

Mythology for Fictional Worlds 😊

Participants

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Description

Myths are a core component of a culture; how do writers create believable myths for invented cultures? How do writers invite existing myths to inspire their fictional creations without engaging in cultural appropriation?

Questions & Answers

Who said it?

interesting ways to write taboo into your story connected to mythology. How can mythology lead to boundaries, rules, tricksters?

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What are some ways that the written word interacts differently than the oral tradition when recording and passing down myth?

<i>A. Flexibility of the spoken word vs the written</i> <i>a. A written version becomes the story.</i> <i>i. The cultural deifying of the written word</i> <i>B. Nigerian (among others) griots will have a tradition to maintain a story (memorize with social pressure)</i> <i>a. We don't have the memory of the oral traditions</i> <i>C. When books are moved to different forms (internet, pdf, ebooks) you don't know what's been changed</i> <i>a. Translations add another level of complexity</i> <i>b. Time travel, "The Starship Theodora" by Lou Antonelli</i> <i>D. The version that was written down is The Authority (that may or may not be earned)</i> <i>a. There are the texts and the argument</i> <i>b. If you the writer put something in the book, a myth, do you want it to be authoritative or are you going to push back against yourself. You gesture at diversity.</i> <i>E. As a writer, say no to monoculture.</i>	<i>A. Chris</i> <i>B. Andrea</i> <i>C. Ian</i> <i>D. Eliz</i> <i>E. Rob</i>
<i>what are some does and don'ts for writing the outsider. The character encountering the other? Opportunities for useful misinterpretation?</i>	
<i>A. "Voices" by U.K. LeGuin has great examples/ well written</i>	<i>A. Andrea</i> <i>B. Eliz</i> <i>C. Ian</i>

<i>B. If the outsider is the reader viewpoint, our world, culturally legible, leave a lot of room, a gap, for people (the reader, the author) to learn from mistake “Left Hand of Darkness.”</i> <i>a. You get outsiders perspective and then the insider’s realization that the outsider has understood the wrong thing</i> <i>C. Fred Lerner, In Memoriam from Fantastic Books (July 2024)</i> <i>a. He’s telling the point of view of a small minority within the minority of an insular culture.</i> <i>i. Outsider that we already know, that are the same and yet different</i> <i>ii. And Human vs non human</i> <i>D. Speaker for the Dead: aliens do something “horrific” and “barbaric” it looks like genocide is on the way. But there is something that he’s missing that’s very important. Looking at the same set of facts but getting different outcomes</i>	<i>D. Chris</i>
<i>How would one play with mythology reinvented over time & in real time?</i> <i>Stories interpreted for me audiences and across mediums?</i>	
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<i>What are double edged functions of myth as both a creative and destructive tool?</i>	

<i>A. Jewish myth: about impossible deliverance from destruction, quite a few them.</i> <i>B. Myths can also give redemption at the same time they can be reductive to the other</i> <i>C. They can also make us take responsibility</i> <i>D. In the final reckoning that love will win the day</i>	<i>A. Chris</i> <i>B. Eliz</i>
<i>Where is mythology wider than gods and religion?</i>	
<i>A. Superstitions</i> <i>a. How recent the split between prayer, medicine, magic</i> <i>i. I'm going to say an 'our father" to get the timing, the magic, a ceremony</i> <i>ii. People are not monolithic in their interaction with the cultural spirit world.</i> <i>B. Daily life is infused with spirituality</i> <i>a. Can call on the orishas</i> <i>b. The natural world is spiritual and is not separated,</i> <i>C. You have a prop that allows for you to interact with the spirits around you.</i> <i>i. The jedi, animism</i> <i>ii. Like a placebo that lets you feel better, or an actor's prop that allows them to inhabit their character</i>	<i>A. Eliz</i> <i>B. Andrea</i> <i>C. Ian</i> <i>D. Chris</i>

<i>D. There is a basic level of understanding that people deal with their world</i>	
<i>How do you deal with religion in fiction committing horrible acts</i>	
<i>A. This is a question of how peoples make sense (emotional sense), of atrocity/</i> <i>B. "Everything happens for a reason we make up later."</i> <i>a. Body is responding before the mind can process, culture does this too</i> <i>i. The myths provide a shared story to give meaning to the things that have happened to our people, or the things our people have done (for good or bad)</i> <i>C. We can tell a story, "Glorious stories" that we are burdened with glorious purpose</i> <i>a. Any myth is contested.</i> <i>D. We create myth to not take responsibility</i> <i>a. But when Dorothy is blown to Oz, it feels better to have the story to tell why it happened and why it won't happen again</i>	<i>A. Eliz</i> <i>B. Chris</i> <i>C. Andrea</i> <i>D. Ian</i>
<i>How do you deal with different question mono vs poly</i>	
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<i>How not to appropriate when creating new mythology?</i>	

- A. *“Write to know,” (questioning) investigate various cosmologies*
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 - b. *Can’t avoid making errors*
 - c. *Research in library, talk to the people, the followers, approach others and “yourself” with humility*
 - d. *The term “myth” is from the 1830’s/ Originally Europeans looking at the other*
- B. *Built a “wiki” and did way too much world-building that wasn’t ever used, or that was no longer useful as the needs of the story evolved*
 - a. *Write enough of the myth to serve the moment in the story*
 - i. *Like being a dungeon master (worldbuilding is fun but you don’t need to be Tolkien)*
 - 1. *Don’t forget your purpose is to tell a story*
 - 2. *Know what your characters care about and what you care about (might not be called “myth”). Build the myths based on those values.*
 - 3. *It’s a point of unity that answers key questions*
 - 4. *The question of “literal” truth in myth is more gray, depends on the culture. Not every culture places equal value on absolute historical accuracy; sometimes emotional or symbolic truths are more important*

- A. *Andrea*
- B. *Chris*
- C. *Elizabeth*
- D. *Ian*

<i>C. Function of myth and story of myth is vast and varied and the boundaries are gray and situationally variable</i> <i>D. There is also the myth of the backgrounds of our lives, the air, the unconscious things that we don't think about, take for granted, is it deep is it realized (is the author aware of the myths they are creating)</i> <i>a. Ian Randal Strock mentioned earlier the Use of the word "humanity" in a nonhuman society. How do you catch and avoid things like that without seeming heavy-handed or deliberately esoteric?</i>	
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<i>Do you find you come up with a culture before starting a mythology, vice versa, or together?</i>	

Jade City is a great example

Shadow Shaper: really critical information, but the characters don't want to hear it.

Blue Eye Samurai does this well. Shadowplay is happening on the street, and the legend has parallels to what is happening with Mizu in the main story.

Andrea: Dramatize the telling of the mythos, i.e. a grandmother trying to tell a grandchild some things but the grandchild is trying to have an argument.