MYLING

Ein Myling ist der Geist eines von seiner Mutter ermordeten Kindes, häufig auf- grund unehelicher Geburt oder weil jene, die zu arm sind, um für ihr Kind zu sorgen, keine soziale Absicherung erhalten. Im 19. Jahrhundert wird Kindestötung mit dem Tod bestraft, und häufig will der Myling dieses Urteil vollstreckt sehen.

Der Geist sucht den Ort heim

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Der Geist sucht den Ort heim, an dem der Leichnam versteckt wurde - schrei- end, heulend und schluchzend. Er erscheint  
als Gespenst im gleichen Alter wie das Kind, als es starb. Die Kreatur kann zu- dem dir körperliche Gestalt eines riesigen schwarzen Vogels mit menschlichem Kopf annehmen. Ein Myling kann neckend und schelmisch sein.

3

3

Three rings to the elves, the spirit assists three times, a group of three protagonists to save the world.

3

A triad of events, characters, or objects feature in many stories. They can be holy or supernatural in nature, symbolizing something beyond the normal world.  
 The rule of three can be applied to storytelling as well. Many stories are made up of beginning, middle and end, and a repetition of three is more memorable. Three is the smallest number to establish and then break a pattern too.

Ideas to subvert:  
- The third time something occurs it breaks with the pattern of the first two times, revealing a lie told to the players.  
- A missing fourth object, hidden by the assumption that everything comes in threes.

4

4

Four elements to master, four cardinal directions, and four horsemen to bring the end.

4

Four aspects make a whole. If there are four things they represent a completeness in an earthly sense, contrasted to the holiness of a triad. Examples are the four elements, and the old philosophies of four temperaments and four humors.  
 Four is associated with death as well, for example in East Asian cultures.

Ideas to subvert:  
- Depending on the cultural background of the players, a connection of four with death can be subversive.  
- Four individuals that seem to be well balanced in their power, turn out to play the role of the four horsemen.

7

7

Seven dwarves lived on the seven seas, seven days of the weeks, looking for seven mystical orbs of dragonkin.

7

Seven is the sum of three and four, symbolizing unity of spirit and body, holiness and earthliness. Due to that seven is commonly a lucky number and things that come in sevens are good fortune and benevolent.  
 Beyond that seven is also just a very popular number among the numbers from one to ten according to studies.

Ideas to subvert:  
- Seven is an unlucky number in East Asian cultures.  
- Seven characters or objects may represent something that is wrong if brought together and unified.

12

12

Twelve knights of the round table protect the isles. Twelve gods form a pantheon in Greek and Norse mysthology.

12

Twelve is most used to symbolize completeness, especially in relation to groups of people, like a pantheon of gods or the twelve labors of Herakles, to absolve him of his sins.  
 Based on the meanings of three and four one can also assign a divine fulfillment to twelve, as it is the product of the worldly and the heavenly. Twelve commonly stands in contrast to thirteen, as the concept of a normal world compared to the bad influence of the thirteenth aspect.

Ideas to subvert:  
- Unifying twelve waring kingdoms signs the end of everyone, due to completeness ending in stagnation and death.

13

13

The thirteenth fairy was utmost displeased by not being invited to the christening.

13

An association of a character, object or event with thirteen, commonly shows them being dark, evil, unnatural or unlucky.  
 Especially Christian culture sees thirteen as a bad omen and associates it with the devil. Days like Friday the 13th are days of especially bad luck, although this superstition developed independently.

Ideas to subvert:  
- The thirteenth son is naturally shunt from his environment but is the last hope of his community.  
- Everyone is afraid for the thirteenth king to destroy the kingdom, but there was a secret king, and the currently ruling king is the thirteenth.

Amnesia

Amnesia

A complete loss of a previous person or personality is rare. More common are a loss of memory of their name, their previous life events or people important to them. This can follow an emotional or physical trauma injury. Any damage to the head specifically can run the danger to forget something, like the past five minutes of standing guard.  
 Healing the amnesia is commonly achieved by either powerful magical healing or exposing the character to events, places or people they have forgot.

