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Brother G's Cyclopedia Of Comparative Mythology

380+ building blocks for the aspiring mythopoet



DEDICATED

To Messrs. Mircea Eliade and Hugh Nibley,
who introduced a young boy 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

What is this? Why is it here? Where is it going?

Why, for the sake of all that's holy, do I think that you care about yet another book on mythology? Surely, you must be thinking to yourself, you have no need for one (even if it is free). You have three already. Maybe even more!

Here's the difference: Those books that you have will tell you who Hades was. Maybe it'll be incredibly in-depth and inform you of every variation of every myth that ever featured him. You'll know a lot about Hades after you read that incredibly thorough book. And after you read the entries on a dozen or so other 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 a number of examples.

This is a book written with worldbuilders in mind. I'm sure that other people can use it. I hope that other people can use it. But its primary purpose is to aid worldbuilders. 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 don't know the building blocks, though, then you can't make any decisions at all. You're locked into repeating the same patterns without realizing it, and any innovation that you make will be accidental.

This book is meant to facilitate a kind of freedom, then. I don't know how much you know already, but I'm sure that there's something in here that will make the book worth reading.

The main body of the text, entitled *From Acosmism to the Year King*, is basically what I've just told you about. It talks about EMERGENCE MYTHS. It talks about WORLD TREES. It talks about BEAR WORSHIP. CAPS AND CLOAKS OF INVISIBILITY, and TABOOS AGAINST NAMING THE DEAD. There are five appendices attached to this book, though, and so long as you're still reading I may as well give you the rundown so that you know what to expect from it.

Appendix A: Examples of divinities with portfolios that you might not expect them to have but in hindsight seem completely reasonable, and why you should go consider doing the same in your constructed mythologies.

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

Appendix C: If the main entry concerns itself 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 good when you want something fairy tale-ish to open your story with (or close it) but are tired of the two that I just mentioned.

Appendix E: Random tables for building new gods. If nothing else, it can be a fun exercise in figuring out how to justify random portfolios and that kind of thing. The tables come from Rolang's Creeping Doom at rolang.com. They have been licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

I must admit, with regret, that I cannot consider this to be a finished project. There's so much more that I could add. Why, if I took just one more month, I'm sure that I could add many more entries and flesh out the others that much more. But if I took one more month, then I'd take another, and another. *It would never end, my friends.*

This is a perpetual work in progress. It will never end. This is something that I've just had to resign myself to. But as I continue to add to it, in-between other projects, I'll make What I've Got So Far available to you. If you have any thoughts at all, any comments, any suggestions, then please, let me know. This is for you. Whether you have something to say about this book or absolutely anything else at all, you can reach me at callmebrotherg@gmail.com.

For free fiction, story ideas, and other assorted things, go to whitemarbleblock.blogspot.com. I also manage a twitter account at twitter.com/The_Idea_Bank, again for the purpose of throwing out ideas for stories like confetti and sprinkles at your birthday party. It updates 1-3 times every day.

From Acosmism to the Year-King

Acosmism is a school of thought that “denies the reality of the universe, seeing it as ultimately illusory.” This philosophy is most prevalent in Eastern religions but is also found in Christian Science.

Alatry is a religious 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 that are foreign to one’s own land.”

Ancestor veneration (*ancestor reverence, ancestor worship*) is the propitiation of one’s ancestors in order to receive their aid or avert their cursing. It serves to enforce kinship values. The ancestors may be approached because, as former humans, they understand their descendants better than would other divinities (especially useful if most other divinities are TRICKSTER DIVINITIES). They generally have some kind of existence which can be made better or worse according to the actions of people in the phenomenal world, just as the interference of the ancestors can make life in the phenomenal world more or less difficult. 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 putting the saints in a position as (adopted) ancestors to all humankind. Despite the common term “ancestor worship” few, if any, religions that practice this believe that their ancestors have or ever will become gods. Examples include traditional Chinese religion, the Igbo, 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 individuals of the species. *Hunting cults* ritually kill 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 the whole species, out of fear of retribution. *Embodiment cults* believe that the species houses virtuous human souls and treat the animals accordingly. *Ominous cults* view the animal as an omen and may eventually develop it into a particular divinity. *Magical cults* associate the animals with some kind of magic, possibly as a source for ritual ingredients, and may eventually elevate them to the status of divinities (either all of them or through a personification). See BEARS; BIRDS; DONKEY WORSHIP; ELEPHANTS; HORSE WORSHIP; SACRED BULLS

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” and which is “found within any of these objects [people, animals, plants, and inanimate objects] that confer power, strength, and success. 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.” See ANIMATISM.

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

Apatheism is the belief that a/theism question is irrelevant and that their behavior would not change even if the question were proved one way or another.

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

The **Apollo (archetype)** is a Jungian archetype. It “is drawn to master a skill, values order and harmony, and prefers to look at the surface, as opposed to beneath appearances,” and “favors thinking over feeling, distance over closeness, [and] objective assessment over subjective intuition.” Its positive aspects are “order, reason, moderation, harmoniousness, and unemotional perfection.” It “presents a pattern that is disastrous, destructive for psychological life, cut off from everything that has to do with feminine ways, [...] whomever he touches goes wrong.”

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) all might be used. “Apotropaic wands” were especially associated with expectant mothers, birth, children, and other things associated with children, and were usually used to draw a circle around that which was intended to be the focus of the protection. It is often difficult to tell the difference between purely apotropaic magic and magic intended to attract good luck rather than repel its opposite. Examples include offerings to the chthonic Averting Gods (Greek) and rituals to Taweret and Bes (Egyptian).

The **Artist-Scientist** is a Jungian archetype. It fills the roles of builder, dreamer, inventor, seeker, and thinker. It is distracted by its own thoughts. It is “simultaneously vastly knowledgeable and yet innocent, impulsive yet cautious.” It represents both the positive and the negative aspects of unrestrained curiosity. It is both creator and discoverer. Rather than a fount of information it is a source of change. It “references the frequent futility of attempting to control one’s fate” but also “the futility of trying to stop a dreamer from changing the world.” In that respect the Artist-Scientist might be regarded as capable of changing everything except for itself.

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

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 atheist with regard to Odin and Zeus). While it’s getting rarer, there still persists the misconception that atheism is a recent 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. Atheism was a capital crime in Athens.

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

³ Evil spirits are 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. Though magpies were actually *anti*-apotropaic in the British Islands, so somebody’s got the wrong idea about them, whoever it is.

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

Autotheism is the “worship of oneself” or the “belief that one is a deity” or the “belief that one is possessed by a greater power.” See **SUITHEISM**.

Axes mundi (*cosmic axes, world axes, 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 meet.” 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, and vines. Homes can serve as personal axes mundi or extensions of the common one, as illustrated by the practice of feng shui in China and the importance of the tent-pole in nomadic cultures. They are “the place that is sacred above all” and represent the place that is “known and settled,” the organized universe in microcosm in contrast to the **CHAOTIC MATTER** 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 axis mundi concept is viewed as a primarily feminine one. Because the term brings together a number of concepts, a culture may have several axes mundi. See **COSMIC SUPPORT**; **GARDEN OF THE GODS**; **WORLD’S NAVEL**; **WORLD TREE**.

Badges of shame (*marks of shame, symbols of shame, stigmas*) are visible symbols that are worn in order to display the bearer’s status as being an outcast in some way. In mythology and religious contexts examples include male circumcision in some cultures, Indra’s one thousand eyes (Hindu), and the Mark of Cain (Biblical).

Battles against titans (*titanomachies, theogonies*) are myths that tell of a conflict between the ruling divinities and the **PROTO-DIVINITIES** that preceded them and held power until losing the conflict. They are often part of the culture’s **CREATION MYTH**. They may represent the conquering of the land’s **PREDECESSOR PEOPLE** and their gods. Examples 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.

Bear worship (*arctolatry*) may predate anatomically modern humans but dates back to at least 70,000 BC. According to Bächler, Leroi-Gourhan, and others it may even have been practiced by Neanderthal societies. 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.⁵ Regardless of how old its cult is the bear is regarded by many to be the oldest European divinity. It appears to have been “intertwined with hunting rites.” One known ceremony from the Upper Paleolithic (as gleaned from archaeological remains) called for a bear to be shot with arrows, finally be killed with an arrow to the lungs, and then be “ritualistically buried near a clay bear statue covered by a bear fur with the skull and the body of the bear buried separately.” In some Chinese creation myths, the **CREATOR DIVINITIES** are described as wearing bear-skins. Examples include the Ainu religion, Artemis (Greek), Bear Mother (Nivkhs, Haida, and others), and Matunos/Matunos (Celtic). See **URSA MAJOR**.

⁵ Scholars no longer support the hypothesis that this is actually a case of ancestor worship by the bears themselves. Neanderthal activity is now judged more likely

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

Bed burials are interments that feature the inclusion of a bed with the deceased (who is placed upon it). In some cultures it was strongly associated with women, usually of the upper-class. They point to the use of sleep as a metaphor for death. They may be combined with SHIP BURIALS.

Benevolent moon stories are a variety of ORIGIN-OF-DEATH MYTH that associate death with the MOON, whose waxing and waning "gave primitive peoples the idea that man should or might return from death in a similar way." The moon may petition other divinities to allow humankind to be capable of resurrection, resurrect 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. Examples are found in places such as Fiji and Australia.

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 so commonly-used 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 are associated with. Generally only particular species of birds may be used. Their species, number, and direction and rate of movement may all contribute to the interpretation.

Birds were most commonly associated with the sun, the resurrection, prosperity, protection, and/or the tree of life or the world tree in ancient thought. They may be the form taken by the creator divinity. They may 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 (ex. buttocks, ears, penis, tongue) would be pierced and the blood would be collected on paper, 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. It is classified as an "auto-sacrifice."

Blood rituals are defined by involving the "intentional release of blood." They are generally symbolic of death and rebirth.⁶ Blood brother rituals involve the intermingling of blood between multiple people (usually male) in order to unite them as family. Especially when deliberately performed in such a way as to release blood, body piercing can serve as part of a RITE OF PASSAGE or provide magical protection. They are most strongly-associated with Mesoamerican religions but are present elsewhere, such as in Italian culture and some forms of Sufism. See BLOOD BURNING; HUMAN SACRIFICE.

Bronze Age European Religion included SOLAR BARGES, the SUN CROSS, deposits of bronze axes and sickles, MOON idols, wheel pendants, conical GOLDEN HATS, skydisks, burial mounds, and cremation.

Calendrical and commemorative rites are rituals that mark certain times of the year or fixed periods since a particular event. They "give social meaning to the passage of time, creating repetitive weekly,

⁶ Blood magic is generally seen as abhorrent because blood is so often equated with the soul, so that blood magic, though it is seen as being powered by a mere bodily fluid in today's culture and its fantasy literature, is anciently regarded as equivalent to magic that is powered by people's souls.

monthly, or yearly cycles.” They may be attached to seasonal changes or solar or lunar cycles. They “impose a cultural order on nature” and aim to transform the natural world, as embodied in the passing of time, into something controlled by humankind.

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).

Cardinal directions and colors are often associated with each other. These colors frequently appear in place divinity names.⁷ North may be black, blue, red, white, or yellow. East may be blue, green, red, white, or yellow. South may be black, blue, red, white, or yellow. West may be black, blue, green, red, white, or yellow. The “Center” direction, where it exists, may be blue, green or 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 the south (where it is south of the equator), the opposing direction is associated with the opposing season, and then autumn is usually associated with the west and spring with the east. This phenomenon is found on all continents.

