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Posted by James Curcio

This is a selection from *The Immanence of Myth*. It is available in full through Weaponized Press.

"In early times, the legend goes, the world of mirrors and the world of humans were not separated as they would be later on. In those days specular beings and human beings were quite different from each other in color and form, though they mingled and lived in harmony.

In that time it was also possible to come and go through mirrors.

However, one night the mirror people invaded the earth without warning and chaos ensued. Indeed, human beings quickly realized that the mirror people were chaos. The power of the invaders was great, and it was only through the magic arts of the Yellow Emperor that they were defeated and driven back to their mirrors. To keep them there the emperor cast a spell that compelled the chaotic beings mechanically to repeat the actions and appearances of men. The emperor's spell was strong but it would not be eternal, the legend says. The story predicts that one day the spell will weaken and the turbulent shapes in our mirrors will begin to stir. At first the difference between the mirror shapes and our familiar shapes will be unnoticeable. But little by little gestures will separate, colors and forms will transmogrify, and suddenly the long-imprisoned world of chaos will come boiling out into our own. Perhaps it is already here." John Briggs & F. David Peat

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ROME WASN'T BURNT IN A DAY

Modern Mythology: Myth Is A Mirror

Myths are “mirrors of the soul,” which can only reveal to us what we already have in ourselves: so what is a message of love and compassion to one can be a distorting call to hatred and bigotry for another. Meaning exists in the surface interaction with the mythic object, rather than in the myth itself; it is not, as we have said, intrinsic to the myth-object.

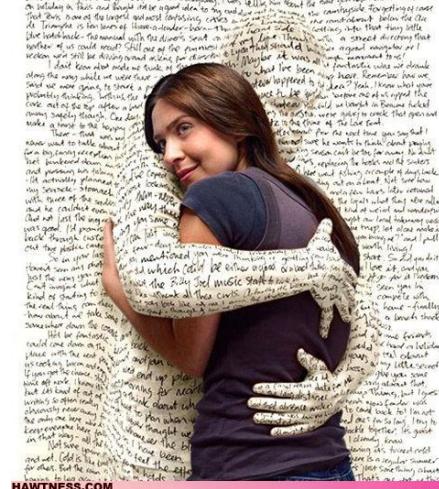
We discover ourselves in these stories, and they are given life through us. We might also say “Myths exist at the cross-roads,” and we find ourselves there, as well. The cross-roads become a potent mythic image: that point where the worlds meet, converge or diverge. We find a similar overlapping of worlds in the symbolism of fog, in the abyssal ocean, and, quite obviously, in the mirror. The mirror is the crossroads, a juncture between two worlds. How do we cross over to the other side?

Mirrors are curious things. Many animals don't recognize themselves when they see their reflection. A cat may cringe, howl, or seem unaware that the image exists at all. Rather than demonstrating the insufficiency of cat-consciousness, (in not recognizing their self in the image of themselves as an other), it simply demonstrates a little of how they perceive the world – they may, and likely do, perceive it in many ways more clearly than we do. But they do not appear to perceive themselves in it, at least not in the sense that we do.

When we say we are “self conscious,” this has a dual meaning: we are aware of ourselves within the world, and thereby, as in the myth of the Garden of Eden, we might feel shame, and guilt. We stand outside ourselves, and thus, outside the garden. In an existential sense it is hard to say if we've actually made out in the deal; we gained language and other forms of representation as some sort of consolation prize in exchange for the immediacy of just being. Being in one dimension is exchanged for the possibility of awareness, divided in two.

When we see ourselves, we see our “selves” in this image of an other. What does self-reflection mean? It implies an exile from one's self. To see a thing clearly we have to stand beside it, outside of it. I see a glass in front of me; I'm one with it in my senses, but I know it through its negation in relation to “myself.” It is not me. If I swallow saliva in my mouth, this is considered normal. If I spat in that glass and then swallowed it a moment later, I might feel revulsion. This is the borderline. After leaving me, bringing it back into myself makes me nauseous. My boundaries were transgressed. The saliva became other. The psychologist R.D. Lang uses this as an example of an element of schizophrenic perception. These barriers are more permeable and confused for them. An author may say “I'm too close to this book to see it clearly, now,” and it is often observed that in some ways, those who know us best know us the least.

