a heretic (it is unclear which). Al-Ma'arri, writing during the Islamic Golden Age, stated that there were two kinds of people, those with brains and no religion, and those with religion and no brains.

¹ Bird-David, Nurit. "Animism' Revisited: Personhood, Environment, and Relational Epistemology." *Current Anthropology*, 40.S1 (1999).

² Atheism was a capital crime in Athens. The Samkhya school of Hinduism and various Greek philosophers promoted atheism during the Axial Age. Euhemerus stated that the gods of the day were merely mythologized

which would thereafter be burned. It was a form of burnt offering and could serve as a FERTILITY RITUAL. The piercing could be performed with obsidian, stingray spines, or shark's teeth. Imitation spines and teeth might be made out of jade or stone. To encourage bleeding, a rope with thorns or flakes of obsidian might be pulled back and forth through the wound. This act is classified as a form of "auto-sacrifice," or sacrifice of the self.

Caps and cloaks of invisibility appear in a number of places, almost always in European cultures. Examples include Hades' cap of invisibility (Greek), the invisibility cloak of Caswallawn (Welsh), and the Tarnhelm (Norse).

Concentric stone circles are sets of two or more stone circles arranged within one another. They include some or all of the following: central mounds, outlying standing stones, avenues, circular banks on which the stones rest. Burials have been found at all excavated concentric stone circles, pointing to a funerary purpose. They may have been rebuilt from similar structures made of timber.

Corn mothers (*corn dollies*) are straw figures made in connection to the harvest in Europe. They were a manifestation of the importance attached to the last sheaf of the harvest. A corn mother could be made by the first man in the town to finish harvesting his field and thrown into another man's field, to be thrown into someone else's when he finished, and so on until the last man to finish had no-one to give it to. This man was seen as cursed and would have to care for the corn mother through the winter, but because he had the opportunity to place it in the ground at the beginning of the plating season (possibly as part of a FERTILITY RITUAL), this might have been a mixed blessing and consolation prize for being the worst guy in the community at harvesting. One imagines that receiving a bigger crop than normal (if this were the expected result of the ritual) might doom the poor man to finishing last *again* and so on forever.

Cosmic consciousness is the idea that the universe is "an interconnected network of individual consciousnesses, each one of which is connected to every other one." It may be top-down, with consciousness in individuals coming

from a common source, or it may be bottom-up, with consciousness coming together from individuals to form the network. Indra's Net is an ancient example, but the idea has become more popular in recent times.

Crossroads are liminal places between worlds, where the supernatural world can be reached (or can reach the ordinary world). One may be able to force LIMINAL DIVINITIES to appear here and/or trap them here. DIVINATION may be performed here. They can be considered in some respects to be miniature AXES MUNDI.

Divine apathy is the idea that a divinity (usually the Abrahamic God) cannot suffer or be affected emotionally.

Divine language (*language of the gods*) is divine or otherwise magical proto-language that predates human-made languages and may have led to them. Early civilizations in particular regarded language (especially in the form of WRITING) as being a gift from divinities. Examples include Adamic (LDS), Classical Arabic (Muslim), the LINGUA VERDE, and Vāc (Hindu).

Dolorous strokes are a particular kind of wound suffered by the king. This transforms him into the Maimed King and his kingdom into the Wasteland. A quest (e.g. the retrieval of the Holy Grail) must be performed in order to heal the Maimed King and restore the Wasteland. The wound may be in the king's genitals, in his thighs (often thought to be a euphemism for the genitals anyway), or elsewhere. He may be impotent and/or incapable of moving, with the latter being symbolic of the Wasteland's lack of fertility. While most prominent in the story of the Fisher King in Arthurian folklore this depiction is descended from Bran the Blessed (Celtic). The severed head on a platter is another recurring element in the Celtic-derived versions of this myth. In the Lancelot-Grail cycle, the wounding of the Fisher King occurs to each succeeding generation. See SYMPATHETIC MAGIC; YEAR-KING.

Donkey worship (*onolatry*) was a mocking accusation that was commonly hurled against foreign cultures.

Duotheism is a belief in exactly two deities, usually a god and goddess of roughly equal power.

Emergence myths are **CREATION MYTHS** that describe how the **LEGENDARY PROGENITORS** of the people had to pass through one or more previous worlds in order to reach the present one. They may change form or behavior as they pass from one world to another. This is often regarded as a kind of birth, and one or more female divinities may stand by to guide them into each (or just the last) new world as a symbolic midwife. It may be believed that there are yet more worlds to travel through. Emergence myths are regarded as distinctly feminine in this way, as contrasted with masculine creation myths like **EX NIHILO** and balanced creation myths like **WORLD COUPLES**. Cultures with an emergence myth sometimes lack any other kind of creation myth and simply treat the **PHENOMENAL WORLD** as having always been there or originating in a time and manner unknowable to them. They are most common among peoples with nomadic pasts and are often thought to be retellings of their migrations, and therefore may feature **PREDECESSOR PEOPLES**. Examples can be found in Hopi, Maya, Navajo, and Zuni mythology.

Female nonuplets (*women of nine*) are sets of nine sisters. They are often associated with mountains. They are often divine or have a relationship with a divinity. A single male may be associated with the nine. Examples include the **LEGENDARY PROGENITORS** of the Kikiyu Tribe, the Nine Maidens (Scottish), and the witches of Caer Lyow (Welsh).

Fetches are doubles or illusory apparitions of living people. They often presage the person's death but are not inherently malevolent. Examples include doppelgangers (Germanic), some depictions of the Ka (Egyptian), and vardøgers (Norse).

Flying carpets (*magic carpets*) are carpets that can transport their riders either instantaneously or supernaturally quickly. While most popular in Arabian mythology, examples also exist in Russia.

Folk religion refers to those aspects of religion which are practiced by a people but are not official

doctrine. The line is blurred or even nonexistent in religions with little to no centralized authority.

Golden hats (*gold hats, goldhüte; s. goldhut*) are Bronze Age artifacts from Central Europe. They are made of thin sheet gold and were attached externally to long conical and brimmed headdresses. We have only discovered four of them so far, so we don't know too much, and since we've been looking since 1692 you are probably free to say what you want in your story without fear of contradiction anytime soon. At present, we figure that they are connected to some kind of solar cult. Some scholars think that they were used as complex calendrical devices. They do have symbols that point to being a lunisolar calendar, so the idea is not as crazy as it seems.

Grave fields are prehistoric cemeteries. They lack above-ground structures. They are generally arranged on elevated ground relative to settlements. They are generally positioned east to west, from head to feet. They appear to be unique to European cultures.

Green Men are **VEGETATION DIVINITY**-like representations, most often of a face wreathed by or made from leaves. They may utilize animal rather than human faces. Branches or vines may shoot forth from orifices on the face and they may bear flowers or fruit. The three most common forms are: the foliate head, which is completely covered in green leaves; the disgorging head, which spews vegetation from its mouth; and the bloodsucker head, which sprouts vegetation from all facial orifices.

Heart-burials involve the interment of the heart separately from the rest of the body. They were most common in Europe, especially in the Middle Ages.

Heavenly Mothers (*Mother in Heaven, Sky Mother*) are the feminine counterparts to **SKY FATHERS**. They do not exist in all religions that worship a Sky Father. In Christianity, Mary may be referred to as "Our Mother" but is not strictly considered a Heavenly Mother equivalent of God. Examples include Ashertu (Hittite), Devi (Hindu), Nut (Egyptian), and the simply-named Heavenly Mother of LDS mythology.

Henotheism (*inclusive monotheism, monarchical polytheism*) is the worship of one divinity without denying the existence of other divinities. Henotheists may consider the worship of other divinities to be valid by other people but not by themselves. Contrast with MONOLATRY. See KATHENOTHEISM.

Hero cults are dedicated to the veneration or worship of specific mortal men (as opposed to more general ANCESTOR VENERATION), most clearly developed in Greek culture. Heroes may be considered such in this context because of the manner of their lives or because they suffered unusual deaths. Saints in modern Christianity could be seen as a type of this. The Greek hero cults appear to have been inspired by the Bronze Age relics and ruins which surrounded them and of whose origins they had no recollection.³⁹ They developed from clan-centered ancestor veneration but were often totally broken from any sense of familial relation and were instead national in focus. The same hero might have tombs in several places, all lauded to one degree or another by the cults at each one. Rather than living in the OVERWORLD or with the gods the heroes were chthonic divinities that existed in the UNDERWORLD and their influence and rituals were more the color of Hades than Zeus. They could appear as humans or as snakes but rarely appeared except when angered. They were sometimes viewed as being capable of inflicting boils, fevers, and lice upon people. The cult was in practice directed not only to the hero but to his wife, mother, and children as well. Some hero cults were centered on an oracle. The heroes' corpses were less likely to be displayed than their possessions.