Celestial oceans (*celestial rivers, world oceans*) surround the entire universe, not only the PHENOMENAL WORLD but also the OVERWORLD and the UNDERWORLD.

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 (ex. the world is their dream). They may have been chained through a trick. 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 aforementioned tormentor). All other characteristics of the sleeping hero apply. Examples include Artavasdes II (Armenian), Hobbomock (Quinnipiac Amerind), and Loki (Norse). The mytheme is beloved by Lovecraft, as witnessed by Azathoth and Cthulhu, among others.

Chaotic matter is the “formless or void state preceding the creation of the universe.” This matter may be described as vapor or water, without characteristics of space, and/or being salty or muddy. It generally moves, in a way that makes one think of a stormy ocean.

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.

The **Child** is a Jungian archetype. Its subtypes include the wounded child, abandoned or orphan child, dependent child, magical or innocent child, nature child, divine child (with extraordinary potential), and eternal child. It is “potential future.”

Color symbolism is a common motif whose particulars can vary wildly from culture to culture. Colors that are commonly symbolic include black,⁸ blue,⁹ green,¹⁰ red,¹¹ white,¹² and yellow.¹³

⁷ Belarus means “White Rus” or “White Russia.” Xipe Totec was also known as Red Tezcatlipoca because of his association with the east.

⁸ 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.

Common taboos include 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 a “the lady doth protest too much manner.” See TABOOS AGAINST NAMING THE DEAD; TABOOS ON FOOD AND DRINK

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, and 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 timber structures.

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. He was seen as cursed and would have to care for it through the winter but because he had the opportunity to place it in the ground at the beginning of the planting season (possibly as part of a FERTILITY RITUAL) it may have been a mixed blessing slash consolation prize for being the worst guy in town at harvesting. One imagines that receiving a bigger crop than normal, if this were expected, might doom the poor man to finishing last *again* and so on and forever.

Corpse roads (*lych gates, bier roads, burial roads, coffin roads, lykes, coffin lines, funeral roads, corpse ways*) are roads used for the transportation of corpses to cemeteries. They are often associated with LIMINAL DIVINITIES and GHOSTS. They usually pass through liminal locations such as forests and rivers.

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ Meanings [green] include death, envy, gambling, good fortune, hope, hunting, fairies, freshness, hope, immortality, inexperience and immaturity, life, love (especially fresh or growing), misfortune, nature, peace, power, prosperity, prostitution, rebirth, renewal, royalty, safety, sexuality, sickness, spring, strength, toxicity, vivacity, and witchcraft.

¹¹ Meanings [red] include activity, anger, beauty, blood, celebration, ceremony, Communism, courage, danger, death, dignity, dynamism, fertility, good fortune, happiness, health (it may even be thought capable of curing illnesses or casting out demons), the heart, heroism, hospitality, fire, joy, love, loyalty, marriage (in Eastern cultures), 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.

¹² Meanings [white] include beginnings, civic virtue, cleanliness, death, detachment, disaster, divinity, esteem, exactitude, fertility, ghosts, goodness, good fortune, gratitude, innocence, joy, lights, marriage (in Western cultures), monarchism, mourning, neutrality, newness, peace and passive resistance, perfection, purity, reincarnation, sacrifice, and serenity.

¹³ 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.

Correct action (*orthopraxy*) was generally perceived as necessary to one degree or another in ancient religions. Only rarely was “correct belief” or 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 blasphemer. See RITES OF AFFLCTION; RITES OF EXCHANGE AND COMMUNION; RITES OF FEASTING AND FASTING; RITUAL PURIFICATION; RITUAL SLAUGHTER.

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

The **Cosmic Man** is a Jungian archetype. It is an element of creation myths. It is generally helpful and positive. Whether presently alive or dead its body usually makes up the structure of the phenomenal world. It represents the universe or the oneness of human existence. It is often both the beginning and the goal or end of life or creation (ex. union with Brahma in some forms of Hinduism). Examples include Keyumars (Persian), Pangu (Chinese), and Purusha (Hindu).

Cosmic egg myths (*world egg myths, mundane egg myths*) are CREATION MYTHS describing 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 proto-world Avaiku (Cook Islander), Pan Ku (Chinese), Protogenus (Greek) and, technically, the Big Bang.¹⁴

Cosmic supports hold the world and/or the sky aloft. 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, tortoise or turtles, or serpents, all creatures associated with water, and as serpents they may encircle the world rather than support it from below. There are usually either one or four. They may be derived from WATERY DEMONS, which would have interesting implications if true. Examples include Atlas (Greek), the four dwarves at the corners of the earth (Norse), Jormungandr (Norse), and the Great A’Tuin and the four (five) elephants (Discworld).

Cosmogonical myths are CREATION MYTHS describing 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.

Creation myths are narratives describing how the world began. They have plot (which is more than can be said for some modern literature) 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 (and 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 were the most likely of any myths to be

¹⁴ ...Which is not a reference to WORLD COUPLE MYTHS.

understood symbolically by the cultures that created them. See CHAOTIC MATTER; COSMIC EGG MYTHS; COSMOGENICAL 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). 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 more amenable to inhabitation by humans. Their most common occupation, where they have one, is potter. They may be hermaphroditic. They may have created the world out of loneliness. They may regret making certain or 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 (Incan).

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. A crone “is marginalized by her exclusion from the reproductive cycle,” leading to her home usually being at a liminal location (ex. the woods or an island). She derives her occult wisdom and magical prowess from her 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*. See WISE OLD WO/MAN.

Crossroads are liminal places “between the worlds” where “supernatural spirits can be contacted and paranormal events can take place.” 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.

Culture heroes are heroes “specific to some group (cultural, ethnic, religious, etc.) who changes 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 them or changing their course. There may be two culture heroes who create awesomeness via their opposition (friendly or otherwise). They may be the progenitors of the people. They may encounter and fight their sons without learning the other’s identity.¹⁵ They may be exiled for a crime (usually falsely attributed to them) or because of prophecy only to return later. 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 an important son of their own. The death of the 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.

¹⁵ 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-up 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 by the man.

Culture-giving divinities (*craft divinities*) teach “the arts of civilization” to humans. These arts include 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 (ex. 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.¹⁶ They are often poets or musicians in some manner. Examples include Pramanthu (Hindu) and the Watchers or Grigori (Apocryphal). See ARTIST-SCIENTISTS; THEFT OF FIRE MYTHS; TRICKSTER DIVINITIES; WEAVING; WRITING.

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 FERTILITY DIVINITIES in this 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, as in Norse culture. Examples include Izanami (Japanese), Mors (Roman), Supay (Incan), and Tuoni (Finnish).

The **descent to the underworld** (*katabasis, nekiya*) involves an upper-world being 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, *anabasis*.

Divination is the practice of particular rituals in order to learn of the past, present, or (most frequently) the future through magical means. 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 them¹⁷; sortilege or cleromancy, which is the casting of lots¹⁸; 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 into the previous three types.

Divine apathy is the idea that a divinity (usually the Abrahamic God) “is incapable of suffering, passivity, or modification.”

Divine attendants are minor divinities who serve the ruling divinities. Some roles that are often specifically filled by one or more divinities are accountants of morality or action-recorders, camp followers, cupbearer (Ganymede in Greek mythology), doorkeeper, scribe (Enoch according to some Apocryphal sources), soldier (the einherjar in Norse mythology), spokesman (Metatron in Jewish

¹⁶ Some scholars believe that Loki and Prometheus have a common origin because, among other things: both are connected to fire; both are among the most cunning of divinities in their respective pantheons; and both are involved with the dividing up of a bull which must be shared with an eagle (or Zeus, who may be represented as an eagle). For a more in-depth treatment of this idea, read Timothy J. Stephany’s *The Theft of Fire: Prometheus and Loki*. If it’s true, it really makes you wonder if Loki got sentenced to snake venom dripping on his face for eternity because of some helpful thing that he did for humanity that the other gods didn’t like and covered up.

¹⁷ Needham suggested that the kernel of modern science is to be found in this documentation of omens.

¹⁸ Playing cards and board games developed from sortilege, and even after the class was separated from divination individual games were frequently recombined, as demonstrated by Enochian chess. It makes one wonder what sort of divination might be attempted by playing rounds of *Betrayal at House on the Hill*.

mythology), and watchman (Thor and Heimdall in Norse mythology). They may have been created from drops of water, fire, light, stones, or a combination of elements (such as fire, snow, and water).

Divine food is associated with divinities in some way, usually being 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 it 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. They may have stolen it from its previous owners. It is frequently alcoholic, in which case it was probably bestowed upon or stolen for humankind.¹⁹ There is often a divinity associated with it, especially if it is alcohol (Dionysus in Greek mythology). 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 from their land, especially if the food is associated with the UNDERWORLD or with LIMINAL DIVINITIES. Golden apples are a particularly common divine food. Other examples include ambrosia and nectar (Greek), mead (Norse), and soma (Hindu).

Divine language (*language of the gods*) is “a mystical or divine proto-language” that existed before human-made languages and may have led to it. Early civilizations especially regarded language (and WRITING in particular) as being a gift from divinities. Examples include Adamic (LDS), Classical Arabic (Muslim), Enochian (Apocryphal), and the LANGUA VERDE.

Divine right (*mandate of Heaven*) refers to the idea that the ruler has been authorized to act in his position by a divinity from whom such authorization could conceivably flow. This usually means the divinity in charge of the universe or at least 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.²⁰ Either way, the ruler is legitimate not inherently because of blood or any action on his or her 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 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 the standard concept provides.²¹

Divine twins may have any number of origins but are usually the first at something (ex. the first humans or the first to die) and usually get something out of the deal (ex. 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 father,²² (usually the explanation for one twin being

¹⁹ 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.

²⁰ 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 over every inch of the cosmos? It’s like living in a divine Oceania that may or may not 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 information through the cracks.

²¹ 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.

²² Possibly awkward...

divine and the other not). They may be in opposition to each other, even from the womb. The earliest version of the “divine twins” concept in PIE-derived mythologies is called the HORSE TWINS, and the description given there is often applicable to later versions. In some mythologies they are not born together but become blood brothers at some point in life.²³ The second “twin” may even be formed from a body part of the first twin at some point in life. Examples include Romulus and Remus (Roman) and even Elros and Elrond (Tolkien), who preserve the essential characteristic of one twin being divine and the other human. See FETCH.

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 (ex. the retrieval of the Holy Grail) must be performed in order to heal the Maimed King and the Wasteland. The wound may be in the king’s thighs, his genitals, or elsewhere. He may be impotent and/or incapable of moving. While most prominent in the story of the Fisher King in Arthurian folklore this depiction is descended from Bran the Blessed (Celtic).²⁴ 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 YEAR-KING.

Domestic divinities. See HOUSEHOLD DIVINITIES.

Donkey worship (*onolatry*) was a common mocking accusation against other cultures.

Dualistic creation myths are CREATION MYTHS describing the universe as having been created through the opposition of two or more CREATOR DIVINITIES. In a less antagonistic case, creation may have been carried out by a married couple who are showing off to or competing against each other. In either case, the divinities may be DIVINE TWINS.