In our minds, some kind of trick must be occurring within this matrix of networked neural cells playing hot-potato with electrochemical impulses. Conceptually, the “reflecting mirror” could be brought into the mechanisms of our mind as well. I might ask, “how is it that I might ‘hear’ my thoughts? And who is it that ‘hears’ them?” Internally, a thought must be perceived by an other, or at least it would seem that it must be other from that which perceives it. We imagine that if a thought is “heard” it must also be “spoken,” and though it is not an actual requirement, there is a



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sense that these two must somehow remain separate. We speak through the mouth and hear through the ears; different organs of sense, but consciousness appears to do these acts simultaneously. Any real thought about self-consciousness produces an infinite regress, a fractal which in Aristotelian terms is a paradox. Our mirror breaks apart, the model is not sufficient to deal with what is actually occurring.



An impulse reflects upon itself, and to exist must be perceived by another, ad infinitum. It is tortoises all the way down. Every thought, every being, splitting off from itself, like cells splitting by mitosis, so that they might know themselves in the Other. The unified self is a thing that cannot be. Yet, here we are. Looking at ourselves in the mirror, experiencing ourselves through the definition of our boundaries.

Even when we look out into the world, it is in seeing this opposite, this Other, that we are drawn to expand beyond the already established

self-territory. Much like that mythologized “meeting of the eyes” in the Troubadour tradition, or the white stag in the forest, a nymph, a siren, it lures us forward, though whether that winding path leads to our center or our demise is really just a particularity of that myth. As we chase, the boundary of our self expands. We discover ourselves in new territories. This, too, is a common motif, as the hero is tossed into the adventure unwittingly in the process of giving pursuit to this fleeting ideal. More is taken in, our “self” territory expands through experience. So we see in many myths, where one is lured upon the path but the real journey is one of self-discovery.

The lure for union on the other side is the asymptotic invisible gravity that sets us all upon the path that becomes our lives. This is at once the lure of myth and of romantic love. When it takes you — as it oftentimes does, completely by surprise — you can know it most of all because of how it is at once so familiar and yet so other, so overwhelming and yet so completely intangible. Of course, sex and love both are mythically linked to death, la petit mort, most of all in that they both move towards a unification. However brief that hot moment may be, it forms a singularity in itself if the involved parties are transformed in one way or another by way of the interaction. We speak of “chemistry” in sex and love. This may be more apt than many of us realize.

In an absolute sense, for there to be union, there must be destruction. The initial terms are reformed in a new shape. $A+B=C$, or $C=A+B$. Sexual beings think of this as death though it's doubtful if those that reproduce asexually by mitosis would see thanatos within eros and vice versa, if they thought of themselves at all. Our lives don't actually move in absolutes — no one is completely reformed in the process of merging with another in such a way — but the movement towards such imagined absolutes is ubiquitous. This gets at the discontinuity between beings, which Bataille uses as part of the framework for Erotism, wherein he supports the general thesis that eroticism, a truly human act, is the “assenting of life up to the point of death.” Reproduction implies the existence of discontinuous beings. Beings that reproduce themselves are distinct from one another, and those reproduced are themselves distinct from one another, just as they are distinct from their parents. ... This gulf exists, for instance, between you, listening to me, and me, speaking to you. We are attempting to communicate but no communication between us can abolish our fundamental difference. ... It is my intention to suggest that for us, discontinuous beings that we are, death means continuity of being. Reproduction leads to the discontinuity of beings, but

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brings into play their continuity; that is to say, it is intimately linked with death.

By saying that myth is a mirror, we are getting at the thread of continuity and discontinuity that underlies perception, sex and death. It is a pull, almost like gravity, which tugs at us from the “other side” of things. The Other that exerts this inexplicable gravity on us needn’t be a person, an activity, a mythic image, or even a dream of ourselves as a perfected whole rather than an incomplete fragment; it could be any of these things, or anything else.