Horse burial is the practice of including a horse in the burial ritual. It is usually representative of a nomadic or recently-nomadic culture.³ Examples can be found everywhere from Britain to China. Some claim that evidence of Paleolithic horse burials can be found in so-called "head and hooves" burials, which involved the skin of a horse being hung over a pole with some of its bones left inside to preserve the shape.

Human body and world tree unity is a motif that applies TREE OF LIFE symbolism to imagery of the human body. Examples include Chakra (Hindu and Buddhism) and the Sefirot (Kabbalism), and it was often applied to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (Christian).

Hylotheism is the belief that matter is identical to God, and that God's being does not extend past matter. Compare to PANTHEISM, of which it is a variation.

Kathenotheism is the belief that multiple divinities exist and that there are supreme divinities, but that this supremacy alternates between divinities over time. Examples include the Orphic religion and the Smarta sect of Hinduism.

Lingua verde (*green language, language of the birds*) refers to a supposed perfect DIVINE LANGUAGE. It is conceived of as being used by BIRDS. It may have developed out of the relationship between birds and DIVINATION (see BIRD DIVINATION). The ability to speak with birds is always associated with wisdom. It is usually granted by birds (often a "king of the birds") or through a transformation. The birds frequently warn or inform their new friend of something of which he would otherwise be unaware. Examples of figures who could speak with birds include the Argo (Greek), Dag the Wise (Swedish) and Sigurd (Norse). In non-mythological contexts it can refer to whistled languages.

Laying on of hands is a ritual that involves the titular action in the process of performing a healing. It is most common in Abrahamic rituals today but dates to Mesopotamian cultures.

Loathly ladies are women that, as result of a curse, at first appear unattractive but are revealed to be beautiful after they are engaged by a man who cares nothing at all for their physical appearance. Often they present the man with the choice of their beauty existing in the day, to be replaced by ugliness at night, or the other way around. They are able to assume a beautiful appearance both day and night, however, when their suitor or husband handed the choice back to them. Examples include Cundrie (Arthurian), the Loathly Lady of Celtic mythology,

³ In Kazakhstan, a horse was killed and buried exactly one year after its owner's death.

Skuld's mother (Norse), and certain tellings of "pig-faced women" in Holland and England.

Mana is a "force altogether distinct from physical power, which acts in all kinds of ways for good and evil, and which it is of the greatest advantage to possess or control."⁴ It can heal or affect fortune like the Western conception of luck. It exists not only in people but also in places and objects. It can be gained and lost through various actions, those most optimal being sexual or violent or disposed to a quality of balance. War was thus seen as a supremely respectable course for a king to take his people through, in order to gain much mana. Robert Blust believes that the word originally denoted "powerful forces of nature such as thunder and storm winds that were conceived as the expression of an unseen supernatural agency."⁵ It is not traditionally viewed as being a source of fuel for fireballs and invisibility spells.

Medicine murder is the killing of a human in order to harvest the body for magical ingredients. There may be little to no ritual involved in the act, but in some traditions torture may be performed in order to increase the potency of the magic. Rather than prey opportunistically, the medicine murderer will typically select a specific person to kill. The victim is usually very young or very old.

The **Milky Way Galaxy** is where we live, unless you're reading this a really long time from now.⁶ Every culture has had at least one story about the observable portion of the Milky Way. It may be a spilled material (Armenian, Cherokee Amerind), especially milk (as in Egyptian, Roman). It may be associated with BIRDS (Finnish, Estonian). It may be any number of objects, including a herd of cows (Greek), a canoe (Maori), a dolphin (Hindu), or the WILD HUNT or a generic hunting party (German, Siberian).

Misotheism is a hatred of the gods, or the belief that the gods are uniformly malicious. This philosophy could only have practical effect in

religions where it is believed that the gods could be affected in some way, whether by lack of worship or another mechanism. While it can appear anywhere, it is depicted most prominently in Norse mythology, where a number of the sagas recount men who turned their backs on the gods and of whom it was said, "in themselves they trusted."⁷

Monolatry is the belief that multiple gods exist but that only one is fit for worship by anyone. Contrast with HENOTHEISM.

Necropoli (*cities of the dead*) are large cemeteries with elaborate tomb monuments. They are located away from cities rather than within them. In some necropoli the tombs were constructed as though they were houses, with multiple rooms and ornamentation. They are often located on or near hills.

Old Men of the Sea are (typically male) WATER DIVINITIES. They may be reflective of an older order of divinities, as they typically predate the ruling pantheon and may be associated with the primeval ocean. They may change shape, and may need to be held onto while they change shape in order to achieve some other goal, such as getting them to answer a question.⁸ Typically, they only tell the truth, but just see the previous sentence on how difficult it can be to get them to say anything in the first place. They typically have children, which are either beautiful daughters or terrible monsters (or both). They are minor divinities but nevertheless very ancient. Examples include Aegir (Norse), Nereus (Greek), and the Old Man of the Sea (Arabian).

Omnitheism is the belief that all religions have a core recognition of the same god. This is especially prominent in Hinduism, which frequently asserts that all people, regardless of their faith or lack thereof, are Hindus and just don't realize it.

⁴ Codrington, R. H. *The Melanesians: Studies in Their Anthropology and Folklore*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1891.

⁵ Blust, R. A. "Proto-Oceanic *mana Revisited." *Oceanic Linguistics* 46.2 (2007).

⁶ If so, then please issue a new edition of this book to account for the change.

⁷ Grimm, Jacob. *Teutonic Mythology*. 1835.

⁸ Like other primordial divinities, Old Men of the Sea are often keepers of great secrets, and can be counted on to have plot-relevant information.

Pandeism is the belief that the **CREATOR DIVINITY** created the universe by becoming it and then ceasing to exist as a separate, conscious entity.

Panentheism is the belief that the universe is fully a part of God, but that God nevertheless transcends or has some existence separate from the universe. In other words, the universe is God, but God is not the universe. Contrast with PANTHEISM.

Pantheism is the belief that the universe is in some sense divine and should be worshiped. As God *is* the universe and is fully identical with the universe, by definition God does not transcend the universe because God cannot transcend God. Compare to HYLOTHEISM and contrast with PANENTHEISM.

Polydeism is the belief that many gods each created a different aspect of the universe, and so none of them have any interest in the universe as a whole. See IDLE DIVINITY.

Posthumous names are given to individuals (usually nobles) after their deaths. They replace the names that were used by that person in life. Examples are found in China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam.

Post-theism is a form of nontheism which supposes not to actively reject theism but to instead passively leave it behind as obsolete. It is less combative than antitheism, or the active opposition to theism, and generally assumes that theism was at one point necessary for human flourishing.

Queen of Heaven is a title given to some female sky divinities. It appears to have originated in Sumeria. Through Babylon and Persia, it reached Greece, where Alexander the Great carried it out to most of the rest of the world. Where there is a heavenly divine couple they are generally matched by a chthonic divine couple (e.g. Hades and Persephone in Greek mythology). Examples include Frigg (Norse), Hera (Greek), Isis (Egyptian), and Mary (Christian).

Rainbows can be interpreted as bridges, messengers, an archer's bow, horses, serpents, or the token of a promise. There may be a divinity associated with them in particular.

Red ochre has been and still is used by hunter gatherers around the world and throughout history for ritual purposes. It is believed to be universally used to represent blood, death, life, and sex.

Riderless horses are single horses... without riders! With the boots reversed in the stirrups, it symbolizes fallen soldiers. It is connected to HORSE BURIAL and HORSE SACRIFICE. It dates back to at least Genghis Khan and may go even further back in Afghanistan, where it represented the Buddha.

The **royal touch** (*thaumaturgic touch*) is the reputed power of a monarch to cure disease (generally skin diseases) by physical contact. It was most often claimed by the English (through to the 16th Century) and French kings (through to the 18th Century) but could be found elsewhere. It was often used to prove the legitimacy of one's claim to the throne, and England and France believed that their variant of the royal touch demonstrated that God favored their countries over everyone else's. One popular procedure called for the monarch to touch or stroke the face or neck of the petitioner, hang a gold medal (called an Angel) around the petitioner's neck, read passages from the Bible (Mark 16:14-20 and John 1:1-14), and offer prayers (usually to God but also to the Virgin Mary and the Saints). It was most often performed on holy days, especially in cold months. Near to five thousand people could be touched in a single year by some monarchs. Queen Anne, the last of her line to practice the royal touch, would fast the day before. Among the French it was held that even the corpses of their monarchs could heal. Related abilities claimed by other European monarchs were the power to cure stuttering with a kiss (Habsburgs), to exorcise demons (Castile), and cure jaundice (Hungarian). See LAYING ON OF HANDS.