Duotheism is the “belief in and worship of two deities, usually framed as a god and goddess of roughly equal power.”

Dying-and-rising divinities (*life-death-rebirth-divinities*) differ from DYING DIVINITIES in that they return after their death through either resurrection or rebirth. They are often associated with the year cycle, especially in regard to the growing of food and represent “the permanence and continuity of life.” Some are mortals before dying and experience apotheosis in completing 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 describing 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 bird. It is usually sent by someone as opposed to acting to fulfill its own designs. There

²³ An excellent example of nonconventional divine twins is 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.

²⁴ In a broader sense parallels can be seen (among other places) in Attis (Greek), whose castration leads to the sympathetic self-castration of his future father-in-law, the king, which would symbolically represent the devastation of the kingdom; in Jarilo (Slavic), who murder and dismemberment allow his wife to build a house but also presage winter and her devolution into a hag of death until he is back together again; and in Osiris (Egypt), whose death allows Set to take the throne. His resurrection is necessary for him to sire Horus, who will retake the throne, and it may be relevant that Osiris ultimately remains castrated and remains as the king of the underworld while Horus, who is physically intact, is the one to defeat Set and is considered to be dwelling with the living gods.

may be many preexistent beings, in which case they are usually asleep and the diver is usually 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 may 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. They are believed to have a common origin in the east coast of Asia. Examples include Maori mythology, Seneca Amerind mythology, and Tatar mythology.

Earth mothers (*Mother Earth, Mother Nature, Mother Goddesses, Magna Dea*) are divinities that represent motherhood, fertility, creation, 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 and the concept is probably connected to the development of agriculture. They may also originate from the divinization of seasonally-occupied locations. 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 lead to the Earth Mother concept, including a “bird and snake” WATER DIVINITY group and a “stiff nude” DEATH DIVINITY group. In some cultures, such as the Greek, the various goddesses appear to have developed mostly as variations of a single Earth Mother which 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 also be reversed for a SKY MOTHER and EARTH FATHER, as is found in some traditions of Egyptian mythology (Nut and Geb). See MISTRESS OF BEASTS

Elements in classical thought were thoughts 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 times²⁵: in the Greek system air corresponded to gases, earth corresponded to solids, fire corresponded to plasma, and water corresponded to liquids. The Babylonians had two systems (which probably inspired the Greek system): one was based on earth, sea, and sky, and the other included these but added fire and wind. The alchemical system 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 akash (void, an element beyond material experience). The Tibetan 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 (ex. water nourishes wood, which feeds fire).

Elephants are associated with cooperation, long life (even immortality), loyalty, military power, spirit, strength, royal power, and wisdom. They may rule over the other animals. They may be the reincarnations of humans of great virtue and/or noble position, especially if the elephant is white. They may be pets of the royalty. Their skulls may have inspired legends of GIANTS and Cyclopes.

²⁵ Whatever else you might think about the ancients, they weren’t stupid. Modern science is only what it is because it could capitalize on thousands of years of prior work. Despite the occasional screaming error (no worse than our own) they were usually wrong only because they lacked information that they couldn’t possibly have.

Emergence myths are CREATION MYTHS 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 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 include Hopi mythology, Mayan mythology, and Zuni mythology.

The **Eternal Child** (*puella aeterna* or *puer aeternus*) is a Jungian archetype. It is mythologically the eternally-young child-god and psychologically an older person who refuses to mature. It is generally a VEGETATION DIVINITY and DYING-AND-RISING DIVINITY. It is associated with resurrection and divine youth. It seeks independence and finds restrictions “intolerable.” Examples include Adonis (Greek), Attis (Greek), Kore (Greek), Peter Pan (pop culture), and Tammuz (Sumerian).

Ex nihilo myths are CREATION MYTHS describing the creation of the world from nothing. Creation suddenly appears according to the thoughts or words of one or more divinities, or is a dream or bodily secretion of one or more divinities.²⁶ The creator may exist upon or 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 and balanced creation myths like WORLD COUPLES. The creation account in the Quran is an example of ex nihilo myth.

Fairies are a class of divinity which occur frequently in mythology and share various attributes. Their most important characteristic is that, whether they are malicious or not,²⁷ they must be protected against,²⁸ with bread being the most commonly-used (either to ward against or placate them) and bells coming in next. They often are referred to by euphemisms such as Fair Folk (from whence cometh “fairie”), Good Folk, or People of Peace. Nobody believes these euphemisms but they are necessary to keep eavesdropping fairies from being angered. Physically they usually fall into two groups: tall and radiant or short and wizened, and they may be able to change their size. They may also have green eyes, wear green clothing, or be associated with green in some other way. Within the context of a culture they may be considered to be beings who took no side in the BATTLES AGAINST THE TITANS, enchanted humans, spirits of the dead, or ghosts. Within the context of anthropology they may have developed from divinities from earlier belief systems, ghosts, malevolent spirits, or stories of conquered peoples.²⁹ They may have their own world or country, called Elfland or Fairyland.³⁰ They may abduct children

²⁶ The creator divinity may create the world from his 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.

²⁷ Some are mischievous or simply helpful but lacking in understanding of human affairs.

²⁸ This idea is sometimes lost as time goes on but it is always there in the older stories.

²⁹ ...Who may have remained extant for some time in more remote areas of their former land, such as forests and mountains

³⁰ It is typically in these cases that the links to the dead and the UNDERWORLD are most clear, and most if not all of the rules of the latter may be assumed to apply to Fairyland in any given mythology. Burial mounds, too, were typically taken to be fairy hills.

and/or the elderly and may leave other fairies or enchanted wooden mannequins (usually the explanation for an inexplicable death) in their place. 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 generally give the same.

Fate divinities like to come in threes. They usually create the 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 include the Moirai (Greek), Norns (Norse), and Ursitoare (Romanian). See FEMALE; NONUPLETS; TRIPLE DIVINITIES.

Father Time is the personification of time. He is generally portrayed as an elderly man with a beard, dressed in robes and bearing a scythe and a timekeeping device (usually an hourglass). These traits are derived mainly from the Grim Reaper and Chronos and their counterparts in other mythologies, which could allow Father Time to be interpreted as a combination time and DEATH DIVINITY.

Fear of bears is called arcotophobia, which is Greek for “common sense.” See BEAR WORSHIP.

Female nonuplets (*women of nine*) appear often in mythologies. 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 Kikuyu tribe, the Nine Maidens (Scottish), and the witches of Caer Lyow (Welsh).

Fertility divinities are associated with birth, fertility, pregnancy, and sometimes sex. Rather than grant some special benefit they may be propitiated as divinities of sterility and famine³¹ in order that their wrath and powers 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 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 CALENDARICAL AND COMMEMORATIVE RITES.

Fertility symbols are objects used to represent fertility, most often in association with FERTILITY RITUALS. They include representations of animals such as frogs and intertwined snakes, tokens representative of HIEROGAMY, the Ganges River, and the maypole.

Fetches (*doppelgangers*) 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).

Fire worship (*pyrodelia, pyrolatry, pyrolatria*) probably dates back as far as 790,000 years ago. If controlled fire existed earlier than this (as is suggested by the million-year-old remains at Wonderwerk

³¹ Solar and summer divinities are especially popular in this role.

Cavern) or fire was worshiped even before it was controlled then the practice may be even older. Dating back to PIE culture there was a division between animate fire (*egni-) and inanimate fire (*paewr-). Fire may also be divided between hearth-fire and forge-fire. Fire may be symbolic of purity because it cannot be polluted and may be used to refine other materials. 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 as conceived as a ceiling or other solid substance. In ancient thought it was most regarded as being made of metal, as demonstrated by the Hebrew word *raqa*, from which that language's word for firmament is derived, and which means "to beat or spread out," specifically in reference to hammering metal. It may be immortal 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, and Mesopotamians, and goes back to at least PIE roots but in all likelihood is even older than that.

First Humans (*protoplasm*) are distinguished by being humans 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 usually 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 clay or stones (such as in Biblical, Chinese, and Egyptian myth), ashes (Hindu), blood or a blood-clot (Jewish, Melanesian, Samoan), bone (Jewish, Inuit), seeds (Inuit), wood (Indonesian), or a number of different elements³² (German, Jewish, Siberian).

Flood myths (*deluge myths*) are stories of a divinely-caused flood with few survivors, one of them usually the patriarchal head of the others. They are usually global. The sons of the father often go on to found three particular lines (ex. Aeolus, Dorus, and Ion in Greek myth, and Ham, Japheth, and Shem in Biblical myth). Examples of surviving patriarchs include Deucalion (Greek), Manu (Hindu), Noah (Biblical), Utnapishtim (Babylonian).

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 is 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 or no centralized authority.

Forests are liminal places that can both threaten danger and offer refuge. They may be enchanted or be 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 often effectively national borders. Most people did not travel too far into the forest, which was a place for the Other to reside. This was not merely superstition. In Europe, for example, the forest was where bandits, BEARS, boars, and wolves dwelt. A greater proportion of German fairy tales take place in the forest than any other European fairy tale. The Black Forest, which

³² 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 clouds)

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, mythomoteurs*) explain the origins of a particular city or people and give the 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 their divinities typically dealt with their progenitor and entered into a covenant with or expressed favor of him. 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. See HOMELAND EXODUSES; LEGENDARY PROGENITORS; PREDECESSOR PEOPLES.

Funerary cults are a type of ANCESTOR VENERATION which focuses on the tomb. 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 in such forms as Mount Olympus (Greek). 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 moon, under the sea, or in a volcano. See DIVINE ATTENDANTS; SACRED MOUNTAINS.

Ghosts are the spirits of the deceased. They may appear as “barely visible wispy shades” or as exactly as they did in life³³ (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.³⁴ They may be interacted with physically. 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 (such as death by fire or 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.

Golden hats (*gold hats, goldhüte; s. goldhut*) are Bronze Age artifacts from Central Europe. They’re “made of thin sheet gold and were attached externally to long conical and brimmed headdresses.” We’ve only discovered four of them so far, so we don’t know too much, and since we’ve been looking since 1692 you’re probably free to say what you want in your story without fear of contradiction any

³³ It sometimes happens that a ghost’s nature is given away not by its appearance but by its behavior.

³⁴ The most unusual cause seems to me to be *excessive mourning*: the dead will come back if you’re too sad and try to make you not-sad.

time soon. What we figure right now is that they're connected to some kind of solar cult.³⁵ Some scholars think that they were used as "complex calendrical devices."³⁶ Still, they do have symbols that point to being a lunisolar calendar, so the idea isn't as crazy as it seems.³⁷

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.

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 they are similar to hell bank notes. They may have been discovered even in some Neanderthal graves (it is currently in dispute whether the pollen was placed there intentionally or later by burrowing mice).

Green Men are VEGETATION DIVINITY-like representations, most often of a "face surrounded 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.

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 Fufluns³⁸ (Etruscan), Ixchel (Aztec), and Zywie (Slavic).

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.

Hearth divinities. See HOUSEHOLD DIVINITIES.

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

Henotheism (*inclusive monotheism, monarchical polytheism*) is the "belief in or worship of one deity without denying the existence of other deities." Henotheists consider the worship of other deities to be valid by other people but not themselves. Contrast with MONOLATRY. See KATHENOTHEISM.

³⁵ Because, you know, gold and stuff.