The commonality is that it is this transfixing image, standing on the other side of the mythic mirror, that catches hold of us, driving us to frightful and even dangerous extremes in an attempt to break through, whatever it may be. And we cannot break through, for we are discontinuous, but in pursuit we asymptotically “approach the limit,” up to the point of death, which is to say, union. Perhaps it is like a moth to a flame, but without this there would be no exceptional artists or thinkers, there would be no one willing to put their lives on the line, or do much of anything except what is simple and practical. An individual captured by this “mirror” is possessed, half-mad at the least. At the same time some might say they have been touched by God. This is equally true with all the passions, which originate in the impossible Hubris that makes us think we can break through the mirror of perception, make time stand still with the force of our love, or ever leave our cage on one “side” of the mirror.

What else can we extract from this observation? The self is dependent on the other, on the mirror, for its very existence. Existence lies neither wholly with the self or the other, (which may be a self, as well), but in the relation between them. It is the simultaneous correspondence of two things — the seen and the seer — which neither proves nor disproves their ‘absolute existence’ separate from each other. When I experience X, X is as fundamentally necessary to that experience as I am. There is no separation, no looking glass reflection. Our myth is in the mirror, reality an undifferentiated monad that we will never see in itself. Our brains themselves are characterized, along with primates and several other “higher” mammals, by the presence of “[mirror neurons](#),” which explains just how crucial mimicry and mirroring are to our psychological makeup.

Neither I nor my experience exists in a vacuum, as there is no discontinuity between myself and the object, and my existence in that moment is a synthesis of these relationships. In fact, the Cartesian model wherein there is a separate “I” which experiences objects separate from itself does not follow. We experience self in the other, in all our points of intersection; of those areas where there is none, we simply cannot know. Our experience occurs in self-contained wholes, in the time of kairos. Time as chronos creates the illusion of fragmentation.

All of this from the simple symbol of a mirror. If we stare into it for too long, we might find ourselves on the other side. Here too, many myths and stories come to mind, though none so readily as Alice’s second glance through the looking glass. It is in looking across that divide, into that mirror, that the necessity of myth becomes clear, because we must make sense of ourselves, and can only do so through what reflects back at us.

Let’s look at the larger picture. A culture can only be understood through the myths it reflects. This is because our myths represent a culture’s deep structure, at least in symbolic form. Concurrently, it is difficult to speak meaningfully of myth without recognizing a seeming paradox



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PARTY AT THE WORLD'S END



Modern Mythology: Myth Is A Mirror



that runs through all contexts, all level of granularity: myth is the meaning we glean from representation, yet it does not contain this meaning. Myth has no meaning. It is almost as if every time a series of symbols (a book, for instance), passes into a new nervous system, it is born for the first time. Words, sentences, and pictures are, on their own, no more a myth than the notes written on a staff are music, however all of these are the embodiment, that is, the representation, of psychological experience.

Myth is, in the final summation, truly a mirror image of our inner lives, even our unconscious prejudices, for better or worse. We did not create our flesh or bone, nor did we choose the circumstances we were born into. The myths we value or create, on the other hand, are unbounded. They are the closest we can get to the creative power of divinity, demonstrating our ability to build worlds from the clay we

are given, to infuse it with our own meaning, and to choose what the very nature of the universe will be in our tale. In a sense, we live within them.

Authors may find it a little silly to talk overmuch of their characters as having a “life of their own,” but the process of writing a novel makes certain demands on any serious author. Most poignantly, it requires the author to stand as an observer in a created world, imagined or otherwise. I think it is a common experience of spouses of authors that when in the thick of a project, an author is only half here. The other half is... where? We asked earlier how one gets “to the other side.” Maybe without knowing that it’s through accessing the power of the active imagination, many authors and artists know a way to hop through.

In this, we have our entry point into the function of myth. On a personal level, a myth is the story of life; most commonly, it is a narrative abstracted from the specific to the general, and then back again. For example, an artist pulls from specific life experiences, and abstracts them to a general or archetypal form, in other words, a form with general resonance. This narrative is then re-portrayed as if it is a particular instance. The archetypes are given a unique character. This may not be the only method a myth may take, but it is certainly one that most modern artist and writers are most familiar with.