Sacred bulls (*astral bulls*) are representative of power and life force. The term "bull" is here used to refer to both sexes of cattle where necessary. Many prominent divinities have titles which hint at their origins as bulls (e.g. Marduk is called the "Bull of Utu"). They may be lunar (the bull's horns usually representing the crescent **MOON** in these cases) or solar. They may be the first animal and ancestor to all other animals. The concept may originate in aurochs, which were extant up into the Iron Age and worshiped by a number of bull cults from the Neolithic on. Ritual perfection of the bull

was usually regarded as important (e.g. the red heifer of the Torah), and it is often sacrificed on behalf of the people. This may be a forgotten part of a ritual reenactment of the creation of the world.⁹ Their milk may be the main or only source of food for the ruling divinities. Their prominence in non-Abrahamic religions was a contributing factor to the “horned Devil” image, though amusingly it is possible that YHWH was originally portrayed as a bull. Examples include the Bull of Heaven (Babylonian), the Golden Calf (Judeo-Christian), both Hathor and Apis (Egyptian), Moloch (Canaanite), and TAURUS (Greek).

Sacred prostitution (*temple prostitution, religious prostitution*) is a sexual ritual treated in part as a commercial transaction despite being performed as religious worship, most often as a **FERTILITY RITE** and/or within the bounds of **HIEROGAMY**. Sacred prostitution may involve either sex as either party. A sacred prostitute is a hierodule, and the Old Testament has two words to distinguish between ordinary prostitutes (*zonah*) and consecrated prostitutes (*kedeshah*). Some scholars dispute the actual existence of sacred prostitution as such in the Near East (and sometimes elsewhere) and argue that it is a misunderstanding or misrepresentation of hierogamy.

Salting the earth (*sowing the earth with salt*) is the act of spreading salt on an area to curse it against a people’s return. It is generally performed against the land of a conquered people. It is also an act of purification against the perceived corruption of the conquered people if salt only can be used, but in some cultures other minerals and weeds may be used as well. Odysseus feigned madness by sowing salt, but the connection to this ritual, if there is any, is unclear.

Sea witches are found in folklore across Europe. They appear to sailors and other seafarers. They used magic connected to the **MOON**, the tides, and weather, could manipulate the fates of ships and/or

people, and or had complete control over the sea. They may be phantoms or **GHOSTS**. They were sometimes said to sell three-knotted ropes to sailors to give them control over the wind. They used clam, scallop, and oyster shells as bowls, and seaweed, fishing nets, sea grass, driftwood, sea glass, and sand.

Self-immolation (*auto-cremation, fire baptism*) is the practice of setting oneself on fire. It was especially popular in India, in which it is one practice among many that are collectively referred to as “abandoning the body,” which also include: burning one’s extremities or burning incense on one’s skin; drowning, slicing, or starving oneself; self-mummification; and voluntarily being fed to insects or other wild animals. These practices were usually conflated with each other and could substitute for each other with ease in myths where they occurred.

Ship burials (*boat graves*) are places of interment in which a ship serves as coffin for the dead and any **GRAVE GOODS** interred.

Skin-changing stories are a variety of **ORIGIN-OF-DEATH MYTH**. They hold that humans once had the ability to live forever by changing or shedding their skins like snakes do. They may have lost the ability (usually in a contest against a snake) or willingly given it up (according to one story, because children could not recognize their parents after the latter changed skins).

Solar symbols symbolize the sun. They include circles, circles with a point in the center, circular disks, doubled sun crosses, eight-pointed stars, and sun crosses.

Star people live in the midst of or are the stars themselves. They may be the children of the sun and the **MOON** or just the moon. They may come out only in the night in order to avoid the sun, who, their parent or not, ate all of the stars that once

⁹ In myths derived from the Proto-Indo-European system, the creation of the world often involved the death of one or more cattle and even more often their presence (e.g. the cow Auðumbla in Norse mythology). The most obscure connection to this tradition may be a Gaulish ritual recorded by Pliny the Elder: “White-clad druids climbed a sacred oak, cut down the mistletoe

growing on it, sacrificed two white bulls, and used the mistletoe to cure infertility.” Besides the connection to the **WORLD TREE**, the deaths of the bulls bring fertility and birth, which is a reenactment of creation in miniature. This was performed ‘on the sixth day of the **MOON**’ with a sickle, which was also often associated with the Moon.

shone in the daytime and will eat them too if they get caught. They may have descended to the Earth at the beginning of time to make the world (especially if led by or comprised solely of an old man) or the **FIRST HUMANS**, or may be the first humans themselves.⁶⁷ They may fall from the sky rather than intentionally descend. Either at this time or later they may wed humans; or both star-husbands and star-wives are common across mythologies but in a given myth only one or the other is heard of. Romance with star people may end in tragedy. Examples can be found in Cree Amerind, Iroquois Amerind, and Miemac Amerind mythology, among other places, but seems restricted to North America.

Suitheism is the belief that one is a god, but not necessarily the only god. Compare with **AUTOOTHEISM**; **HENOTHEISM**.

Sun crosses (*wheel crosses*) are crosses inside circles. They are found as far back as the Neolithic. We don't really know what they mean, because they mostly disappear in the Bronze Age, but we like to guess. Currently the sun cross represents the Earth instead of the Sun, which is what we figure our ancestors meant by it. It might also mean the four seasons and/or the full year (hence its supposed reference to the sun). In Armenia, where it is called the Arevakhach, it refers to eternity and light.

Supernatural nurses are commonly associated with **DIVINE TWINS**, among other **CULTURE HEROES**. They may be giants, horses, nymphs, or wolves, among other possibilities. They may mentor the children. Feeding by **BIRDS** is common, even where another being fulfills the rest of the role. Examples of children reared by supernatural nurses include Dionysus (Greek), Romulus and Remus (Roman), and the cubs of Asena (Turkic).

Taurus is a constellation. It was perceived as a **SACRED BULL** by the time of the Chalcolithic. For a time, the constellation marked the new year (in spring) in several cultures.

The Three Hares is a motif that appears as far west as England and as far east as China, where it has been found as early as the 7th century BC. It may have been transported out of China via the Silk Road, but a contrary view is that the Three Hares

developed independently in England and/or Germany. It features three rabbits chasing each other in a circle and is drawn in such a way that there are only three ears between them, each one shared by two rabbits. It is thought to refer to fertility and the lunar cycle. In Christianity it may be a reference to the Trinity, and may represent Threefold Divinities in other religions as well. It has also been theorized to be antiquity's version of an out-of-control meme, made popular because of the inclusion of rabbits in an amusing optical illusion.⁷² In Christian art the Three Hares are sometimes associated with the **GREEN MAN**, either in contrast or to imply a deeper symbolism than the Trinity.

Trees are symbols of fertility, growth, decay, and resurrection. As phallic objects that bear sustenance they can represent the union of such paired characteristics as masculine and feminine, physical and spiritual, or living and nonliving. A human's life may be tied to a tree (e.g. the Tale of Two Brothers) or the tree may simply sicken and die in sympathy with zir suffering but most ideas emphasize the connection between humankind and trees. For this reason, trees could be planted to mark milestone occasions (e.g. birth, betrothal, marriage, regnancy). The connection between human and tree can result in an attempt to transfer illnesses or bad luck to the tree by leaving objects at the tree or splitting it in two and passing between the halves. Sometimes the sickness may remain behind and can be caught by others who come to the tree. They may be thought to be capable of speech. See **FORESTS**; **TREE WORSHIP**.

Touch pieces are coins or medals that are reputed to have one of any number of magical powers (few have more than one). They must be in close physical contact in order to be made use of. Some touch pieces must first come in contact with something else of magical potency in order to gain power themselves (which may or may not be related to the abilities of the magical object that granted the touch piece its power).

Treacherous gardens are inversions of **PLEASANT PLACES**. Associations with sexuality, if they exist, are malign.