Ideas to subvert:  
- As the old memories come back, they are not compatible and create a second consciousness trapped in the same body.

Amnesia

As he stepped off the stairs, the feline woman looked surprised and called out “Lucien”. Who is this Lucien? This is his body now, whoever he was, he is dead.

Beauty beyond compare

Beauty beyond compare

Nothing can compare to the appearance of this object, landscape or character. Sometimes this beauty is by divine ordain, or magically gifted. These blessings can come at a cost, either for the beauty to be conditional to certain circumstances or the achievement of beauty demanding other traits to be sacrificed like kindness or morality.  
If there are no other aspects to ease worries, supernatural beauty commonly evokes ideas of danger or subterfuge.

Ideas to subvert:  
- The supernatural beauty is chosen or granted to create distance to the people around a character.

Beauty beyond compare

The legend of the queen spreads far and wide, and everyone flocks to the palace to witness the stunning sight.

Birthright

Birthright

To be convinced that you deserve something purely by being born into a family and culture is common in aristocracy and capitalism. A character might have a birthright due to heavy generational trauma as well, which is usually framed as reparations for the harm done to their ancestors.  
It is common in stories to keep a birthright a secret from the public or even the character themselves, to be revealed in a dramatic moment.

Ideas to subvert:  
- The true nature or way of access of the birthright is obfuscated by generations of oral retelling. This may end in significant mistakes in the knowledge about it.

Birthright

This watch. This watch was on your daddy’s wrist when he was shot down over Hanoi. The way your dad looked at it, that watch was your birthright.

Birth Sign/Defect

Birth Sign/Defect

To be marked by birth is often hard on children. People around them tend to interpret greater reasons behind the distribution of vague birthmarks or severe disabilities from birth, if there are any reasons or not.  
 Due to that this type of story often deals with themes of segregation, persecution and social isolation. Especially if the mark is a sign of something greater or more important, like an important heritage or task.

Ideas to subvert:  
- The birth sign is just chance, revealing the persecution as simply wrong.  
- The mark reveals a truth about the parents of the child, like them being cruel.

Birth Sign/Defect

The monster was human afterall, she was sure of it. She prepared herself to show it the crescent moon on her collarbone as proof of her nature.

Call to adventure

Call to Adventure

As a central part of the hero’s journey, also called the monomyth, the Call to Adventure is a common component of many stories. The central idea is that the hero learns that they must leave the comfort and safety of the known home and embark on the adventure of the story.

Ideas to subvert:  
- The Call to Adventure may be fabricated by an outside force, trying to abuse the hero for their own goals.  
- The hero is desperate to escape the boring normal world, and jumps on the first sign of a Call to Adventure. Even if it is misinterpreted as such.

Call to Adventure

The content man sits on his porch, smoking a lovely pipe. As he notices an old friend approaching, he does not know of the adventure that is waiting for him.

Chosen One

Chosen One

A character chosen to succeed in one specific task of great import, is an age old story. If they are chosen from birth or chosen after specific accomplishments depends on the story.  
 A chosen one does not have to be chosen to do good too, the specifics may be outlined in a prophecy or similar reading of fate.

Ideas to subvert:  
- An authority figure may call out a character as chosen from the beginning, after they already tried and succeeded at the required challenge.  
- A hero that is chosen has to face off a Chosen one fighting for evil. The two fates contradict, throwing fate into question.

Chosen One

Seers have foretold the birth of a child who will bring about the downfall of the powerful queen.

Cunning Solution

Cunning Solution

A problem so large or so delicate, to not be possible to solve by brute force or diplomacy, can be solved by a smart idea, a good plan, or subterfuge. Or all three at once, at the hands of a trickster character. Stories use this chance to highlight characters that have previously stood back as the other characters had their spotlight.  
 The burden is on the storyteller to make it seem smart, while still being compelling and not contrived.

Ideas to subvert:  
- The problem solved by the solution was caused by the trickster themselves.  
- The trickster has just covered up the problem.

Cunning Solution

Dressing up the muscular man in a wedding gown, was truly only an idea the Trickster god could have come up with.