³⁶ ... Which probably marks the first and last time that anybody tried wearing calendars on their heads, least of all calendars made out of gold

³⁷ This discovery supports the "our shamanic ancestors were tripping balls" theory, incidentally.

³⁸ Sounds more like the goddess of Care Bears, really.

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.

Hierogamy (*hieros gamos, sacred marriage*) is the 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 marriage of Sumerian kings and Inanna (through her high priestesses), the YEAR-KING, and the ritual coupling of the Queen of Athens and Dionysus (through his priest or the king himself). It also has parallels in the bridal theology of the Bible. See SACRED PROSTITUTION; SPIRIT SPOUSE

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

Homeland exodus are a common myth, and often rooted in some kind of fact (if nothing else, a past of nomadism). They tell of how the culture came from a different land before settling 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 Aztlan (Aztec), Ergenekon (Turkic), and the Exodus from Egypt (Biblical).

The **Horned God** (*Old Horny*⁴⁰) is a Neopagan divinity that represents hunting, the life cycle, the life force energy of animals and the wild, nature, sexuality, "the union of the divine and the animal," and wilderness. Through the aforementioned union he brings together humanity and that which is above humanity, and humanity and that which predates humanity.⁴¹ He is shown with antlers or horns on his head and may have an animal head (usually an animal that would have antlers or horns). In the style of the YEAR-KING he may marry and impregnate the TRIPLE GODDESS in the spring or summer, die in the autumn, and then be born again in the winter at Yule.⁴² He may be a mediator between humans and a higher, unknowable and impersonal divinity. He can be represented as a DEATH DIVINITY (in his guise as

³⁹ It is very likely that few of the tombs of the hero cults actually held Greek corpses. Most of them probably belonged to peoples who inhabited the land before the Greeks arrived.

⁴⁰ You're thinking that this is one of my jokes, but it isn't.

⁴¹ "Where the falling angel meets the rising ape," to misuse Pratchett

⁴² Oedipus with horns.

ruler of the afterlife called Summerland), DYING-AND-RISING DIVINITY, GREEN MAN, PSYCHOPOMP, SOLAR DIVINITY, and VEGETATION DIVINITY.

Horse burial is the practice of including a horse in the burial ritual. It is usually representative of a nomadic or recently-nomadic culture. In Kazakhstan a horse was killed and buried exactly one year after its owner's death. Examples are found everywhere from Britain to China and some claim that so-called "head and hooves" burials are evidence of Paleolithic horse burials. These involved the skin of a horse being hung over a pole with some of its bones left inside to preserve the shape.

Horse sacrifice is a common ritual. Though its forms of expression and purpose varied it appears to have a single PIE origin 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, which produced 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).

Horse twins are a sub-category 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, too. At least one of them has a name meaning "horse." They are close to human beings. They are associated with fertility (and assist at births), dance, and swans. They found cities, wage war, and are possessed of magical healing abilities. To the cornered general and the storm tossed sailor both they lend their aid. They enforce oaths. They may follow the SOLAR DIVINITY around.⁴⁴ They are possibly based on Venus in its aspects as the morning star and the evening star. They first originate in PIE myth and the further you get from this the more distorted they the concept becomes. Examples include Lel and Polel (Slavic) and Polydeukes and Kastor (Greek), and there is possibly a trace of it in the birth of Sleipnir (Norse).

Horse worship is primarily a phenomenon of PIE-derived cultures. Horses in these systems are seen as divine and often are associated with the king (often through his descent from the HORSE TWINS) or warriors in general. They can represent the sun and SOLAR DIVINITIES and be steeds of the gods or their confidants. 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.⁴⁵ See HORSES SIRED OR BORNE BY DIVINITIES; RIDERLESS HORSES; WHITE HORSES.

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

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

⁴³ The drowning of a horse as a sacrifice to Poseidon can also be seen as a kind of live burial.

⁴⁴ Because they want to be all overprotective about their little sis, I don't know

⁴⁵ If they yelled too much, then there were also hoarse throats.

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, they are called hearth divinities or domestic divinities. Household SHRINES are often dedicated to them. They are generally more resistant to attempts by invading cultures to stamp them out. Some scholars believe them to be derived from ANCESTOR VENERATION, especially when worshiped as a class. Examples include brownies (British), domovoi (Slavic), Hestia (Greek), and tomtes (Swedish). See SPIRITS OF PLACE.

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).

Human sacrifice (*ritual murder*) is usually performed to appease or support divinities or to send people on to the afterlife in a particular manner (such as delivering them to a particular afterlife or as the servants of a departed person⁴⁶). It can be performed for divinatory purposes. It can be performed to “enhance societal bonds,” because nothing gives you a dose of community spirit better than knocking back a couple of beers at the annual head-chopping festival, right? Entombment is a common method of human sacrifice in eastern Asia. It is closely related to animal sacrifice. The Binding of Isaac in the Bible is thought to have originally been a story that told of a transition from human sacrifice much like Christianity taught of a transition from animal sacrifice without repudiating its previous practice. 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 a body part of a divinity). Many humorous divinities were derived from a PIE female dawn divinity who had both SOLAR DIVINITY and LOVE DIVINITY aspects among others. Examples include Aphrodite (Greek), the Erinyes (Greek), Kvasir (Norse), Raktabija⁴⁷ (Hindu), Ushas (Hindu), and the various divinities born from Izanagi’s ritual washing and purification (Japanese).

Hungry ghosts are SHADES that are characterized by a defining 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), pretas (Buddhist), and many (but by no means all or even most) creatures commonly classed as “vampires” in modern analysis.

Hyloteism is a “doctrine of belief that matter is God, or that there is no God except matter and the universe.” Compare with PANTHEISM.

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 commits some grievous offense. There may be a number of intermediary divinities which may still be called upon to aid humankind and even petition the idle god on their behalf. Examples include Bondye (Vodou), Uranus (Greek), and the CREATOR DIVINITY of Deist thought.

⁴⁶ This is called “retainer sacrifice.” It appeared everywhere from Mongolia and Scythia to Mesoamerica and Egypt.

⁴⁷ ... Who had the curious situation of being his progenitor as a humorous divinity. Each drop of blood that he spilled developed into a fully-formed copy of himself.

Incubation is the act of sleeping in a sacred area in order to receive a divinely-inspired dream or be cured of an ailment. Examples include the incubation of King Solomon at Gibeon (Biblical).

Infant exposure. See INFANT SACRIFICE.

Infant sacrifice was usually performed as an extreme form of sacrifice during a disaster when nothing else was working. 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 a reluctant to directly spill the blood of the child. The exposure is symbolic of a second birth. The slain were usually accorded a great honor. It can be part of a MIRACULOUS BIRTH. If so, it highlights the tension between the parents and their heroic child and sets them as the child's first foes. Examples include the capachocas (Incan) and sacrifices to Moloch (Canaanite and Carthaginian). Other cases of infant exposure include Gilgamesh (Sumerian), Moses (Biblical), Oedipus (Greek), and Siegfried (Germanic).

Kathenotheism is the “belief that multiple deities exist, and different deities are supreme among them at different times.” Examples include the Orphic religion and the Smarta sect of Hinduism.

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), and Thoth (Egyptian).

Langua verde (*green language, language of the birds*) refers to a supposed “mystical, 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.

Last meals, such as are given to prisoners prior to their executions, arose from the European belief that the dead might come back to haunt the living and take revenge for their execution. By offering a meal there was offered with it a truce, and by accepting the meal the prisoner also accepted the truce. Peace was made between both parties notwithstanding the imminent death of one at the hands of the other, and it could be expected that no curse would come from the execution.

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 thing that is linked to and the likelihood that it will be used for good or for ill by a third party. Some sort of banishing ritual is necessary to break the link.

Law of similarity. See SYMPATHETIC MAGIC.

Law of sympathy. See SYMPATHETIC MAGIC.

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.

Legendary progenitors figure in FOUNDATIONAL MYTHS as the common ancestor of a people or dynasty. They may be FIRST HUMANS. It is important to be able to trace one's lineage to the relevant legendary progenitor in order to prove a claim.

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 the location that one is at). The vessels which carry the liquids and from which they are poured often have a sacred character.

Lightning divination (*ceraunoscopy*) is performed by observing lightning or listening to thunder.

Liminal divinities are associated with thresholds, gates, doorways, crossroads, and the like. They "cannot be easily placed into a single category of existence" and are "crosser[s] of boundaries." They may be two-faced, of ambiguous sex, genderfluid, and so on. 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 not yet entered another." They have the potential to both hurt and help. They often combine two physical states in one body (ex. centaurs, sphinxes, Hel). They may be superb mentors. Examples include the half-incubus Merlin (Arthurian), the human-and-plant Green Man, Caliban (Shakespeare), Spock (*Star Trek*), and cyborgs. Together, certain DIVINE TWINS may be liminal divinities, one being divine and the other human. See CROSSROADS; FATE DIVINITIES; LOATHLY LADIES; PSYCHOMPOMPS; SHAPESHIFTING DOLPHINS; TRIPLE DIVINITIES; WISE OLD WO/MEN; WOUNDED HEALERS.

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

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).

Love divinities are associated with sexual love, lust, or sexuality. Examples include Sukkamuelli (Finnish), Tlazolteotl (Aztec), and Xtabay (Mayan).

Lunar divinities are associated with the moon. They are slightly more likely to be male but regardless of sex they are almost always 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 which may occur at any time between 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.⁴⁸ 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,⁴⁹ as symbolic castration to humiliate slaves and captives and/or to humble themselves before divinities, to imitate a leader who naturally lacked a foreskin, and/or to demonstrate a resistance to pain. Record of male circumcision goes as far back as 2400 BC, in Egypt, and the self-circumcision of Ra was responsible for the creation of two divinities in one myth. 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. In light of its presence in some way on every continent, it seems most likely that it 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 dropped it at some point.

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.” It can heal or affect fortune like the Western conception of luck. It exists not only in people but also in places⁵⁰ 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. 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.” It is not traditionally viewed as being a source of fuel for fireballs and invisibility spells.

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.⁵¹ He may also 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).

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 torture may be performed in order to increase the potency of the magic. A particular person is usually selected to be killed as opposed to preying opportunistically. The victim is usually very young or very old.

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, even iff some editors at Wikipedia are not aware of this. See CONCENTRIC STONE CIRCLES; MENHIRS.

⁴⁸ Jewish legend records that the Binding of Isaac was ordered because, when Ishmael boasted to Isaac that he loved their father so much that he submitted to circumcision even though he was old (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.

⁴⁹ One imagines that wearing funny hats might have done the job equally well.

⁵⁰ Many battles in the Hawaiian Islands were fought over the possession of Molokai, an island reputed to have an exceptional amount of mana.

⁵¹ According to one tradition he was even Cain the murderer, which is referenced in Dante’s *Inferno*.

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 or vehicle for power. Menstruating women are regarded as magically power and religiously sacred, and depending on culture are supposed to be able to do such things as destroy their enemies through magic (Cherokee) and ward off hailstorms and lightning if naked (Roman). Menstrual blood was perceived as a crucial ingredient in sorcery (Mayan) and in both destructive and purifying magical charms (African). Despite this, menstruation was often seen as a punishment, as in Mayan and Jewish mythology (the former for "violating the social rules governing marital alliance," the latter for eating from the tree of knowledge).