Trees of knowledge are an old motif in the Near East. The expression "good and evil" is thought to

be a figure of speech that means everything, so that trees of knowledge of good and evil are “trees of knowledge of everything.” Eating from a tree of knowledge may elevate one to a state comparable to the gods or their servants. They may bear apples,⁷³ figs, peaches, or pomegranates, among other possibilities.

Triple divinities (*threefold/tripled/triplicate/tripartite/triune/triadic divinities, trinities*) are divinities that are associated with the number three. They appear in threes almost as if they were a single being with three bodies and/or have three forms which they may adopt at various times. They are very common in Welsh and Irish mythology. “The number three has a long history of mythical associations.” Green stated that “triplism” was a way of “expressing the divine rather than presentation of specific god-types.” Vesna theorized that triple divinities developed from a PIE female triple divinity associated with WEAVING and possibly with fate. Some triple divinities display three heads or three upper bodies. Examples include Hecate (Greek), the Morrigan (Irish), the Norns (Norse), and the Weird Sisters (Shakespeare).

Triskelions (*trikeles*) are images of three interlocked spirals which may be representative of bent human legs. They date as far back as the Neolithic and may be a forerunner of THREE HARES imagery. They appear in many early cultures, including Lycian coins, Mycenaean vessels, and the Newgrange MEGALITHIC tomb in Ireland.

Two Messengers stories are a variety of ORIGIN-OF-DEATH MYTH. They tell how the ruler of the universe sent two messengers to humankind: one who would inform them that they would be subject to death, and one who would tell them how they could resurrect themselves. The messenger of life is delayed for some reason (usually out of laziness or being misdirected) and the messenger of death is the first to arrive. Thereafter the people do not believe the messenger of life, and the means of resurrection is either no longer remembered or becomes inapplicable. The messengers may be initially sent from humankind in order to answer a question (usually about why Great-Uncle Bob isn’t moving anymore and is starting to stink) and the

messenger of death instead gives a faulty message after the messenger of life is delayed. They are most common in Africa. Examples include the stories of Chameleon and Lizard (Bantu), of Chameleon and Thrush (Akamba), of Dog and Frog (Togoland), of Goat and Sheep (Ashanti), and of Worm and Lizard (Bura).

Water is considered a purifying force in most religions. Water rites are rituals which center on the use of water, usually through immersion or bathing. See FLOOD MYTHS; HOLY WELLS; PARTURITION MYTHS; WATER DIVINITIES.

Weaving is generally a mystical art that is held under the purview of women.¹⁰ This is the origin of the term “distaff side,” which indicates one’s relatives on the mother’s side. The spindle is a symbol of security. Examples of divinities associated with weaving are Frigg (Norse), Mama Occlo (Inca), and Neith (Egyptian).

Winged genii are beings or images that occur repeatedly in Assyrian art, usually in places associated with royalty (including but not limited to palaces). They have the appearance of bearded men with birds’ wings. They may wear horned helmets or diadems, or have bird heads and wear rosettes on their diadems and/or on their wrists. They are believed to represent the antediluvian sages called “apkallus,” who lived during a GOLDEN AGE of humankind and were purified in the FLOOD to henceforth roam the PHENOMENAL WORLD invisibly. They may have functioned as a part of the ATONEMENT process undergone by the king on behalf of his people and seem to have been associated with the TREE OF LIFE. They may have represented the forces that protected the Earth and the Assyrian Empire.

World tree pilgrims are mythological figures who climb the WORLD TREE or travel across a different AXIS MUNDI and bring something from their journey back to the PHENOMENAL WORLD. They usually pay some kind of physical price, either death or some other kind of suffering. That which is suspended from the tree acquires a special status. Examples include the caduceus, Jack and the Beanstalk (English folklore), Jesus Christ (Biblical),

¹⁰ In societies where males are weavers, such as the ancient Egyptian, it is thought that they usurped the role;

even in societies where this is the case, among divinities it is still the purview of females.

Odin hanging on Yggdrasil (Norse), and Dante's *Divine Comedy*. See **DYING-AND-RISING DIVINITY**.

The **Year-King** is a concept developed by James Frazer as an outgrowth of the idea of the **SACRED KING**.¹¹ He represented the **SOLAR DIVINITY** and was the centerpiece of a fertility myth and ritual which saw him married to the **EARTH MOTHER** and then ritually killed no more than a year later. He was a **VEGETATION DIVINITY**, too. He was born with the onset of the spring, ruled during the winter, and died at harvest time. According to this school of thought the year-king shortly developed into the sacred king, who was later sacrificed by proxy

through another man. Eventually this other man would acquire the role of high priest and be sacrificed by proxy through animals. This completed a long chain which probably started with the year-king being a proxy in the first place (for the whole group). The idea eventually led to Murray's theory that a number of the Kings of England were "secret pagans and witches" whose deaths were reenactments of the year-king ritual.⁸⁵ According to Frazer, examples included Adonis (Greek), Attis (Phrygian), and Osiris (Egyptian). See **DYING-AND-RISING DIVINITIES**.

¹¹ Frazer, James George. *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*. New York: Macmillan, 1951.

Appendix A: Non-Standard Portfolios

All too often, divinities in constructed mythologies have portfolios that are far neater than they should be. In such mythologies, the reason for each element's presence can be determined without a modicum of thought. In naturally-developed mythologies, however, the portfolios can be downright odd...and yet no less sensible, once you figure out how A led to B led to C.

Following are eleven examples of divinities whose portfolios developed over the generations in order to acquire elements that at first glance may make little sense. If you're struggling to figure out how to do it in your own stories, then these should hopefully give you some ideas.¹

Bastet [Egyptian] began as a protection divinity in Lower Egypt, especially against diseases² and evil spirits. As with many other Egyptian divinities with reason to be ferocious she was portrayed as a lioness. As a protector of Lower Egypt (and later all of Egypt) she was especially regarded as a protector of Pharaoh, which led her to being cast as Ra's protector. His own status as a solar divinity led to Bastet being associated with the sun and, to a greater extent, fire. As Lower Egypt lost war after war with Upper Egypt she became increasingly associated with housecats (which were also seen as protectors against threats both physical and supernatural) and thus motherhood was added to her portfolio because of the devoted behavior of mother cats to their young. Meanwhile, a linguistic quirk (her name also meant "of the ointment jar") caused her to be associated with perfume, which would lead her to becoming the mother and/or wife of Anubis due to the use of perfumes and ointments in embalming the dead.

Beavi [Sami] was originally a solar divinity. Because of the extreme northerly clime, the importance of the sun was even greater than usual and she took

spring and summer into herself. As the one that made the growing season possible she became a fertility goddess, and in this guise fed the reindeer, who in turn brought "wealth and prosperity" to the people. Because the Sami made the connection between the darkness of winter and mental illness, she was also a goddess of sanity.

The Horae [Greek] were originally associated with the seasons and through this other "natural portions of time." Because of the natural order reflected in the turning of the seasons and the cycle of night and day they came to reign over natural justice, then justice of all sorts, and then finally order. Being associated with the seasons, the constellations were eventually added to their portfolio.

Ishara [Hittite] was originally a goddess of love, and gradually took on a role as goddess of oaths because of the ties which bound families together. In that role she inflicted sicknesses on oathbreakers (the earliest sicknesses thus associated with her were tied to infertility and diseases of the genitals), and as she was propitiated to lift the sicknesses she became a goddess of medicine as well.

Janus [Roman] began as the god of transitions, which made him associated with beginnings and endings, doors, gates, passages, and ultimately time, especially with regard to the past and the future. As the god of beginnings and endings he was responsible for the opening and closing of wars, which meant that both war and peace were also in his portfolio. These various associations would also lead to him becoming a god of birth, exchange, harbors, journeys, trade, and shipping, and he was a part of the beginning of any ritual regardless of the divinity that it was being held for.³

¹ If all else fails, then you can try to be that guy who goes from dogs to horseshoes because German Shepherds are dogs, Hitler owned a German Shepherd, Hitler was a Nazi, Nazis used the swastika, the swastika is a good luck symbol in some cultures, and horseshoes can also represent good luck in some cultures. The idea is for there to be a chain of logic, but not one that is immediately identifiable.

² Specifically, the contagious ones at first. This isn't a distinction that you usually find in constructed mythologies.

³ Janus knows the gate to Olympus. Janus is the gate to Olympus. Janus is the key and the guardian of the gate. Past, present, future, all are one in Janus. No-one can approach the gods of Olympus save it be through Janus, who is the way.