Plenty of examples exist in the myths that have entered the pop-culture, for instance the portrayal of the Maenad in HBO's popular series True Blood, or Neil Gaiman's Morpheus in Sandman. These characters may be modernized versions of an old archetype, but they have resonance because of the unique traits and personality that gives them a sense of reality and immediate relevance. In this way, though it would certainly enrich the experience, the audience doesn't need to know Greek mythology to get something worthwhile from the modern variant of a myth.

A mythology arises around the artist as well as their creations, and they must play to that role. They are often, in essence, typecast as their alter ego. When success finds them, they are asked to produce the same thing over and over again, by the audience if not the studio. A rare few have made careers out of killing and remaking themselves in new or modified forms — David Bowie, for instance, immediately comes to mind. But this is the exception rather than the rule. Hunter S. Thompson said that he found it difficult publicly being Thompson, rather than his alter ego, Raoul Duke,



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I'm never sure which one people expect me to be. Very often, they conflict — most often, as a matter of fact. ...I'm leading a normal life and right alongside me there is this myth, and it is growing and mushrooming and getting more and more warped. When I get invited to, say, speak at universities, I'm not sure if they are inviting Duke or Thompson. I'm not sure who to be. I suppose that my plans are to figure out some new identity, kill off one life and start another.

Having method acted this mythological character for a short time, I can say that this rabbit-hole goes still deeper. When you open yourself up to a character like Duke, it's almost as if he forever inhabits a place in your mind from that point on. Is this any different from the Orisha or Loa, which seem to change form and pop up in a constant interplay with the culture of its participants? It is hard to say, but when you play with these things, even if it is in a sense just play, also consider that that, like Hunter himself, you are playing with live ammunition. I doubt I could drink Wild Turkey and smoke a cigarette with a filter and not "risk" shifting at least partially into character. How different is this from the possession some seek with Baron Samedi, with his favored rum and top hat?



Numerous, often bizarre theories abound about the deaths of such characters, as if to say that as their myth lives on, so must they. Perhaps Elvis Presley, Jimmi Hendrix, Kurt Cobain, Jim Morrison, and Michael Jackson all grew tired of their mythologies and attempted to escape it through some brilliant faked death, jamming out together on a tropical island somewhere. More likely, the price of living their myth overran them in various ways, and they all paid the price that often comes along with being burned into the

cultural consciousness.

As living itself can act as intermediary between the chance and arbitrary nature of life and the possibility of an underlying, unifying cultural consciousness, myths are also the emergent and recursive cultural code that has always driven human civilization. They are recursive because the stories that carry through the ages repeat themselves, in different forms, from one generation to the next, growing and yet never changing deep structure. They are emergent because, at the cultural level, this code gives rise to complex behaviors that surpass the sum of their parts, and can be considered to have a life of its own — whether we mythologize that cultural intelligence as the Will of God, the hive-mind, zeitgeist, archetype of the collective unconscious, or some form of manifest destiny.

Put another way, the mythic life is the whole, of which our current awareness is but a fragment. There is a sense in which we are living within our lives as the protagonist cast into a random situation that was neither our design nor our intention, and yet another in which we are disconnected from time, observers and creators, partaking in each others creations. The personal life, its pains, frustrations, successes and hopes, are all transient and relatively insignificant outside the relatively small sphere of our lives, except when given mythic resonance. The tale is what matters. Legends and heroes always lag a generation or two behind the present, and the times we live in are desperately in need of both, as it has always been. You're living it right now. Part of our life passes like a drama written by a novelist biographer, but behind that there is a

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mysterious process of growth which follows its own laws and takes place behind the biographical peripeteias of life and goes from childhood to old age. Viewed in mythological context, the greater human being, the anthropos, is likened to a tree.

Life is a dream you won't remember upon awakening, and myth is that dream, retold. This retold dream is the realm of myth, and concurrently, its representatives take the form of art, music, and literature.³ Myth commonly borrows from the realm of dream, and in some ways shares a similar dual nature as both real and unreal, (it is real as a psychological fact, but does not directly carry into the material world without our mediation.) However, myth cannot be simply reduced to dream images. Dreams on their own do not define, transform, or destroy cultures.