The **Milky Way Galaxy** is where we live.⁵² Every culture has had at least one story about the observable portion of the Milky Way. It may be a spilled material (as in the Armenian and Cherokee Amerind cultures), especially milk (as in the Egyptian and Roman cultures). It may be associated with BIRDS (as in the Finnish and Estonian cultures). It may be any number of objects, including a herd of cows (Greek), a canoe (Maori), a dolphin (Hindu), or the WILD HUNT or generic hunting party (German, Siberian).

Miraculous births often accompany divinities and great heroes. They may involve such things as astronomical signs, divine intervention, and/or unusual hardship (such as the child massacre of Bethlehem, abduction, 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 before even being born). Examples include Dionysus (Greek), the Hero Twins (Mayan), and Jesus Christ (Biblical).

Miraculous conception. See MIRACULOUS BIRTH

Misotheism is the "hatred of the gods" or the belief that the gods are uniformly malicious. This philosophy could have practical effect only in religions where it was believed that the gods could be affected in some way. This philosophy is most prominent in Norse mythology, where a number of the sagas recount men who turned their backs on the gods and of whom it is said "in themselves they trusted."

Missing sun myths deal with the disappearance of the sun, possibly 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).

⁵² ...Unless you're reading this a very far time into the future. If this is the case, then please issue a new edition of this book to account for the change.

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.

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

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. While many cultures had calendars that were dependent on the moon these were usually lunisolar calendars, meaning that they also relied on the sun. There may have been a moon before there was a sun. It may have been an object (especially a mass of WATER) that was thrown into the sky or an anvil or grinder for a CREATOR DIVINITY. Its marks 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 exist after this one is destroyed). See THE MAN IN THE MOON.

Moon rabbit. See MAN IN THE MOON.

Mortality salience is the “awareness of one’s eventual death.”

Mosquitoes are usually regarded as having specifically been created from the end result of death, such as the bones of a demon (Indian) or the ashes of a corrupt woman (Chinese). As in the aforementioned cases, the corpse usually belonged to someone with a negative character.

Multiple suns are commonly thought to have existed, either sequentially or together. Where they existed together, there are usually four of them and they frequently came out one at a time. Either from the beginning or later 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 for reasons that 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 big 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 Nidorina (not really). See GREEN MAN.

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 proposed the existence of PIE cultures that were

⁵³ Freaking bears, man.

nature worshipers and existed in small-scale, family-centered communities with matrilineal succession and pantheons ruled by a divine mother. Weir theorized that all religion began as a worship of that which early humans could “see, touch, and feel.” See NATURE DIVINITIES; PLEASANT PLACES; SACRED GROVES; SACRED PLANTS.

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.

Night divinities are associated with night, the night sky, and darkness. While SOLAR DIVINITIES are almost always associated with the day, LUNAR DIVINITIES are not so guaranteed to be associated with the night. 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 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 Apes (Egyptian) and Rahu and Ketu (Hindu). Skoll and Hati (Norse) are foretold to be examples when they eat the sun and the moon at Ragnarok. See MISSING SUN.

Old Men of the Sea are (typically male) WATER DIVINITIES that may be reflective of an older order of divinities. 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). They typically tell only the truth, but see the preceding for how difficult it can be for them to say anything in the first place. They typically have children, either beautiful daughters and/or terrible monsters. 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 contain a core recognition of the same God.”

Origin myths (*etiological myths, aitions*) are myths that 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 the people in the origin myth did it. See creation myths, origin-of-death myths. 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 pretty crap and they wanted to know which idiot to blame for it. One of the less common stories is that the world is the inferior creation from a contest between two divinities and that all things in it come to an end as a result.⁵⁴ 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, or other worlds. Though they may find also be located in the PHENOMENAL WORLD their source, if it is not at one of the first two locations given, is in another world. There are most often four (sometimes one or three, less often five, very rarely two or more than five) rivers associated with their source. They may need to be crossed in

⁵⁴ Maybe we could find out who the other guy was and go to *his* world.

order to reach a particular world. Examples include the Élivágar (Norse), the rivers of Hades (Greek), and the rivers of the Tree of Life (Jewish).

Overworlds. They almost always have multiple levels (usually three to five).

Pandeism is the belief that the CREATOR DIVINITY created the universe by becoming it and then “ceased to exist as a separate and conscious entity.”

Panentheism is “a doctrine that the universe subsists within God, but that God nevertheless transcends or has some existence separate from the universe. Contrast with PANTHEISM.

Pantheism is “the belief that the universe is in some sense divine and should be revered.” As God *is* the universe and identified wholly with the universe, by definition God does not transcend the universe because God cannot transcend God. Compare to HYLOTHEISM and contrast with PANENTHEISM.

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

Phenomenal world is a term for the world that we inhabit, exclusive of the OVERWORLD, UNDERWORLD, and any other worlds or planes of existence which may exist in a culture’s cosmology. It is that which we can directly experience, which none but a student of ACOSMISM or a brain in a jar would deny.

Pleasant places (*loci amoenus*) are “idealized place[s] of safety or 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.

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. They “pose no threat and offer no hope.”⁵⁵ 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 that supposes not to actively reject theism but to instead passively leave it behind as obsolete. It is less combative than antitheism, which is an active opposition to theism, and generally assumes that theism was at one point a wholly necessary philosophy of religion.

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 a spirit world. They may enter his 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

⁵⁵ ...Unless the one in charge of creating black holes gets overzealous.

animal soul, the shaman's soul *becomes* that very soul. Reaching 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.⁵⁶

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, etc) and under peril from some threat, usually a monster. This may be the first time that the threat has made itself known or the latest in a series of perils. The threat generally kills one 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 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 his 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 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 (the primary divinities of the religion). 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; CREATOR DIVINITIES; 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 that 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 at birth. Examples include Hermes (Greek), the valkyries⁵⁷ (Norse), and Xolotl (Aztec).

Queen of Heaven is a title given to some female sky divinities. It appears to have originated in Sumeria and through Babylon and Persia reached Greece, where Alexander the Great carried it to most of the rest of the world. Where there is a heavenly divine couple they are generally matched by a chthonic divine couple (ex. 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.

⁵⁶ Which is actually just the postdeluvian set. The Mythological Cycle also records daughters of Cain, a granddaughter of Noah, and a number of fishermen from Iberia as being inhabitants of Ireland.

⁵⁷ As "choosers of the slain," Odin and Freyja were technically valkyries themselves.

Ranked societies rank their members according to their genealogical distance from the ruler. Rank may be assigned to individuals, families, or villages.

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

Regnal names (*reign names, era names*) are given to some rulers upon their ascension to power. Periods of time may be named after the ruler (hence “era name”) especially if there exists a series of rulers that have taken the same regnal name (ex. the Georgian era).

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.

Rites of affliction are APOTROPOAIC MAGIC rituals that are meant to prevent misfortune and/or to determine its cause and undo or reverse it should it befall someone. The misfortune may be individual or affect a group as large as the whole people. Examples include the Isoma ritual (Ndembu).

Rites of exchange and communion are rituals that involve sacrifice and are serve to “praise, please, or placate” divinities. They involve the giving of a gift, but these 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 a community publicly expresses an adherence to basic, shared religious values, rather than to the over presence of deities.” Turner describes them as “social dramas” that enable social stresses to be worked out in a symbolic fashion. 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 Christian baptism, high school graduation, and marriage. They are not necessarily religious in nature. They are divided into three phases as denoted by van Gennep: preliminal, liminal (or threshold), and postliminal. Together these follow the casting-off of one’s present identity and status, one’s subsequent existence in a sort of void state (such are called “threshold people”), and then the acquisition of a new identity and status. Emphasis is on the third step, and 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. See MALE CIRCUMCISION.

Ritual clowns (*sacred clowns*) fill the social role of trickster in societies. They break social norms (or outright ignore their existence) 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 to be a Dionysian safety valve in otherwise

Apollonian societies. Examples include *heyoka* (Lakota Amerind), jesters (European society), and reverse warriors (Plains Amerind). Greek comedy and satire originated from ritual clowns.

Ritual purification was required before certain activities, especially direct worship of divinity, could be performed. Ritual impurity was 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 characteristic distinguishes ritual slaughter from animal sacrifice, but it is still believed that the slaughter must be performed in a particular manner.

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 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 throne⁵⁸ and England and France believed that their variant of the royal touch demonstrated that God favored their countries over everyone else. 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 by a mouth-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 that hint at their origins as bulls (ex. Marduk is the "bull of Utu"). They may be lunar (its horns usually represented the crescent moon in these cases) or solar. They may be the first animal and ancestor to all other animals. The concept may originate with aurochs, which were extant 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 (ex. the red heifer of the Bible) 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 world⁵⁹, which in PIE-derived myths often involved the death of one or more bulls and even more often their presence. 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, and it is possible that YHWH Himself was originally portrayed as a bull. Examples include the Bull of Heaven (Babylonian), the Golden Calf (Biblical), both Hathor and Apis (Egyptian), Moloch (Canaanite and Carthaginian), and TAURUS (Greek).

⁵⁸ I can find no reports of anyone trying to win a contested throne through demonstrating their ability to apply the royal touch, but it seems like something that someone would have done. If you can find an example, please tell me.

⁵⁹ The most obscure connection 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 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.

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 king is usually sacrificed, and sometimes he’s just sacrificed at the end of a given period (most often the end of a year). This kind of king is generally thought of as the shepherd of his people (which is why he is expected to sacrifice himself for the survival of his people, as the good shepherd⁶⁰ sacrifices himself for his sheep) and is a mediator between the people and the gods (which in some cultures is a justification for his death, because it allows his spirit to travel to the home of the gods to petition them directly). From this concept we get rulers styling themselves with such titles as “deputy of Ishtar” and “vicar of Christ.” Examples include the Ashanti, the Javanese, and Mesopotamian cultures (from which we get the concept of a messiah or anointed one). See DOLOROUS STROKES; ROYAL TOUCH; YEAR-KING.

Sacred mountains are central to the religions which feature them. They are believed to be the places closest to heaven, and the local sacred mountain is usually regarded as the highest in the world and/or the AXIS MUNDI. They are places where humans meet the gods. Sometimes the gods lived there permanently. Temples like ziggurats were 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 except 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 Mount Etna (Greek), Mount Kirinyaga (Kikiyu), and Mount Sinai (Biblical). See THEOPHANY.

Sacred Mysteries are the defining aspect of mystery religions. They are knowledge and practices that are kept secret from outsiders and even lower-ranking members of the religion. There are generally multiple levels of initiation in mystery cults. The essential element of a mystery religion 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 was a mystes (“one who has been initiated”). Generally the sacred mysteries supplemented rather than competed with other forms of religion. Examples include Catharism, the Eleusinian Mysteries,⁶¹ early Christianity (which was considered subversive not because it was closed to

⁶⁰ Wait. “Good shepherd...” Where have I heard this before?

⁶¹ This is a pretty good example of the ability of mystery cults to preserve myths and rituals for very long periods of time. The Eleusinian Mysteries may have lasted for nearly two millennia 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 that mystery religions like this offer a unique look into PIE

the public but because it disallowed practice of all other forms of religion, most especially the imperial cult), the Mithraic Mysteries, the Orphic Mysteries, and Scientology.

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. Examples include maize and rice.

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 RITUAL 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.