Consuming Folk

Consuming Folk

Consuming other sentient beings is usually marked as a deeply immoral act, changing the creature for the worse. If it drains a metaphysical good, turns into an addiction, or is a sign of inherent evil, the choices for consequences are varied.  
 The most popular depictions of this trope are found in vampires, zombies, and ghouls.

Ideas to subvert:  
- Consuming Folk is a necessary sacrifice to access supernatural powers, like strength or even immortality.  
- The victim sacrificed themselves willingly, either for a greater cause, or for personal reasons.

Consuming Folk

At night the enemies of life roam freely. Drinking blood, feasting on carrion or even hunting children, their hunger has no end.

Curse

Curse

A curse always has a source. A displeased witch, a vengeful demigod, or an emotional lover may call upon powerful magic to afflict a character, place or object with a detrimental effect. Curses usually receive their power from the words and idioms used during the cursing. Due to this a common way to escape a curse is to discover a way to subvert the meaning of its words. A curse is usually caused by an unjust action or treatment of the character speaking the curse. The specifics of the curse may refer to this cause or be a more general punishment.

Ideas to subvert:  
- The curse is inflicted to someone not actually at fault for its cause.

Curse

Damsel in Distress

Damsel in Distress

A female read character is put into a dangerous or restrictive situation and can only escape with the help of a heroic figure, coded as a strong and dominant male.  
 As this trope is deeply rooted in restrictive gender roles, many stories try to subvert it, in favor of more in depth characterization. Sometimes it is still appropriate to consider the parts of the trope that work and try to adapt it rather than simply subverting it. Generally, one should try to veer away from the clear gendered reading of the trope and give the damsel ways to contribute to their rescue.

Damsel in Distress

The farmer boy threw open the cell with force. The princess rose from her rest and looked at him slightly annoyed: ‘A little short for a guard.’

Enthralling Music/Song

Enthralling Song

Magical music, be it the song of sirens, the flute of the ratcatcher, or the maddening dance of the fey, is a common way to express supernatural power luring characters into danger and entrapping them. Alternatively, the music speaks sometimes of an ethereal goodness a character possesses, elevating them above the other, worldly musicians.

Ideas to subvert:  
- The prince is only able to enthrall specific creatures with his music, for example rats, birds, or other small critters.  
- The character cannot control his music and charms others unwillingly.  
- The character has a hideous speaking voice.

Enthralling Song

First you will come to the Sirens who enchant all who come near them. If any one unwarily draws in too close, they warble him to death with the sweetness of their song.   
 ~ The Odysse

Evil Witch

Evil Witch

Perceived power in minority and disadvantaged groups easily scares people. Historically, women have been accused of witchcraft and other immoral acts, usually for disregarding traditional gender norms, through self-empowerment and education, and rejection of hierarchies, for example by not marrying or speaking up. To be an Evil Witch, a character does not need to be capable of magic at all, but in stories it usually coincides.  
 Commonly witches gather in groups of three too. A coven forms outside the regular cultural hierarchy and provides a social in-group for those deemed Evil Witches by others.

Evil Witch

The night was as black as the inside of a cat. A fire gleamed and illuminated three hunched figures. ‘When shall we three met again?’

Fate

Fate

Fate is often interwoven with stories. Characters are destined to play their role as the events unfurl, with little control on their end. In more interactive narratives, fate usually affects things outside of the preview of the players, or the narrative questions if fate is truly inevitable, or if it can be subverted.  
 Fate is expressed through prophecies or visions about the future. Knowing the future often leads to characters trying to prevent or change the foreseen events, usually leading to them causing them in the first place.

Ideas to subvert:  
- The prophecy is not vague, specifying an exact location, actor and time.

Fate

And his blood shall give us the light.  
Let tears flow, O ye people of the world.  
Weep for your salvation.  
 ~ Wheel of Time

Fate worse than death

Fate worse than death

As punishment for indiscretion, some characters are threatened or subjected to a state that is impossible to escape, including them being unable to die. Usually this goes along with torture, immense pain or similar unpleasantries.  
 At times just not being able to die is enough to qualify as a Fate wors than death though. Many immortals grow disillusioned with reality and actively search for a way to end their suffering.