Though there is a cultural dimension of myth, the key to first understanding – and thereby creating – a living mythology comes through self-examination and exploration, rather than a strict exploration of the “world out there.” We transmit our living, personal mythologies to each other through our art, but equally so, through our impact upon one another in our day-to-day lives; in the secret languages we invent and share; in the dreams and histories we share, so long as they transform, and regardless of whether they otherwise die with us, secrets to the end.

Each of our lives is a story, an album, a painting, in which we play the starring role, but only posthumously, in hindsight, or through the internal wrestling of the creative process which separate us, momentarily, from our day-to-day concerns. Proof of this is found, and re-enforced, through the primacy of the protagonist (and antagonist) within the acceptable narrative framework. No one is an extra, and identification with the core protagonist is considered essential for the saleability of a story because of this psychological fact. Though it is reasonable to wonder if this “fact” isn't a culturally re-enforced idea that has in part structured the very way we interpret our life experience.

These stories – our own stories and the fictional myths born from them – weave together into an ever-changing tapestry which we call culture. Though it sounds a bit high-flung, we can become demigods for those who inherit the worlds we create. This mantle is both a boon and a curse that is often bestowed posthumously upon certain writers, artists, etc. This worthiness is far from egalitarian, and often strikes a harsh contrast to the living reality of that individual's life. Many of the individuals that our present cultures owe themselves to died impoverished, unfulfilled, or (most famously), crucified. An ongoing mythical tradition is like a river that flows ever forward, sometimes branching off, or dying to drought or dam, yet nevertheless continually flowing, never reaching an ultimate destination.

From this we may recognize that the beliefs and symbols that live on through us, which we convey to those around us, are the currency of the mythological realm. Many have used the term meme to represent this currency, and to systematize this cultural economy. Though perhaps a buzz-word of our time, this term nevertheless is useful in that it distinguishes the symbol from the sign in a structural way, allowing us to recognize that represented ideas themselves operate, in a sense, like organisms. Memes serve a greater function than being mere packets of information, as “...Magic has always been about the encoding of meaning, about symbolic literacy, about the creation and even the restoration of calendars. Memetics is a way of comprehending the ramifications of such encoding, identifying the systems that result from

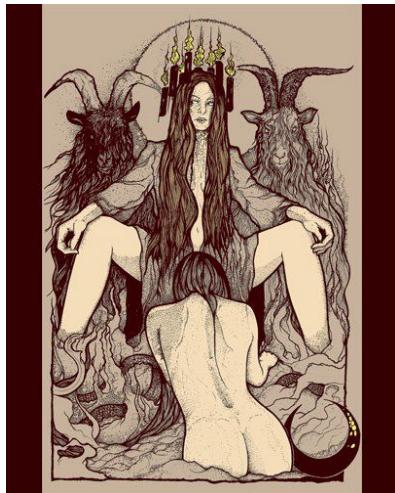
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rituals, and transmitting meaning into a goal-oriented complex system, the meme space. Memes are more than a linguistic phenomenon.

Though I don't want to get side-tracked, I think the idea of memes requires more consideration. It's a term that we toss around and either accept on its face that cultural information can, in some way, be likened to the behavior of viruses. As with most metaphors, there are ways in which it is accurate, and ways that it is not. More importantly, what are the repercussions of this idea in terms of the overlapping relationship of genes and culture? In other words, do myths play a role in our evolution, as a part of our mirrored relationship with ourselves?

I would like to provide a few quotations from *A Thousand Years of Nonlinear History* on this subject, and then give commentary more aligned with our specific line

of inquiry. "Darwin's basic insight was that animal and plant species are the cumulative result of a process of descent and modification. Later on, however, scientists came to realize that any variable replicator (not just genetic replicators) coupled to any sorting device (not just ecological selection pressures) would generate a capacity for evolution." [57] Thus, the attraction or repulsion we feel when encountering a certain facial structure, or from a pattern of symbols constructed – we might say – right out of the genetic intelligence of an individual, helps provide one of the key sorting mechanisms in literal and figurative mating rituals. A lot of sorting is taking place when we are attracted to one book and not another, or one song and not another. When we find a common movie or favorite show with someone, there is a bond there. Think about the sorting and matching occurring here, and how it might affect things far larger than mere entertainment.