The **Sage** (*senex, sophos*) is a Jungian archetype. It is usually a philosopher and is a father-figure. It is characterized by kindness, wisdom, and sound judgment. It uses personal knowledge of people and the world and tells stories to guide people into understanding their present selves and realizing their future selves. It may be a foreigner (culturally, nationally, ethnically, temporally, etc) or even a liminal being. It is often removed from action partway through a story.

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.

The **seclusion of girls at puberty** is a common rite of passage. A common element was a requirement that the girl "neither touch the ground nor see the sun" for the period of her seclusion. According to Frazer, these prohibitions were shared in ancient cultures by SACRED KINGS and priests. 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, as in the myths revolving around Persephone.

Self-centered world (*umwelt*) is a term devised by Uexküll and Sebeok to refer to the "biological foundations that lie at the very epicenter of the study of both communication and signification in the

mythology— not being the mythology themselves, but nevertheless being possibly less-removed from it than other mythologies.

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 will not share the exact same worldview.⁶²

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.

Shades are GHOSTS, specifically those that are "mere shadows"⁶³ of their living selves (as opposed to, say, the complete and vital spirits considered to inhabit the Christian Heaven). They may exist only in a semiconscious state. They are usually "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 done by being brought to live with the gods, and the term "hero" could 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 retrieve needed information about the past, present, or future; leading sacrifices; preserving tradition by storytelling and songs; acting a PSYCHOPOMP; and healing physical or nonphysical ailments by treating a person's spirit. Shamans are intermediaries or messengers between the phenomenal world and one or more spirit worlds. They may use tools such as swords, feathers, pipes, horns, drums, and bells. By operating primarily in the spirit world they effect changes in the phenomenal world and brings balance. Shamanism has been suggested to be the dominant religious practice of the Paleolithic. 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. "The shaman must become sick to understand sickness." 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 kind and most of the people exhibit some amount of the characteristics which they associate with shamans. The first known shaman was female. See HIEROGAMY; TUTELARY DIVINITIES; WOUNDED HEALER.

Shapeshifting dolphins appear in a number of myths. Dionysus turned a group of pirates into dolphins after they jumped into the sea in fright. Dolphins of the Amazon River are regarded as being able to change shape and sire children by human women.

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

⁶² This has obvious relevance for worldbuilders whose universes feature more than one sapient species.

⁶³ In Hebrew: tsalmaveth (death-shadow).

Shrines (*halls of remembrance*) are sacred places dedicated to a particular figure. They usually contain items associated with the figure (ex. bones, images, possessions), one of which is usually a focus. They may be located within buildings (whether they be churches, homes, or otherwise) 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.⁶⁴ This impurity was often acquired through the death of a relative. They are traditionally beggars or others 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 in to prevent the deceased from returning in some manner. It is considered to be a kind of apotropaic ritual. Examples of the traditional sin-eater were found in England, Scotland, and Wales, and also in the Appalachians. Equivalent figures found elsewhere in the world include Tlazolteotl, who ate the filth of a soul after its death (Aztec).

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).

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 the animals and the immense difficulty that may exist in practicing more common means of disposal (in Tibet, for example, the ground is too difficult for graves and fuel for fire is too rare for widespread cremation). It is today practiced in Mongolia, Qinghai, and Tibet, but almost-indistinguishable practices also exist among some Zoroastrians. In the past said practices were also found among the Comanches, Hawaiians (for their nobles), and 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 or most of the pantheon. 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 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; QUEENS 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 performing one or more acts of legend. They are generally humans (especially 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 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

⁶⁴ 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.

being tricked into a shameful act. One or more omens typically presage their return. Examples include Jesus Christ (Biblical), King Arthur (Arthurian), 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 itself or merely have power over it. Whether they are male or female, they are generally of the opposite sex to the lunar divinity. They may be cannibals. They may be bitten by a serpent, 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 symbols symbolize the sun. They include: circles; circles with a point in their center; circular disks; doubled sun crosses; eight-pointed stars⁶⁵; and sun crosses.

Solar vehicle 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 animated 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 mortals⁶⁶; ba, which was a person’s unique personality; 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 in the 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 capable of or even willing to harm people if not given a place to stay.

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 are male or

⁶⁵ The sun is a servant of Chaos! Hate the sun, serve the Emperor!

⁶⁶ This was part of the reason for destroying all record of a person’s name, as was the case with Akhenaton. It also encouraged a desire for fame, which increased the time that one’s name would be remembered. Ra, for example, is probably going to be remembered until the Egyptians themselves are forgotten.

female and are generally of the opposite sex to the shaman. They may impregnate female shamans and be impregnated by male shamans. They are generally communicated with through 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 bodily possess the shaman or another being. Examples include the manang (Borneo), the loa (Vodou), the “marriage to one’s heavenly counterpart” in Valentinian Gnosticism, and even, in some ways, the “brides of Christ” concept in Christianity.

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

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 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.

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 (*chaoskamps*) are myths that depict the battle of a divinity against a serpent demon (a “chaos monster”). The two figures 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 that follows afterward. Creation may be made possible by the serpent’s defeat or the serpent may be a WORLD PARENT (family reunions just got awkward). Examples include Marduk and Tiamat (Babylonian), Michael and the Devil (Biblical), Ra and Apes (Egyptian), Susanoo and Orochi (Japanese), and Zeus vs Typhon (Greek), and it is hinted at in the Bible through certain references to Leviathan. So basically it’s freaking everywhere.⁶⁸ See BATTLES AGAINST THE TITANS; THE PRINCESS AND THE DRAGON; WATERY DEMONS.

Suitheism is “the belief that one is a god, but that there may be others.” Compare with AUTOTHEISM; 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

⁶⁷ if a pair, which is most common, then they often have seven sons and seven daughters).

⁶⁸ 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 that Jormungandr’s dad is Loki, who was of the race of giants, who were directly descended from Ymir (whereas the Aesir, who Thor was descended from, were licked out of ice by a giant cow). This is not how it usually goes down but then, Ragnarok is special.

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).

Sympathetic magic (*imitative magic*) is “based on imitation or correspondence.” In other words, it is based on the idea that a thing which is sufficiently similar to another thing can be used to affect it. Examples include the ideas 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 a barren woman can 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 this taboo may be as extreme as death (as among the Goajiro). Examples of cultures with this taboo include the Australian aborigines, Indians, Maasai, Mbayá,⁶⁹ Saharans,⁷⁰ and Siberians.

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

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.

Theft of fire myths tell of a divinity who stole fire (and possibly the knowledge to make fire) from beings who sought to keep it away from humans and possibly others as well.⁷¹ The divinity is usually benevolent, stealing it for the good of those who lack fire. The fire may be stolen in a trick exchange or in exchange for the owner’s stolen child. The fire is usually kept in the hearth of the divinities where it is being held by the main pantheon or in a cave. In some ancient religions the tablets of destiny, book of

⁶⁹ ...Where everyone in the tribe receives a new name from the chief after someone dies

⁷⁰ ...Who refrain from giving family names so that the whole substance of a person’s name may be abandoned with that person

⁷¹ Though it is an unforgiveable stretch of the imagination, it nevertheless provides interesting story material to suppose that theft of fire myths date back to a time before our distant ancestors had the knowledge to *make* fires despite having control over them. In that era any appearance of fire (assuming it were 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 ridiculously argued to come from this same worldview).

life, or other sacred book may be stolen, with all other traits of a theft of fire myth applying to the situation. Examples include Mātariśvan (Hindu), the Watchers (Apocryphal), Grandmother Spider (Cherokee Amerind), and Rabbit (Creek Amerind). See culture-giving divinity.

Theophany is the appearance of a divinity to humans. The divinity may be glimpsed as it is or in another form (ex. swans, clouds, pillars 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.

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) and the eating of harvested grain as a reborn VEGETATION DIVINITY.

Theophoric names incorporate the name of a divinity as a basic element. The practice (called theophony) 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. They are especially common in Mesopotamia and the Near East. Examples include Apollodoros (Gift of Apollo), Elijah (My god is YHWH), John (YHWH is gracious), and Theodore (God's gift).

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 that the Trinity.

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). See LIGHTNING DIVINATION.

Totems are beings, objects, or symbols representing animals or plants that are in turn the symbol or image of a people. It calls back to a recorded ancestry or mythic past which, in reference to the totem, is

⁷² This suggests the possibility of future historians debating the religious symbolism that LOLcats held in the Twenty-First Century.

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 upon totemism in terms of one's relationship to the group. Possible reasons for selecting a totem are physical or psychological similarities between the group and the totem and rational interest in preserving the species (ex. the animal is an important food source). See SHAMANISM.

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).

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 he's at Olympus, no-one will look for his grave). Examples include Enoch (Biblical), King Gesar (Tibetan), and Viracocha (Incan).

Treacherous gardens are inversions of pleasant places. Associations with sexuality, if they exist, are malign.

Tree worship (*dendolatry*) features in many religions. They serve as pilgrimage sites and are often dedicated to or are themselves local divinities. As the local divinity it may be 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 sacred themselves. Either because the trees are viewed as sapient or because they are thought 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 (ex. in Thailand there are trees that are not permitted to be climbed because their spirits make it too dangerous), and a few fall into both categories. See TREES OF KNOWLEDGE; TREES OF LIFE; WISH TREES

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

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

⁷³ A Latin play on words: malum (apple) and mālum (evil). Nevertheless, it matches interestingly with the golden apples of immortality.

Trees of life are a source or 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 (ex. 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.⁷⁴ They may be connected to the death of a DYING-AND-RISING DIVINITY (ex. the tree of life was used to build Osiris' coffin, Jesus' cross was referred to as a tree of life). It is often conflated with the tree of knowledge, even in the Bible.⁷⁵ 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, Chinese mythology, and Christian mythology.

Trickster divinities subvert and break rules set by gods, humans, or the cosmos. They also fall into a Jungian archetype that is also called the Clown. They may be malicious but the effects are generally positive in the long run (especially if the trickster was acting out of benevolence). They are cunning and/or foolish. 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), Bugs Bunny (Looney Tunes), Coyote (Amerind), Hermes (Greek), Jacob (Biblical), and Loki (Norse). See RITUAL CLOWN.

Triple divinities (*threefold/tripled/triplicate/tripartite/triune/triadic divinities, trinities*) are divinities 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). See THE TRIPLE GODDESS.

The **Triple Goddess** is a TRIPLE DIVINITY first described by Graves and later adopted by Neopaganism and used in reference to historical female triple divinities. Her three aspects are the Maiden, the Mother, and the CRONE, which together represent the female lifespan, the phases of the MOON, and sometimes the division between the OVERWORLD, the PHENOMENAL WORLD, and the UNDERWORLD. The Maiden is associated with “enchantment, inception, expansion, the promise of new beginnings, birth, youth and youthful enthusiasm, represented by the waxing moon.” The Mother is associated with “ripeness, fertility, sexuality, fulfillment, stability, power and life represented by the full moon.” The Crone is associated with “wisdom, repose, death, and endings represented by the waning moon.” They may or may not be considered to be mere aspects of a single divinity. Graves believed that she was worshiped especially among poets. Evans speculated of a similar divinity at Crete who was “at once virgin and mother,” which others feel was influenced by the Virgin Mary.

⁷⁴ 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 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.