Ideas to subvert:  
- A character throwing the phrase around as a bluff, might end up empty handed if the other character calls them out on it.

Fate worse than death

Removed from daylight and subjected to constant searing pain, by a snake oozing venom into his eyes, the immortal god suffers into eternity.

Foundling

Foundling

Finding abandoned children is a common origin story for many heroes. The circumstances of the discovery are usually mystical and mysterious, be it on the doorsteps during a thunderstorm, in a basket after a mass slaughter, or falling from the sky like a comet.  
 The Foundling is often fundamentally different than their newfound family, and a lot of their relationship deals with the conflict of familiar love and fundamental differences.

Ideas to subvert:  
- The Foundling had some level of say or input in choosing their new family.  
- The Foundling is not a Foundling, but a lost child of the family.

Foundling

The crying of a newborn alerted the playing children of something being wrong. Soon after the parents had to decide what to do with this rogue child in a basket.

Greed

Greed

Acquiring large amounts of money or material possessions, for the primary reason of having more than others, is generally deemed morally bankrupt.   
 Characters falling to the alure of Greed are unable to find an end to their searching and laboring. This constant stress can lead to severe misjudgments of their own intelligence or capabilities, leading to fatal mistakes.

Ideas to subvert:  
- Greed is not an individual problem but encouraged and perpetuated by the culture and systems in place.  
- The ruin brought on by Greed leads to a change of hearts in the greedy character, who regrets their past ways.

Greed

As the gold spread over the face of his darling daughter, he crumbled as a man, father and person.

Hidden Beauty

Hidden Beauty

Superficial, first impressions are usually not the only aspects of any character, but some have actively disguised or hidden their true qualities. Either by obfuscating their beauty through disfigurement, fashion or a curse, or purposefully acting in a way to come across uncaring, cruel or even evil.  
 Revealing the Hidden Beauty usually needs work, positive attention or a change of perspective. This may happen in form of a montage.

Ideas to subvert:  
- The character does not want to be perceived as beautiful, due to gender stereotypes.  
- An actually Hidden Ugliness is revealed.

Hidden Beauty

The vile beast living in the abandoned castle, she discovered, had in truth a heart of gold.

Hubris

Hubris

As a common trope and mortal flaw in ancient mythology, Hubris is a well explored theme. The idea of a character seeing themselves as above their station, is portrayed by them assuming traits or rights saved usually for deities. Examples are the right to be immortal, divine knowledge or being able to tamper with fate. As punishment the character is faced with their lack in whatever they value, in the face of divinity.

Ideas to subvert:  
- A character having Hubris implies a ruling class, branding certain traits or rights as divinely ordained. Opening a class-struggle discussion, may undermine such efforts.

Hubris

As he flew higher and higher, closer and closer to the brightest sun at the sky, he felt his wings fail him, melting under the cruel gaze of this star.

Immortality/Undying

Immortality/Undying

Death is one of the most severe negative consequences to a character’s actions. Being able to prevent this reality, speaks of strength, dedication or fate. If a character does not start their life immortal, achieving Immortality is usually an extensive process, and hard to recreate if at all possible. This process might tie the life of them to a single condition or object, that, if broken or destroyed, is able to end their life at last.

Ideas to subvert:  
- A phoenix is not impossible to kill but cannot be prevented from returning.  
- Immortality is not always a fate someone wishes for, especially with a long time passing.

Immortality/Undying

The hero was indestructible. His skin, bathed in the burning blood of a wyrm, was impenetrable, except to the spear thrown by an ally.

Invention

Invention

An invention or huge leap in science or magic opens up new conflict and problems. An invention is always made by a group or an individual. What kind of people either are, what their standing in society is, and what their motivations were to invent, usually define large parts of the narrative.  
 Inventions rarely can be kept secret, especially if they are used to make large changes. How and if the access should be shared is a difficult question to answer.

Ideas to subvert:  
- Being able to Invent something ties a character to an upper class unwilling to share its access or benefits with others.  
- The invention has unforeseen large-scale consequences.

Invention

He did it. He created life. His life’s work laid on the operating table in front of him, and it was beautiful. ‘He’ was beautiful.