Mars [Roman] was originally a god of the fields and farming but became a war deity because those fields of delicious grain needed to be guarded, and as soon as the god who helped you to grow the stuff started to help you protect it, it wasn't a big leap for him to become, ah, more proactive in protecting the fields. Not to mention that from the very beginning he had been waging war against rats and droughts and other things that hurt the crops.

Mitra's [Hindu] portfolio probably began with "the blood oath and tribal contracts." His name means "covenant, contract, oath, or treaty" and was derived from a word meaning "to fix, to bind." The contracts which he oversaw were the "means of binding" persons and groups together. Through this he became associated with honesty and friendship.

Oya [Yoruba] seems to have begun as a wind divinity. She seems to have become a thunder divinity through association with the storms that could bring lightning and fierce winds both, but most of her portfolio's growth came from the elements of movement and chaos contained in the wind, which ultimately led to her portrayal as a "facilitator of transition." Through this path she became a creator who acted through turmoil and "in the forms of sudden and drastic change," even through natural disasters such as fires, floods, storms, and tornadoes. She stood watch at the edge of the underworld but was a fertility divinity at the same time, and she was even manifest in the "flash of the marketplace."

Sekhmet's [Egyptian] portfolio developed because she was originally just connected to killing people a lot but blood is the same color as wine so she became associated with that, and wine was a good thing so she gradually took on more positive aspects. Apollo's portfolio included dreams because he was a god of medicine and dreams were perceived as having healing power.

Thor [Norse] almost certainly began as a thunder divinity. From here the reasons for his association with storms and strength are obvious, but why the oak tree? Apparently already part of the package before Thor himself was developed (the oak tree is sacred to many a thunder divinity), it was likely included because it was seen to be the tree that was most likely to both be hit by lightning and to survive a lightning strike. The association with storms may have led to fertility being included in his portfolio via the rain that they brought, and this may have then led to an association with healing. Alternately, fertility and healing both may have come from his role as a protector of humanity because of our dependence on the harvest for our survival. Either way, all of this also led to the protection of "men's habitation and possessions" and association "with well-being of the family and community."

Tlaloc [Aztec] was first associated with "the earth and ground water" such as springs and then eventually developed into a "mountaintop rain god." As rain divinities are wont to do, he then became associated with the storms that brought the rain, and as a god of the earth caves became very important to him. His nature as a chthonic god was strengthened by the Mesoamerican association between water (especially cenotes) and the underworld. As a rain divinity he also became known as a fertility divinity.

Utu [Sumerian] was first a solar divinity who became associated with justice and then law in general as he brought "wrong and injustice to light." As one who was eventually seen as casting away demons as the sun casts away the night he was called upon to heal the ill, making him a health divinity. He arose from a mountain in the east with the dawn and descended into a mountain in the west with dusk, and he became associated with the dead because of his nightly trips through the underworld. It was eventually believed that he decided their fates during this time just as he decided the fates of the living according to their living of the law.

Appendix B: Epithets and Fusions

Epithets are basically additions to a divinity's name. They can be seen as titles or as a component of the divinity's full name. They generally serve to inform about a particular characteristic of the divinity. As a literary device epithets helped one to arrange the rhythm and spacing of the line (most ancient literature was either poetry or at least poetic in essence). For ritualistic purposes the epithet could act to delimit the divinity or shape it.

Either because divinities suffered from multiple personhood or were a little dense, it was often believed that one needed to address the divinity with the relevant epithet in order to invoke its power in the desired manner. Calling after the aid of Zeus Brontios would more likely get you storms than anything else, which would be next to useless if what you really wanted was for Zeus to punish someone for breaking the rules of hospitality. You should have called upon Zeus Hospites if that were the case. And not including an epithet at all could lead to just about any possible reaction from the divinity.

Epithets could serve to shed a great amount of light on a divinity, and those with multiple distinct roles had to be approached with even greater care and attention to their epithets. Persephone could be approached by such titles as epithets when the focus was on her role as a vegetation divinity. As a chthonic death divinity, though, she was Persephone Aristi chthonia or Persephone Hagne, among others, and she could be approached as Persephone Despoina or Persephone Melindia in order to invoke her influence with her husband, Hades.

Epithets often reflected a fusion with other divinities (as seen in the aforementioned epithet Despoina). One of the most prominent sets of examples is seen in Ra, who was Amun-Ra after the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt and Sobek-Ra in the last dynasties, to name the first and last fusions in his long career.

Appendix C: Meta-Theory

Mythologies exist. That's clear enough. How and why they develop how they do isn't so clear-cut, however, and there have been many explanations given of the origin of religion and the process of its development. Their facticity is not of the utmost importance in most worldbuilding exercises; unless the theory is explained outright, more often than not even an incomplete theory's falsity will go unnoticed.

What will be noticed, though, is that a series of religions developed according to a particular theory, whether wrong or right, will display a unity that adds verisimilitude to the setting.

Pay especially close attention to CULTURAL UNIVERSALS and LINGUISTIC UNIVERSALS. While any human culture should have these in one way or another (especially the former group), playing around with the groups is a good way to create a peculiar nonhuman culture (or even a very, very strange human culture). Many of these are so ingrained that we generally notice them only by their absence.

Apollonian and Dionysian is a dichotomy that draws on themes in Greek mythology to explain two perceived kinds of cultures. Apollonian cultures are characterized as being some or all of the following: accepting of homosexuality and celibacy, creative, focused on visual arts, logical, masculine, modest, obsessed with appearances, ordered, rational, reasonable, and restrained; and make distinctions between individuals. Dionysian cultures, on the other hand, are characterized as being some or all of the following: chaotic, destructive emotional, excessive, feminine, instinctual, intoxicated, intuitive, irrational, life-affirming, ostentatious, unrestrained, and wild; and break down the barriers between individuals so that "beings submerge themselves in one whole." Camille Paglia suggested that "Dionysian" be replaced with "Cthonic" in order to emphasize that the culture is more than hedonistic, and argues that the dichotomy is rooted in the opposition between "the higher cortex [Apollonian] and the older

limbic and reptilian brains [Dionysian]."¹ While not its first proponent, Nietzsche is likely its most famous, and he elaborated greatly on the concept. Examples of Apollonian versus Dionysian cultures are the Zuni versus the Kwakiutl.

Buddhist diffusionism is a theory by Mackenzie that explains the existence of the swastika in places as far as Britain and Scandinavia as being due to the presence of traveling Buddhists.

Cosmographic mythology is a theory by Santillana that myths were created to encode astronomical truths.

Cthonic-Maternal is Johann Jakob Bachofen's theorized second stage of the development of religion. It was exhibited by a matriarchal agricultural civilization in the Neolithic and was characterized by lunar worship. This stage was preceded by HETAERISM and followed by DIONYSIAN and then APOLLONIAN stages.

Cultural universals (*anthropological universals, human universals*) are elements of culture that may be found in all human cultures.² They are judged to have a biological basis. They include: aesthetics; affection felt and expressed; age grades, statuses, and terms; attachment; attempts to predict the future, sustain life, and win love; baby talk; beliefs about death, disease, and mis/fortune; biophilia; body adornment; childbirth customs; childcare; childhood fears, including of loud noises and strangers; cleanliness training and hygiene; coalitions; collective decision making; collective identities; community organization; concept of family or household and other kin groups; concept of normal and abnormal states; concept of personhood; concept of precedence and causality; concepts of right/good/true and wrong/bad/false; concept of rights and obligations that are held by members of the group and a means of distinguishing in-group from out-group; concept of time, including calendars and other means of timekeeping; connection recognized between sickness and death; control of fire (but not

¹ Paglia, Camille. *Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nerfertiti to Emily Dickinson*. New York: Vintage Books, 1990.