⁷⁵ “She [wisdom] is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her, and happy is every one that holdest her fast.” – Proverbs 3:18

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 the THREE HARES. They appear in many early cultures, including Lycian coins, Mycenaean vessels, and the Newgrange MEALITHIC tomb in Ireland.

Tutelary divinities (*hermetic divinities*) guide, help, or protect individuals or groups. They may accompany a person from birth. Examples include daimons⁷⁶ (Greek), patron saints or patron hallows (Christianity). See POWER ANIMAL; SPIRIT ANIMAL; SPIRIT SPOUSE; SUPERNATURAL NURSE.

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).

Underworld demons live in the land of the dead. They almost always act at the behest of a DEATH DIVINITY, either willingly or after being 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 unlucky, unprotected, unrighteous, or unwary. Examples include Ammit (Egyptian), Cerberus (Greek), and the supay (Incan).

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 relation to 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.⁷⁷ Examples include Adlivun (Inuit), Mictlan (Aztec), and Uku Pacha (Incan). See DESCENTS TO THE UNDERWORLD; UNDERWORLD DEMONS.

Ursa Major (*the Great Bear, Charles' Wain, the Giant Star Bear Waiting to Eat Us*) is a constellation that includes the Big Dipper. It is associated with a BEAR in so many cultures across the world (more cultures associate the two than do not) that many archaeologists believe this association to date back further than the migration across the Bering Land Bridge. Ashe proposed that the constellation was associated with a bear goddess that would later evolve into the Greek Artemis. See BEAR WORSHIP.

⁷⁶ 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.

⁷⁷ 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 it 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 Mayan mythology.

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 corresponding to winter. 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 to seek revenge for either their deaths (cruel, unnatural, or unjust) or 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 their body or the place or means of their 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. Votives include armor, body parts (even the votive-giver's own) coins, and religious symbols. They are usually cast in water or watery places (ex. 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).

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 certain circumstances, a hag-like appearance). Monotheistic "One Gods" often have closer parallels to local war divinities than any other class of divinity. They are often FERTILITY DIVINITIES or LOVE DIVINITIES (especially if female) as well. Examples include Agurzil (Berber), 'Oro (Polynesian), and Tohil (Mayan).

Water divinities are associated with all WATER or with particular bodies of water such as rivers or lakes. A water divinity's importance generally scales in proportion to the importance of the body of water with which it is associated. They are most dominant in civilizations where water is either very rare or common but unusually important for prosperity (such as 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 are more often female than not, especially as classes of divinities like nymphs and naiads. They may also be DEATH DIVINITIES and/or craft divinities (because of the various skills associated with the water, such as astronomy, cartography, and shipbuilding, and trade in general). They may be known for seducing humans (and may or may not kill them), especially if female. Examples include Jengu (Bakweri), St. Peter⁷⁸ (in Lithuanian folk Christianity), Suijin (Japanese), and Tlaloc (Aztec). See OLD MEN OF THE SEA; SEA WITCHES.

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

⁷⁸ ...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.

Watery demons frequently gnaw at⁷⁹ 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), and the kallikantzaroi goblins (Greek). See OCCULTING DEMONS.

Weaving is generally a mystical art under the purview of women. In societies where men are weavers, such as the Egyptian, it is thought that they usurped the role. 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. Even in societies where men are weavers, among divinities it is still the purview of women. It is a gift from divinities or other beings. Examples of divinities associated with weaving are Frigg (Norse), Mama Occlo (Incan), and Neith (Egyptian).

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. 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.

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.

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 purified in the great flood to henceforth roam the earth invisibly. They may have functioned as part of the atonement process undergone by the king on

⁷⁹ Though more an example of a TREE OF LIFE than an AXIS MUNDI, the plant of (eternal) life given to Gilgamesh by Utnapishtim is eaten by a serpent (the ur-chaos monster), one of the few examples of a successful attack on either the tree of life or a world tree. The snake's acquisition of immortality may point to the underlying motivation for these attacks.

behalf of his people and seem to have been associated with the tree of life. They may have represented the forces protecting the Earth and the Assyrian empire. The winged genii is thought to have influenced the conception of the chimera, the griffin, Pegasus, and Talos, among other mythological beings.

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

The **Wise Old Wo/Man** (*sky-wo/man*) is a Jungian archetype. It symbolizes the wisdom of the eternal fe/male nature. They are each “contrasted with a correspondingly dark, chthonic figure,” the terrible mother or witch and the hunter or old magician respectively. These represent “negative parental images in the magic world of the unconscious.” Enlightenment comes from reconciling the two. The Wise Old Man and the Hunter may also be called the Whole King and the Twisted King. Examples include Hecate (Greek). Examples include CRONES; SAGES.

Wish trees are an element of TREE WORSHIP. They may be wish trees because of their species, location, or appearance. Objects (usually coins, wreaths, ribbons, or rags but also cigars, meat, hair, clothing, human nails, etc) 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, luck, love, or the granting of another wish. Animal or HUMAN SACRIFICE may also be made at the tree, whether they are simply killed on site or actually killed with the tree (ex. 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. They are not witches themselves.

World Couple myths are CREATION MYTHS that 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 way trace their lineage back to the world parents. You might be able to argue that accounts of the FIRST HUMAN that 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.

World folk-epics are epics that form an integral part of a 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 he or she 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.

World mills (*heavenly mills, cosmic mills*) describe the firmament in terms of a rotating millstone. They may churn out good fortune and misfortune both. They may be responsible for organizing the universe in a COSMOGENICAL MYTH. They may produce a liquid DIVINE FOOD. They may be associated with the CELESTIAL OCEAN or with whirlpools.

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 Celtic mythology (where there are two bulls and no people, and one of the bulls totally gets a hankering for steak and rips the other one apart), Lithuanian mythology (where there is a star maiden who decapitates a bull and three cows, the latter of which then turn into her sisters), and Norse mythology. See SACRED BULL.

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

World tree are a type of AXIS MUNDI.⁸² Typically their roots reach the UNDERWORLD (represented as either earth or water) and their branches (inhabited by birds) the OVERWORLD in order to connect them to each other and to the phenomenal world. In the Old World the concept is strongest in Norse mythology, and they are present in Mesoamerican mythology, where there may be four world trees at each of the cardinal directions. Their branches are sometimes theorized to have been clouds or the visible MILKY WAY GALAXY. Some scholars believe that the world tree concept has been "programmed into the human mind by evolutionary biology" and "implanted in our collective unconscious" because of our millions of years of development among the trees, which for that time were most of our world. See HUMAN BODY AND WORLD TREE UNITY; TREE OF LIFE; WORLD TREE PILGRIMS.

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), Odin hanging on Yggdrasil (Norse), and Dante's *Divine Comedy*.⁸³ See DYING-AND-RISING DIVINITY.

Worldview (*weltanschauung*) is the "fundamental cognitive orientation of an individual or society encompassing the entirety of the individual or society's knowledge and point-of-view." 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 opinion⁸⁴) about their worldview. It has been argued that worldview is unavoidably bound by restrictions set by language, a basic point of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. See SELF-CENTERED WORLD; WORLD FOLK-EPICS.

The **Wounded Healer** is a Jungian archetype. It refers to the capacity "to be at home in the darkness of suffering and there to find germs of light and recovery with which, as though by enchantment, to bring forth Asclepius, the sunlike healer." It confronts its sickness and mortal peril in order to have power over injury and death. "It is his own hurt that gives a measure of his power to heal." This confrontation is a rite of passage into a new existence. In some cases its personal wounds cause it to unintentionally harm

⁸⁰ A curious case is the myth of Romulus and Remus. While they didn't create the world Romulus was the founder of Rome and the progenitor of the Roman people, which, all kidding aside, is often synonymous with the creation of the world for a people even if there were other folks around already. Romulus killed his brother and, more interestingly, is said in some stories to have been dismembered by the senators of the city later on.

⁸¹ An obvious possibility is multiple world parents that get sacrificed (or maybe sacrifice each other at the same time) but I haven't seen it.

⁸² In some legends, the bodhi tree under which Gautama Buddha reached enlightenment had been planted at the first place in the world to exist.

⁸³ This may be the only example of Satan or any equivalent figure being an AXIS MUNDI.

⁸⁴ This is not to say that atheism necessarily lacks mythology or that religion necessarily requires it.

others furthers instead of heal them. Their interaction is mutually beneficial; if it is possible for its wound to be healed then this is only to be done through healing others. Examples include Chiron (Greek), Dr. Gregory House (pop culture), and Carl Jung himself. See DYING-AND-RISING DIVINITIES.

Writing allowed the development of greater complexity in religion than had been seen before. The doctrines and practices of a religion did not have to be limited to that which could be readily remembered after writing was invented, which quickly led to an explosion in size. 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 kept were religious (tithes, temple storehouses, etc). Theories about the beginning of writing ascribe its origins to musical notation or marks of ownership, among others. See DIVINE LANGUAGE.

The **Year-King** is a concept developed by Frazer as an outgrowth of the recognized SACRED KING position. 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, “a divine John Barleycorn.” 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 “high priest” role 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, and Osiris (Egyptian). See DYING-AND-RISING DIVINITIES.

⁸⁵ Which is an awesome idea, but probably not true.

Appendix A: Non-Standard Portfolios

All too often, divinities in constructed mythologies have portfolios that are far neater than they should be. Without a modicum of thought it can be determined why each element in there. 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, these should hopefully give you some ideas.⁸⁶

Bastet [Egyptian] began as a protection divinity in Lower Egypt, especially against diseases⁸⁷ 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.

Beaivi [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 him to

⁸⁶ If all else fails, 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.

⁸⁷ Specifically the contagious ones at first, which isn't a distinction that you usually find in constructed mythologies.

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.⁸⁸

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.

⁸⁸ 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.

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." Paglia suggests 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]. 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 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.⁸⁹ They are judged to have a biological basis. They include: **a**esthetics; affection felt and expressed; age grades, statuses, and terms; attachment; attempts to predict the future, sustain life, and win love; **b**aby talk; beliefs about death, disease, and mis/fortune; biphilia; body adornment; **c**hildbirth 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

⁸⁹ When designing a nonhuman culture, removing a few cultural universals can serve to make it subtly alien (or not-so-subtly, depending on what you remove).

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 necessarily fire-making); cooking; copulation normally conducted in privacy; cooperative labor; cosmology; counting; courtship; **d**aily routines; death rituals, including mourning; decorative art; **d**e **f**acto 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; **e**ducation, which includes toilet training; envy and symbolic means of dealing with envy; ethics; ethnocentrism; etiquette; **f**easting; food taboos; **g**ender roles⁹⁰; gestures and facial expressions; gift-giving, admiration of generosity, and disapproval of stinginess; giving of directions; gossip; greetings; **h**airstyles; healing practices; hospitality; **i**ncest, especially between mother and son, tabooed in most or all cases; inheritance rules; **j**oking; **l**eaders; **m**ales 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); **np**eer groups not based on family; perception of music as art; personal names; personal names; personal property rights⁹¹; 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; **r**eciprocity; revenge; resistance to abuse of power; right hand is preferred by culture if handedness preference exists; risk-taking; rites of passage; **s**anctions 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; **t**echniques 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; **w**ariness (if not fear) around snakes; and weaning. See **L**INGUISTIC **U**NIVERSAL

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 is an idea by 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

⁹⁰ Which is not to say that there are only two genders, or that any given gender is sex-specific.