What do I mean by "figurative?" I mean that sexual attraction belies an inherent biological imperative to produce offspring, but humans have in various ways circumvented that, sublimated that, and so the "children" that can be born from the co-mingling of our ideas needn't be physical or literal. Nevertheless, the ideas that are most compelling to us, the art that attracts and changes us, seems to operate more-or-less on the same principles that determine a mating selection process.

In other words, we can indeed use a genetic metaphor in regard to our myths. Read that again. Selection processes, sorting mechanisms, and other systemic relationships apply to the ways myths replicate, spread, feed, and die. And these myths have an affect on our own breeding, as well as the basic relationships we form with one another and the environment around us. They are a part of these feedback mechanisms.

"Richard Dawkins independently realized that patterns of animal behavior (such as bird-songs or the use of tools by apes) could indeed replicate themselves if they spread across a population (and across generations) by imitation." This has clear repercussions in the study of the diffusion of language and culture, and carried right along with them is the undercurrent of all forms of human representation, as we've seen, which we've taken to refer to simply as "myth." This opens up the door for a new approach to mythic study which goes far beyond what can be accomplished in a single introductory volume, but I am hopeful that more work will be done in this direction in the future.

Let's take this line of thought a step further, perhaps folding it back into itself like a ribbon. Within the context of modern markets, we are taught to think of the sale of media (books, movies,

music, etc) not much different than the sale of a sandwich, or any other commodity. This misses the function a book or other piece of content that embodies mythic content serves – it is “weaponized content.” The memes that are reproduced through exposure to the medium, that being the “audience” or “user,” rather than the container or vessel that merely serves to propagate the content in a material world. A book is dead trees, glue. A CD or hard drive is petroleum. There is an art to the container. My wife is obsessed with the beauty of the hand constructed book, of paper or inks that are rendered by hand, constructed conscientiously, carefully. Regardless, containers are designed to attract us to that object, an object which in many cases cannot be reduced to the object itself.

So, a better metaphor than those following from ideas of consumption and commodity might be found in the relationship of flowering plants and the insects that help them spread. Imagine that pollen is cultural information. Flowers generate pollen and passively make themselves attractive to the insects that also somewhat blindly lap up the nectar, in the process carrying pollen from one flower to the next. Of course, a random breath of wind also plays its role in disseminating this genetic material.

To an extent we all serve both as “bees” (memebearers) and “flowers” (nexus points, which can be codified within books, movies, or really in whatever container seems most appropriate to the nature of the narrative.) So we may be lured in by the narrative, or some other element, but what we take in and carry on are the memes embedded within it, which may very well have been placed there completely unconsciously by the author. As I previously stated, this can be seen as the genetic code of a myth, and I imagine few of us are consciously aware of our genes. Consider this rather bizarre fragment from *Join My Cult!*,

Black Osiris: Time to start spreading us a little pollen, ain’ that right boys ’n girls?

Anne: Pollen?

Leri: That’s how we look at spreading memes.

Crazy Fingers: Viral marketing.

Anne: Memes?

Black Osiris: Bees help big flowers make little flowers, Anne. A meme’s a... thought-language pattern, a contagious one.

Leri: (READING FROM DICTIONARY) “A unit of cultural information, such as a cultural practice or idea, that is transmitted verbally or by repeated action from one mind to another.”

Anne: Like... “mother hive brain,” or “I am America’s favorite soft drink,” or “I am the monkey flower, pollinate me,” or “I am a neurosurgeon,” or...

Black Osiris: So like I was saying about d’ bees...

Leri: (CUTTING HIM OFF) They have no vested interest in the spreading of pollen. It’s just an accident that flowers capitalize on. It allows them to reproduce.

Black Osiris: Yeah, yeah! Gettin’ wu wei with that shit. If I’m really doing things right, I’m doin’ them effortless.

Crazy Fingers: I was watching Muhammed Ali box today. He looked almost careless to an untrained eye. But he tore Holyfield apart, or more accurately, pecked at him until he made himself fall apart.