² When you're designing a nonhuman culture, removing a few cultural universals can serve to make it subtly alien (or not so subtly, depending on what you are removing).

necessarily fire-making); cooking; copulation normally conducted in privacy; cooperative labor; cosmology; counting; courtship; daily routines; death rituals, including mourning; decorative art; de facto oligarchies; distinctions between actions made and not made under self-control; diurnality; division of labor, especially by age or sex; dominance and submission; dream interpretation; education, which includes toilet training; envy and symbolic means of dealing with envy; ethics; ethnocentrism; etiquette; feasting; food taboos; gender roles³; gestures and facial expressions; gift-giving, admiration of generosity, and disapproval of stinginess; giving of directions; gossip; greetings; hairstyles; healing practices; hospitality; incest, especially between mother and son, tabooed in most or all cases; inheritance rules; joking; leaders; males on average travel greater distances over their lifetimes, engage in more coalitional violence, and are more prone to theft and lethal violence; mealtimes; mediation to deal with conflict; moral sentiment; music, melody, rhythm, song, and dance, and distinction between most music and music for children (especially lullabies); narratives; nepotism; peer groups not based on family; perception of music as art; personal names; personal names; personal property rights⁴; planning, including for the future; play, including games of pretend, playthings, and to improve skill; poetry, including pauses, repetition, and variation; prestige from proficient use of language; prestige inequalities; proscription of violence in at least some cases; promises and oaths; proverbs and sayings; puberty customs; psychological defense mechanisms; reciprocity; revenge; resistance to abuse of power; right hand is preferred by culture if handedness preference exists; risk-taking; **RITES OF PASSAGE**; sanctions and redress of wrongs, including temporary or permanent banishment; shame; shelter; soul concepts; statuses and roles, which are distinguished from individuals and can be based on concepts other than age, kinship, and sex; succession; surgery; techniques and/or substances to alter consciousness/mood; territoriality; thumb-sucking; tool making, including containers, cutters, levers, pounders, tying material, twining, and weapons (especially spears); triangular awareness (the assessment of

relationships among the self and two other people); trade; turn-taking; wariness (if not fear) around snakes; and weaning. See LINGUISTIC UNIVERSAL.

Disease of language is the idea proposed by Müller that the earliest languages couldn't support references to natural and abstract phenomena except as conscious beings. While these references may have been understood as figurative by the people that first made them, they were eventually taken to be literal fact.

Dionysian. See APOLLONIAN AND DIONYSIAN.

Eternal return refers to the suggestion by Mircea Eliade that rituals—and even storytelling could be ritualistic—served as a means of symbolically returning from historical (or profane) time to the golden age and the beginning of time. In a sense, this mythical age is a conceptual true north, and through this process power is gained and one is oriented with respect to the rest of the universe. Far from stifling humans this empowers them by allowing them to self-identify with the process of creation: the founding of a city far from home is nothing more than another instance of the act of creation that the gods performed when they organized the universe from chaos. When the people are oppressed, they may throw themselves into sacred time and recall the martyrdoms of past generations or identify with the DYING-AND-RISING DIVINITY. In other words, these things become bearable, even glorifying, because through eternal return they acquire a “metahistorical meaning.” Notable examples are found in New Year festivals, in the Dreamtime of the native Australian people (especially the Karadjeri tribe), in the Passover dinner, and even in Christianity, where sacraments or ordinances such as baptism and communion serve to bring up a remembrance of Christ and take part in His life. See SACRED AND PROFANE.

Euhemerism is the idea that mythology was derived from authentic history as though the retelling of the latter was a generations-long game of Telephone. Sometimes there was little

³ This is not to say that there are only two genders or that any given is necessarily sex-specific.

⁴ In its most basic form this would be “that which is useful to me and only to me,” such as a person's glasses or a memento.

corruption to the idea. Other times (to apply the idea to one suggested example) the inventor of sails was turned into Aeolus, the ruler of the winds. This idea is named after Euhemerus, who lived in the Fourth Century BC.

Geom mythology claims that past geological events were sometimes fossilized in mythology and can be studied through this lens either to support traditional methods of research or in place of them where they are impossible.

Hetaerism is Johann Jakob Bachofen's theorized first stage of the development of religion. It was exhibited by hunter-gatherers in the Paleolithic and characterized by polyamory and communism. It was followed by the CTHONIC-MATERNAL stage.

Homo Necans refers to the idea by Walter Burkert that "lack of predator instinct [in Paleolithic humans] was made up for by turning patterns of intra-species aggression against the prey." In other words, humans anthropomorphized animals in order to make them equals against whom they could wage war. This necessary change in outlook, it is argued, set the stage for the development of religion through a broadening of anthropomorphization and ANIMISM past that which had been applied specifically to prey species.

Hunting magic is a term that refers to "magic associated with hunting in hunter-gatherer cultures." Walter Burkert theorized that the rituals of hunting magic were the foundation of all religion. Henri Breuil and Leo Frobenius explained Paleolithic cave paintings as examples of hunting magic. According to one theory shamans would "retreat into the darkness of the caves, enter into a trance state and then paint images of their visions, perhaps with some notion of drawing power out of the cave walls themselves." The paintings were a sort of pre-enactment or spiritual dress rehearsal of the hunt before the hunters actually went out, and

could act "as a consecration of the animal to be killed."

Indigenous religions are defined by Fiona Bowie as lacking written or formal scriptures and creeds, being "thisworldly," being confined to a single language or ethnic group, and making religious and social life inseparable. Contrast with WORLD RELIGION.

Interpretatio graeca was the process of syncretization of Greek and other mythologies. The idea, which was applied by others both earlier and later in history, was that everybody was worshiping the same gods, just under different names and sometimes misunderstanding this or that little detail, so if you looked really hard then you could figure out which god was which and everybody could just be cool with each other.

Linguistic universals are characteristics found in all naturally-occurring languages. Constructed languages do not necessarily possess them, though this often makes them difficult to use in one manner or another. They include: abstraction in speech and thought; anthropomorphization; antonyms, metonyms, and synonyms; classification of age, behavior, body parts, colors, fauna, flora, inner states, kin, sex, space, tools, and weather conditions; insults; inverse ratio in words between frequency of use and length; logical notions of "and," "equivalent," "general/particular," "not," "opposite," "part/whole," and "same"; metaphors and other figurative speech; multiple meanings in some words; possessives, both loose and intimate; pronouns; a range of ten to seventy phonemes in common use; redundancy; rules of phonemic change; semantic categories of affecting things and people, dimension, giving, location, and motion; special speech for special occasions; tabooed utterances; translatability; units of time; use in manipulating, misinforming, and misleading others; verbs; and words for "black," "face," "hand," and "white."⁵

⁵ According to Berlin and Kay, development of color terminology proceeds in the following fashion: Some languages have words only for black and white (or, more accurately, dark/cold and light/warm), those languages with three color terms always add red next. The fourth word covers either green or yellow, and the fifth covers the other option. Blue is the sixth word to develop,

followed by brown, and then (in any order) orange, pink, purple, and gray. A word for light blue is the last to appear (you will notice that English does not have a simple term for light blue that is used more often than "light blue" itself). Languages do not have more than twelve general/simple color terms (to contrast with more specific, usually technical terms that are rarely used

Metanarrative is the “grand narrative common to all.” The basic, recurring concepts in mythology are a part of metanarrative but not the whole of it. A **WORLDVIEW** limits not only our ability to perceive metanarrative but also our ability to convey our personal understandings of it and understand others’ explanations of their understandings. This requires us, if we wish to perceive and interact with the whole of it, to do so as part of a collective effort including many others.

The Myth and Ritual School (*Cambridge Ritualists*) was a group of scholars who interpreted myth as arising from ritual. They claimed that rituals were performed for reasons unrelated to myth (e.g. mourning practices on behalf of the death of local vegetation in autumn and winter), but as these reasons were forgotten myths were developed in order to explain them. Related was the idea that early humans had developed a sort of system of “magical scientific laws” based on their (often faulty, for reasons of insufficient information) understanding of cause and effect in different situations. As the rituals which were intended to exploit this perceived relationship were understood to be ineffective much of the time, new explanations were given to justify continuing them (and before you laugh, think about how many justifications you try to give someone before you’ll finally admit to being wrong). Among other things they pointed to how constant rituals remained from generation to generation (and even from culture to culture) as opposed to how fluid mythology could be. The idea is called “Primacy of Ritual.”

Numinous-centered theory is a theory of religion that focuses on what Rudolf Otto described as moments of the numinous or “Wholly Other.”⁶ These moments could be divided into the *mysteria fascinans* and the *mysteria tremendum* (“awe inspiring, fascinating mysteries” and “terrifying mysteries”). These were experiences that transcended the standard human reality or frame of reference and excited feelings that fell into either category. Religion, Otto believed, arose and arises out of attempts to engage with and understand them.

in day-to-day life, like “vermillion”). See **CARDINAL DIRECTIONS AND COLORS**.

Organized religion may have allowed the rise of civilization by providing a justification (other than force) for central authority among multiple tribes and, more importantly, by providing bonds that could connect groups that lacked kin relationships. “Virtually all state societies and chiefdoms from around the world have been found to justify political power through divine authority,” which “suggests that political authority co-opts collective belief to bolster itself.”