⁹¹ In its most basic form “that which is useful to me and only to me,” such as a person’s glasses or a memento.

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 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.

Geomythology 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 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 CHTHONIC-MATERNAL stage.

Homo Necans refers to the idea by 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.” Burkert theorized that the rituals of hunting magic were the foundation of all religion. Breuil and 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 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.⁹²

⁹² There was a distinct lack of killing heathens for not believing in the same gods that you did, so it might be good to bring this idea back. Just sayin’.

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,”⁹³ “face,” “hand,” and “white.”

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. 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** was a group of scholars who interpreted myth as arising from ritual. Rituals, they claimed, were performed for reasons unrelated to myth (ex. 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. They were also called the *Cambridge Ritualists*. The idea is called “Primacy of Ritual.”

Numinous-centered theory is a theory of religion that focuses on what Otto described as moments of the numinous or “Wholly Other.”⁹⁴ These moments could be divided into *mysteria fascinans* and *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.

⁹³ According to Berlin and Kay, development of color terminology proceeds as follows: While some languages have words only for black and white (more accurately dark/cold and light/warm), those with three always add red rather than any other color. The fourth word covers either green or yellow, and the fifth covers the other. 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 (English is not so refined as to have its own word for light blue, especially a word used more often than the term “light blue”). Languages do not have more than twelve *general/simple* color terms. See CARDINAL DIRECTIONS AND COLORS.

⁹⁴ Totally coincidentally, it rhymes with “Holy Other,” which could serve pretty well itself.

Organized religion may have allowed the rise of civilization by providing both a justification (other than force) for central authority among multiple tribes and, more importantly, bonds that could connect peoples 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 Puhvel used “for the mutual demonization that occurred when the Younger-Avesta demonized the daevas, and the post-Rigvedic texts demonized the asuras.” In the early versions that we can find of either text they are, at best, “misguided” but still gods rather than demons.

Primacy of myth is the idea that ritual always arises from myth as a means of applying it practically. “Just as technology is an application of science, so ritual is an application of myth- an attempt to produce certain effects, given the supposed nature of the world.” Contrast with MYTH AND RITUAL SCHOOL.

Proto-science theory is the idea that religion was 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 led 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 more complex interactions and a yet more powerful sense of belonging could be possessed than had been possible before.

Rational choice theory holds the existence of four models of cult formation. In the *Psychopathological Model*, “religions are founded during a period of severe stress in the life of the founder” and are both the process and the result of a peculiar kind of self-therapy. Buddhism could easily be seen as belonging to this model. In the *Entrepreneurial Model*, founders have been involved with multiple religious groups before they take ideas from these and possibly other religions and try to put them together into something new. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, with Joseph’s Smith propensity to eclecticism (everything from differences between German and English translations of the Bible to the Kabbalah to then-modern science), has the characteristics of the Entrepreneurial Model. 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 Adventist Church and the Druze are examples of this process.⁹⁵ 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 spiritual experience to a natural disaster, and usually augments one of the previous three models (it was not even recognized as a separate model at first). Although religions generally adhere more closely to one model than any others this does not mean that they fit exclusively into one model. For example, while most aspects of the LDS Church are Entrepreneurial, it nonetheless also has elements of the Social and Revelatory Models and even the Psychopathological Model.

⁹⁵ While there were many influential guiding figures in the early development of the Church (most especially James White, Ellen G White, Joseph Bates, and J. N. Andrews), no single founder can be pointed to. While William Miller set the stage for the Church’s development in the environment of Millerism (which provided the necessary environmental conditions for the Social Model to engage), he no more founded the Seventh-Day Adventist Church than Jesus Christ did.

Sacred and profane is a dichotomy by which, according to 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 things rests in their 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 kind (i.e. the creation of humanity rather than the birth of a single human). And if power and value are the same, then the ultimate value (indeed the only value worth comparing to any other) similarly lies in first origins of things.

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** is a theory proposed by Dumézil. It puts forth the idea that the PIE 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, not yet widely-accepted but not at all disproven either.

Urmonotheismus is the school of thought that the oldest religious systems were monotheistic. One of the theories in this school is that it was both monotheistic and shamanistic 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 same time) before other divinities entered the scene.

World religions are defined by 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.

Appendix C: 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.

“(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...” Gujati, 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.

“(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.

Appendix E: Random Tables

To repeat what has been said before: The following set of random tables comes from Rolang's Creeping Doom at rolang.com. It has been licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License.

Nature of Being

First, if you haven't decided what this being is, roll for nature

Roll 1d8	Nature of Being
1	Saint
2	Avatar
3	Demigod
4	Reincarnated Emanation/Bodhisattva
5	Local Diety/Spirit
6	Titan/Being/Alien
7	Omnipotent/Omniscient
8	Personified Concept (no strictness or jealousy)

Domain

Then, you can either skip ahead to roll the Deity's purview or you can roll here for a domain.

Roll 1d10	Deity's Domain
1	Household
2	Household + roll again
3	Human Endeavors
4	Human Endeavers + roll again
5	Nature
6	Nature + roll again
7	Personal
8	Personal + roll again
9	Spirit
10	Spirit + roll again

Deities in the personal domain are or were living beings who either were gods/demigods/avatars or they became them after death, coronation, etc. They might not have a particular purview or they might develop one after generations of worship.

Purview

Roll d100 for a totally random purview in any domain or if you already have a domain chosen, roll 1d20 and consult columns 2 and 3. Note that some purviews are opposite sides of a coin. You can choose, flip a coin or make the same god responsible for both sides of the coin (one might pray to the goddess of slavery for freedom, for example).

Roll d100	Domain	Roll 1d5 for Domain then 1d20 for Purview	Purview
1	Household	1	Play
2	Household	2	Fertility/Harvest/Babies
3	Household	3	Health/Disease
4	Household	4	Hunt
5	Household	5	Hearth
6	Household	6	Doors/Household Safety
7	Household	7	Baking
8	Household	8	Wine/Beer
9	Household	9	Sewing/Weaving
10	Household	10	Wealth
11	Household	11	Household Item
12	Household	12	Food (particular)
13	Household	13	Important Commodity
14	Household	14	Male Virility
15	Household	15	Bridges/Gates/Crossing/Crossroads
16	Household	16	Fidelity/Adultery
17	Household	17	Animal Husbandry
18	Household	18	Gossip/Reputation
19	Household	19	Books/Scrolls

20	Household	20	Important Domestic Animal/Insect
21	Human Endeavors	1	Invention
22	Human Endeavors	2	War
23	Human Endeavors	3	Indulgence
24	Human Endeavors	4	Theft/Kidnapping
25	Human Endeavors	5	Travel/Hospitality to Strangers
26	Human Endeavors	6	Sailing
27	Human Endeavors	7	Building
28	Human Endeavors	8	Exploration/Adventure
29	Human Endeavors	9	Cannibalism
30	Human Endeavors	10	Honor/Justice/Vengeance
31	Human Endeavors	11	Trade/Commerce/Unexpected Windfalls
32	Human Endeavors	12	Slavery/Freedom
33	Human Endeavors	13	Learning/Ignorance
34	Human Endeavors	14	Hiding
35	Human Endeavors	15	Art/Poetry
36	Human Endeavors	16	Healing
37	Human Endeavors	17	Protector of Our People
38	Human Endeavors	18	Mining
39	Human Endeavors	19	Sport
40	Human Endeavors	20	Gambling
41	Nature	1	Animal
42	Nature	2	Mountains
43	Nature	3	Night
44	Nature	4	Oceans
45	Nature	5	Season (1d4: Spring/Summer/Autumn/Winter)
46	Nature	6	Plants/Woods
47	Nature	7	Predominant Local Climate/Weather Type
48	Nature	8	Fresh Waters

49	Nature	9	Natural Disasters
50	Nature	10	Thunder / Storms /Monsoon Season
51	Nature	11	Death/Destruction
52	Nature	12	Sun
53	Nature	13	Moon
54	Nature	14	Planet/Stars
55	Nature	15	Air
56	Nature	16	Fire
57	Nature	17	Earth
58	Nature	18	Water (all)
59	Nature	19	Natural Beauty
60	Nature	20	Decay (and rebirth)
61	Personal	1	King/Pharaoh/Emperor
62	Personal	2	Queen/Empress
63	Personal	3	Consort
64	Personal	4	Parent of (roll again)
65	Personal	5	Child
66	Personal	6	Aescetic/Hermit
67	Personal	7	Bastard
68	Personal	8	Hero
69	Personal	9	Villain
70	Personal	10	Monster
71	Personal	11	Traitorous Advisor
72	Personal	12	Criminal
73	Personal	13	Folk Hero
74	Personal	14	Wise man/Wizard
75	Personal	15	Brother/Sister
76	Personal	16	Twins
77	Personal	17	General

78	Personal	18	Physician
79	Personal	19	Martyr
80	Personal	20	Roll Twice
81	Spirit	1	Wisdom
82	Spirit	2	Compassion
83	Spirit	3	Tricks
84	Spirit	4	Protection from Spirits
85	Spirit	5	Miracles
86	Spirit	6	Afterlife
87	Spirit	7	Pre-life
88	Spirit	8	Karma
89	Spirit	9	Undead
90	Spirit	10	Laughter
91	Spirit	11	Song
92	Spirit	12	Love/Sex
93	Spirit	13	Destiny/Fate
94	Spirit	14	Dreams
95	Spirit	15	Fear/Bravery
96	Spirit	16	Greed/Generosity
97	Spirit	17	Jealousy/Equanimity
98	Spirit	18	Hate/Love (non-romantic)
99	Spirit	19	Abstinence/Indulgence
100	Spirit	20	Bardo (Trial grounds between lifetimes)

Form

Roll 1d8 for appearance (if applicable). If you roll twice, combine the two (animal headed human, panther made of swords, whatever).

Roll 1d8	Form
1	Human
2	Humanoid /Demihuman / Unusual Human

3	Animal
4	Object from Nature
5	Natural Process (wind, fire, etc.)
6	Man-made Object
7	Monster
8	Roll Twice

Symbol

Roll 1d8 for a symbol. If you roll twice, there are more than one (cross and fish, tree and wheel, fire and winged man, etc.). Or combine those as well.

Roll 1d8	Symbol
1	Weapon
2	Tool/Household Object
3	Animal
4	Manmade Symbol/Letter
5	Natural Object
6	Monster
7	Body Part
8	Roll Twice

Colors

Every team needs a color or two. Roll 1d10.

Roll 1d10	Color(s)
1	Red
2	Orange
3	Yellow
4	Green
5	Blue
6	Indigo
7	Violet
8	Black

9	White
10	Roll Twice: Mix or Pattern

Offerings

This is what you have to bring to appease/propitiate the deity. Obviously roll again if the result doesn't fit your campaign.

Roll 1d10	Offerings
1	Animal Sacrifice
2	Plants
3	Humans
4	Money
5	Work
6	Art
7	Goods/Commodities
8	Food/Water/Drink
9	Fasting/Deprivation
10	Help Others

Other Aspects

Roll 1d10 to determine other aspects of that deity on a scale of 1 to 10.

Strictness	1 = Forgiving 10 = Unforgiving
Jealousy	1 = No Proselytizing 10 = Convert the World
Opacity	1 = No Revelations 10 = Many Scriptures
Posse	1 = Random Lone believers 10 = Ecclesiatical Hierarchy