Leri: That’s why Bruce Lee was so impressed with him.

Black Osiris: So ya see, If I'm operatin' effortless, dialed up the morphone see, then I'm really spreadin' pollen.

Rachelle: There's a saying in the Hopi tradition... when you're acting effortlessly like that, you're "on the pollen path."

What sweet nectar and bright colors will lure in the unwitting insects? That's the question advertisers are bound to ask. The market is strictly concerned with selling the container. We imagine bees are blissfully unaware of the pollen. They are drawn by the flower. The same is true in advertising. Countless dollars have been spent researching customer reaction to different colors, configurations of symbols and patterns. Certainly, much of this plays into the cutting edge of UX design. But, in contradiction of the common wisdom that says our biological similarities make us all susceptible to the same patterns, at least if we are looking for big-picture trends, it has been my experience that results vary depending on the "species of insect."

In other words, though the audience and the authors may all be consciously unaware of the genetic code of their work, we can readily sniff out what suits us and what does not, in the same way we have sized up potential mates through smell before a single word has been spoken. Even our immune systems are keyed to seek viable mates – this relates to our sense of smell as well – and further there is some evidence that even activities such as kissing have a matching and mating purpose, preparing our immune systems for one another.

We can employ the metaphor of insects and flowers to this idea, but it is equally subject to the over-arching metaphor of this essay: the mirror, Narcissus and Echo.

Perhaps the myth of the genius of the author, or the sexiness of an idea, or the sense of lack manufactured or inherent in the market is what lures an audience to certain material, on the surface. We are all attracted by different ideas and aesthetics, and so much of this is learned, a reaction in accord or in conflict with what we experience around us, a reaction against basic biological and psychological forces.



Women's magazines of course capitalize on this approach almost singularly, triggering insecurity and competition amongst females to drive sales, by directly leveraging these biologically and culturally re-enforced mechanisms. Nearly everyone is aware that sex is used to sell just about everything from deodorant to cars. What's being sold is the representation itself, and it is up to us to ensure that the "container" does not over strip the actual function of any piece of art, (which is discussed throughout the rest of this book). Pollen that does not impregnate may as well be sterile.

If you'll pardon further symbolic exploration, consider that the market itself is subject to a sort of evolutionary and genetic model. "...[I]t becomes clear that interactive species in an

ecosystem have the ability to change each other's adaptive landscapes. (This is just another way of saying that in a predator-prey arms race there is not a fixed definition of what counts as "the

fittest.”)

A market is essentially a conceptual domain mapped on top of the pre-existent ecosystem, so ecological and evolutionary dynamics are more likely causal agents within that system than the formal rules of economics which, based on various logical presuppositions, have shown themselves demonstrably false.

The economists Richard Nelson and Sidney Winter, for instance, espouse an evolutionary theory of economics based on the idea that once the internal operations of an organization have become routinized, the routines themselves constitute a kind of “organizational memory.” For example, when an economic institution (e.g. a bank), opens a branch in a foreign city, it sends a portion of its staff to recruit and train new people; in this way, it transmits its internal routines to the new branch. Thus, institutions may be said to transmit information vertically to their ‘offspring.’

While we could spin into a tangential discussion of the relationship of various mythic interpretations of economics, my point in introducing this idea is simply to demonstrate that we can glance across many domains at once, and find congruent forms as well as patches of discontinuity; however, it stands to reason that the layer that contains genetic and biological patterns should be considered before the other strata, even if this demonstrates a shard of conceptual hierarchy into what is clearly a series of non-linear systems.

If, in this specific sense, we choose to employ the metaphor of memes, then it is worth asking how these memes are carried from one individual to the next. Clearly there is a secondary medium (symbols), but the points of intersection, and the amalgam that results, is the real “burning point of myth,” a nice phrase Campbell once used in a much publicized discussion with Bill Moyers. Perhaps there are too many variables involved in the specifics to look at it from such a generalized perspective, but we can at least glimpse the shape of it.

This is the key: myths arise as relationships, or points of intersection. The relationship between ritual object or work of art and individual audience member, the relationship between audience members within the framework provided by the myth, and so on. They can represent not only the information carried within the transmitted signifiers, but also, perhaps more importantly in the long run, they exist in the sorting mechanism and desire which fuels the consumption and reprocessing of the signified.