Pandemonium is the word that Jaan Puhvul used “for the mutual demonization that occurred when the Younger-Avesta demonized the daevas, and the post-Rigvedic texts demonized the asuras.” In the earliest known versions of either text they are, at best, “misguised” but still gods rather than demons.

Primacy of myth is the idea that religion from born from the need for humans to answer fundamental questions about their world. As answers were conceived they became systematized, and because any possible answer could potentially be better than no answer at all, even a very faulty system that proposed only a few correct actions would lead to better results than having no answers and being able to take no action. King argued that it was born out of a need for complex emotional interactions that at first was satisfied by human relationships but grew and eventually outpaced the development of civilization. This required the creation of divinities with which there could be more complex interactions and to whom there could be felt a yet more powerful sense of belonging than had been possible before.

Rational choice theory holds that there are four processes or “models” through which cults may form. In the *Psychopathological Model*, “religions are founded during a period of severe stress in the life of the founder.” The religion is both the process and the result of a peculiar kind of self-therapy. Buddhism could easily be identified as an example of this model. In the *Entrepreneurial Model*, the founder has been involved with multiple religious groups before ideas are taken from these and possibly other religions and put together into something new. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) has the characteristics of

⁶ Totally coincidentally, this rhymes with “Holy Other,” which would seem to also be appropriate.

this model, as seen in Joseph Smith's propensity to eclecticism—there was a place in his doctrine for everything from the differences between German and English translations of the Bible, to the Kabbalah, to then-modern science. In the *Social Model*, religions develop as its founding members begin to spend less and less time with outsiders, and a theological and ritual system develops out of the culture as a gestalt product. The Seventh-Day Adventists and the Druze are examples of this model.⁷ In the *Revelatory Model*, the founder develops the religion as a means of working out some set of natural phenomena through a supernatural lens. This may be anything from an extreme supernatural experience to a natural disaster, and usually augments one of the previous three models. Indeed, it was not even recognized as a separate model at first. Although religions generally adhere more closely to one model or another, this does not mean that a religion will fit exclusively into one model. For example, while most aspects of the LDS Church belong to the Entrepreneurial Model, it nonetheless also has elements of the Social and Revelatory Models and even the Psychopathological Model.

Sacred and profane is a dichotomy by which, according to Mircea Eliade, ancient humans divided and categorized all things. The Sacred included divinities and any other thing that had in some way taken part in the creation of the world. Things only “acquire their reality, their identity,” in relation to the Sacred. To whatever extent a thing does not conform to the patterns and “ideal models” of the Sacred, it is profane and valueless. The power of a thing rests in its origins, which means that “knowing the origin of an object, an animal, a plant, and so on is equivalent to acquiring a magical power over them.” If origin and power are conflated then the ultimate power lies in the ultimate origin, or not just the origin of that object but of its very class (e.g. the creation of humanity rather than the birth of a single human). Furthermore, if power and value are the same then the ultimate value (indeed, the only value worth

comparing to any other) similarly lies in the first origins of things.

Self-centered world (*umwelt*) is a term devised by Jakob von Uexküll and Thomas Sebeok to refer to the “biological foundations that lie at the very epicenter of the study of both communication and significance in the human [and non-human] animal.” Both biology and environment contribute to one's self-centered world, so that two beings of the same species in different environments (which can be mental or social just as easily as physical) will have different **WORLDVIEWS**, just as members of two different species in the same environment would not share the exact same worldview.

Symbolic boundaries are the “conceptual distinctions made by social actors...that separate people into groups and generate feelings of similarity and group membership.” For clarity, the symbolic boundaries themselves do not divide people into groups, but the sharing of symbolic boundaries. See **SACRED AND PROFANE** for a prominent example.

The **trifunctional hypothesis** was proposed by Georges Dumézil. It proposes that the Proto-Indo-European culture was divided into three castes—“priests, warriors, and commoners (farmers or tradesmen).” These three castes corresponded to the three functions of the sacral, the martial, and the economic, respectively.” The sacral function also integrated the ruling class. Each group had its own gods or families of gods. The idea is still going strong, having been neither widely accepted nor wholly disproven.

Urmonotheismus is the school of thought that the oldest religious systems were monotheistic. One of the theories in this school is that religion was originally both monotheistic and shamanism and then developed into a **DUOTHEISM** with an **EARTH MOTHER** and **SKY FATHER**. **ANCESTOR WORSHIP** and **SOLAR DIVINITIES** are thought to have followed (in either order or at roughly the

⁷ While there were many influential guiding figures in the early development of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church (most especially James White, Ellen G. White, Joseph Bates, and J. N. Andrews), it is impossible to point to any single founder. William Miller may have set

the stage for the Church's development in the fertile soil of Millerism (which provided the necessary environmental conditions for the Social Model to engage), but he no more founded the Seventh-Day Adventist Church than Jesus Christ did.

same time), with other divinities entering the scene thereafter.

World religions are defined by Fiona Bowie as being based on written scriptures, having a notion of salvation (often from outside the PHENOMENAL

WORLD), being universal or potentially universal, being able to subsume or supplant “primal” religions, and often forming a separate sphere of activity. Contrast with INDIGENOUS RELIGIONS, which these typically replace or subsume.

Appendix D: Story-Starting Phrases

There are more ways to begin a story than with “Once upon a time,” and the formula is usually tied to language more than culture (where there’s an appreciable difference). The following is a list of story-starting and story-ending phrases from around the world, organized by language. Words in parentheses do not appear in all languages but are there in order to make the list more compact and more readily show similarities between story-starting phrases.

Beginnings

“(A long, long time ago) Beyond seven mountains, beyond seven forests/rivers...” Polish.

“(A) (very, very) (long) long time ago...” Assamese, Chinese, Indonesian, Korean, Kyrgyz, Qiang, Russian, Slovene, Swahili, Vietnamese, Welsh.

“(In some kingdom, in some land) There was, there lived...” Russian. “(Long ago) long ago (at a place)...” Japanese, Malayalam.

“(There was) Once upon a time...” Basque, Bulgarian. “A long back...” Gujarati.

“A long time ago, there existed...” Shona.

“A long, long, long time ago it was, and there was a king in Galway...” Irish. “At a time long ago...” Tamil.

“At that time, once...” Latin.

“At the beginning of time...” Filipino.

“Back in the days when it was still of help to wish for a thing...” German. “Back in the old time...” Tagalog.

“Behind seven lands and seas there lived a...” Estonian.

“I remember something that our father told me and that is this...” Iraqw. “I’ve told you what’s coming.” Arabic (Algerian), Arabic (Moroccan).

“In a very old time...” Marathi. “In olden days...” Maragoli. “In one era...” Gujarati, Hindi.

“In some country, there was...” Bengali. “In the ancient time...” Sanskrit..

“It’s (or “This is”) an old story...” Gujarati, Hindi.

“Once a long time ago...” Amharic, Danish, Icelandic, Serbian. “Once and a time...” Greek (Modern).

“Once in a country...” Nepali.

“Once long ago in times long gone...” Latvian. “Once there lived a king...” Bengali.

“Once there was, (where there wasn’t, there was a)...” Albanian, Dutch, Esperanto, Faroese,

Finnish, French, German, Hebrew, Hungarian, Icelandic, Luxembourgish, Swedish.

“Once there was, and one there wasn’t. In the long-distant days of yore, when haystacks winnowed sieves, when genies played jeered in the old bathhouse, when fleas were barbers, when camels were town criers, and when I softly rocked my baby grandmother to sleep in her creaking cradle, there was, in an exotic land, far, far away...” Turkish.

“Once upon a day...” Telugu.

“Once upon a time (there was)...” English, Malay, Maltese, Slovene, Urdu. “Once upon a time, there was a truly great friendship...” Koti.

“Once upon the time (“long ago” or “at any time”) (there was)...” Lithuanian, Macedonian, Sanskrit, Thai.

“Once, in the long past age...” Kannada.

“Once, long ago...” Swedish..

“One day, a long time ago...” Afrikaans. “One day, one time...” Persian.

“There once lived a...” Estonian.

“There once was (as never before)...” Romanian.

“There once was one...” Serbian.

“There was a time...” Catalan.

“There was once (a)...” Croatian, Czech, Danish, Italian, Norwegian, Occitan, Portuguese, Spanish.

“There was one time...” French, Occitan.

“There was one, there wasn’t one, there was no one beside the Lord...” Persian. “There was this work that...” Pashto.

“There was, (and) there was not, (there was)...” Armenian, Azeri, Czech, German.