The authors of these relationships we call artists, it doesn't actually matter what the medium, and in many ways artists simply serve as the scribes or mediums for a discussion which is constantly occurring. None of our ideas are entirely our own. The ownership of ideas, too, is a myth based on some rather curious presuppositions about the isolation of the individual from a social fabric that we could just as easily say underlies every action and thought we can and will ever have. Where do we draw the line? Our myths tell us.

It is impossible to speak of myth and not simultaneously speak of artists, and the arts. Religion, art, and myth were born of the same impulse, rendered with the same brush-stroke. I am not just referring to those who manage to find a vocation of art. All myth-builders are artists, on the most fundamental level, as art is not just about what different people or cultures find aesthetically pleasing – it is also, and possibly more fundamentally, a process which tells people what things mean in an ontological rather than ethical sense.⁶ (At the same time, outside the context of the mirror-relationship, myth remains meaningless.)

The purpose of a myth is to lead us into a relationship. They help us cognitively orient ourselves. It may be a relationship with our own inner life, with our past, with the complexities of our present choices and challenges; or it may be the shared myth of a couple, a tribe, a people, a nation. It must be engaging, in other words it must be true, not in the sense of abstract philosophical truth, but in

the sense we really mean it when we use the word with conviction. Mythic “truth” may first signal itself simply through a feeling of congruence, suddenly you feel a strong attraction to a certain image, or manner of thought. Intuition defies final analysis.

Let me give two examples of what I mean. My friend William Clark was suddenly overwhelmed by an intense vision that had many elements of Hindu iconography in it, specifically those related to Kali Ma. He was so affected by it that he took a trip to India thereafter. Initially the goal of this trip was to learn tabla, but his journey ultimately led to living with Aghoris in the cremation grounds, goat sacrifices to Kali, and many other experiences that seemed deeply connected to the visions that started the journey in the first place. It seems to have become an indelible part of who he is as a person, or perhaps, it was a part of himself expressing itself in that way. In either event, the result is the same. It's especially notable that prior to his visions he had next to no experience with these symbols, or the surrounding culture.

In another instance, I left a copy of a book I was reading in the lounge when I was in my sophomore year at Bard college. That book happened to be Aleister Crowley's Book. A girl apparently picked it up, and took it. She proceeded to read it, and it so changed her perspective of her life's direction that she dropped out of school and began a backpacking pilgrimage. I know about this because at a later date I mentioned to friend that my book had been stolen, and she related this story to me. I guess she needed it more than I did.

In a month-long series of talks titled “Living Your personal Myth” at Esalen Institute, Joseph Campbell said “Mythology begins where madness starts, where a person is seized or gripped by some fascination for which he will sacrifice his life, his security, his personal relationships, his prestige, and his self-realization... it's not always easy or possible to know by what it is that you are seized.”

So you can see these things can have real impact in terms of our own lives. Their truth lies in their resonance, and this is not a relationship that anyone else's opinion should interfere with. If something speaks to you, speak back, and engage with it.

Even if this entire process can simply be reduced to staring into a mirror, it is truly amazing what worlds we can find there.

[Take a Trip with us... **Mythos Media.**]

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Having been 'possessed' by an experience rather like William Clark (quoted above) and driven throughout life to find a vocabulary in which to express it (Finally Involution *An Odyssey Reconciling Science to God*) the image of a mirror built incrementally throughout time in which time is simply the consequence of the seeming solidity of the mirror image- this analysis resonates impeccably. The central myth of our collective reality is the 'otherness' of

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This is a selection from *The Immanence of Myth*. It is available in full through [Weaponized](#)

Modern Mythology: Myth Is A Mirror

This is a selection from the *Inheritance of Myths*. It is available in full through [Reaportal Press](#). "In early times, the legend goes, the world of mirrors and the world of humans were not separated as they would be later on. In those days specular beings an..."

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+Monica G the 9solar oracle combo:

I pulse in order to reflect

Realizing order

I seal the matrix of endlessness

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