“There was, oh what there was, in the oldest of days and ages and times...” Arabic (Classical). “Time was time...” Catalan.

“Where it was, there it was...” Slovak.

Endings

“(And) they lived happily until they died.” Czech, Hungarian.

“A bell rang and the tale comes to its end.” Czech.

“A cat in the bog put up his tail and there ends the fairytale.” Icelandic.

“And (then) they lived happily (for) all their days.” Faroese, Swedish.

“And for three days they ate, drank, and had fun.” Bulgarian.

“And I was there, and drank mead and wine.” Polish.

“And I was there, drank some mead ale, dribbled through my beard, had not in my mouth.” Lithuanian.

“And if they have not died yet, they still live there today.” Czech.

“And if they haven’t died (yet), they are still living today.” German, Lithuanian.

“And if they’re not dead, they still live (happily).” Danish, Estonian, Norwegian.

“And it was or it was not, come in inside the pumpkin and come out in the square of (town’s name)...” Basque.

“And red, redder, this tale has ended.”

“And then came a pig with a long snout, and the story is out/over.” Dutch.

“And then came an elephant with a long snout, and blew the story out.” Dutch.

“And then they lived happily for the remainder of their days.” Norwegian.

“And they (all/both) lived happily until the end of their days/lives.” Croatian, Danish, Estonian, Finnish, Icelandic, Slovene.

“And they lived (“happy and content” or “long and happily”).” Italian, Russian.

“And they lived (long and) happily (until the end of time).” French. Polish.

“And they lived a happy life.” Chinese.

“And they lived happily (and contentedly) (“ever after” or “forever” or “until old age” or “until the end of their days”).” Bulgarian, English, German, Indonesian, Marathi, Maltese, Portuguese,

Romanian, Tagalog, Thai, Vietnamese.

“And they lived happily and had many children.” French.

“And they lived happily for the rest of their days.” Serbian.

“And they lived happily, until they died.” Slovak.

“And they lived happy (“forever” or “and ate partridges”).” Albanian, Spanish.

“And they lived in happiness and luxury to this very day.” Hebrew.

“And they lived long and happily.” Dutch, Serbian
“And they lived well, and we lived better.” Greek (Modern).

“Cat out in the swamp, lifted its tail, the adventure is finished.” Icelandic.

“Disaster here, feast there... bran here, flour there...” Georgian.

“Here’s a cat, here’s a dog, this tale has already melted. And here’s a cat, here’s a dog, this tale has already finished.” Catalan.

“Lastly, three apples fell from the sky: One for our story’s heroes, one for the person who told their tale, and one for those who listened and promise to share. And with that, they all achieved their hearts’ desires. Let us now step up and settle into their thrones.” Turkish.

“My story ends and the spinach is eaten by the goat.” Bengali.

“My tale has finished, (it) has returned to go (and) come home.” Goemai.

“Return my story and feed me bread.” Amharic.

“Snip, snap, snute/stout, (“then the story was out” or “then this adventure is finished).” Faroese, Norwegian, Swedish.

“So blissful.” Japanese.

“Tale told, tale finished.” Catalan.

“That’s the length of it.” Finnish.

“The tale has been finished, but the crow has not yet arrived at his house.” Persian.

“This book has come to end but there is still story to be told.” Persian.

“This is the end; run away with it.” Hungarian.

“Three apples fall from the sky/heaven: one for the writer, one for the storyteller, one for the listener...” Armenian.

“Whistle, whistle, the story is done.” Afrikaans.

Selected Sources and Recommendations

Only sources that are not behind paywalls are given below. A complete list would not only be very long, but also very useless to anyone who doesn't have access. I would have had to spend \$29 for a two-and-a-half-page article if I hadn't already had access to it, and some of the articles can't be purchased individually at all.

Sources that can be found online are accompanied by both a tinyurl and the full URL, since (1) some people have concerns about blindly following hidden URLs and (2) it's always possible that TinyURL might stop working for a bit. Alternatively, you can use GetLinkInfo.com or CheckShortURL.com to verify the link.

“Animism? Revisited: Personhood, Environment, and Relational Epistemology,” by Nurit Bird-David. Everything you would ever want to know about animism, complete with an overview of different perspectives on animism over the years.

Short URL: tinyurl.com/animismrevisited

Full: lhc.ucsd.edu/mca/Mail/xmcamail.2012_08.dir/pdfFNa83UDbvD.pdf

Comparative Mythology is an international, open-access journal for comparative mythology. It is published by the International Association for Comparative Mythology. The journal is young (first published in 2015), but the IACM has been holding annual conferences since 2006. I'm confident in their ability to keep the journal going in the long term.

Short URL: tinyurl.com/comymjournal

Full: compmymth.org/journal/index.php/cm

“The Cosmic Hunt: Variants of a Siberian-North-American Myth,” by Yuri Berezkin. An overview of the “Cosmic Hunt” mytheme, in which certain celestial bodies or groups of them are participants (pursuers and pursued) in a hunt.

Short URL: tinyurl.com/berezkin

Full: folklore.ce/folklore/vol31/berezkin.pdf

“Human Sacrifice in Ancient Greece,” by Dennis D. Hughes. Organizes relevant evidence (e.g. archaeological, mythological) for or against the existence of human sacrifice in Ancient Greece. Hughes is reluctant to offer a firm conclusion

(despite having opinions), and views the work as a compilation of the present evidence more than a study of it.

Short URL: tinyurl.com/ddhughes

Full: [academia.edu/7705209/D. D. Hughes Human Sacrifice in Ancient Greece London 1991](http://academia.edu/7705209/D._D._Hughes_Human_Sacrifice_in_Ancient_Greece_London_1991)

Motif-Index of Folk-Literature, by Stith Thompson. A massive, massive collection of motifs collected from folklore and organized straightforwardly, branching off into finer and finer subdivisions. On the other hand, while it gets down to minute details, it misses the forest for the trees, so to speak, and the reader might have to spend a lot of time to make any kind of generalization. A given entry will look like this: “G91.1.1 *Man forced to eat dead father's heart struck dumb*. Irish Myth: Cross.” It isn't exhaustive, either, and there's certainly been a lot of further work done since its publishing date of 1932. Don't take any of that to mean that this resource is useless, though.

Short URL: tinyurl.com/motifindex

Full: ruthenia.ru/folklore/thompson

“The Oxford Solar Myth: A Contribution to Comparative Mythology,” by Abrahm Smythe Palmer. There is in comparative mythology (or indeed in comparative anything) a danger of going too far, drawing connections between things that are unconnected, and in general seeing faces in the clouds. Max Müller, despite his legitimate contributions to the field, did go too far on occasion, and “The Oxford Solar Myth” is an argumentum ad absurdum that demonstrates how, by the same logic that Müller used to “uncover” the truth behind certain old myths, the life story of Müller himself was really just the myth of a solar god. It's a good argument in favor of caution when you're engaging in comparative mythology (hopefully I have listened to it well enough in the writing of this book).

Short URL: tinyurl.com/oxfordsolar

Full: scholarworks.ie.edu/dspace/bitstream/handle/2022/1247/6%282/%29%2068-74.pdf

“Proto-Oceanic *mana Revisited,” by Robert Blust. On the history of the word and concept of “mana” in Oceanic cultures.

Short URL: tinyurl.com/pomana

Full: muse.jhu.edu/article/228918

StorySearch is a searchable database of entries from Stith Thompson's Motif Index of Folklore and Literature. Its flaws are the same as belong to the Motif-Index.

Short URL: tinyurl.com/storyseeds

Full: storyseeds.org/storysearch

"The Theft of Fire: Prometheus and Loki," by Timothy J. Stephany. A comparison of Loki and Prometheus. Be careful about taking it at face value, though, because one of its basic premises is that Loki is a god of fire (he isn't).

Short URL: tinyurl.com/lokitheus

Full: [timothystephany.com/papers/Article14-Theft Fire.pdf](http://timothystephany.com/papers/Article14-Theft%20Fire.pdf)

"The Twin Motif in Comparative Mythology," by Brian Clark. A twelve-page overview of the divine twins mytheme.

Short URL: tinyurl.com/twinmotif

Full: astrosynthesis.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/The_Twin_Motif.pdf

"Yahweh's Conflict with the Leviathan and the Sea," by Cory Baugher. Discusses motifs of Leviathan and water in the Tanakh in the context of a cosmogonical creation.

Short URL: tinyurl.com/YHWHsea

Full: knowingthebible.net/Yahweh-the-leviathan-and-sea

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