

MYTHOLOGIES: Remembrance of Things Past... and Future?

The Maiden and The Crone together consider Myth and hypothesize that mythology is a way for humanity to safely remember dangerous and/or difficult things. From the Bible to Harry Potter and Percy Jackson, myths warn of folly and dangerous paths, offer solutions, counter solo suffering, and provide a seed of hope.

Lynn Maudlin and granddaughter Courtney Riojas will look at a variety of specific myths and examine the ways in which they have served us - and continue to serve us.

What is it about myths? What makes a story “mythic” rather than simply a good story? Mythology provides some explanation for the way things are, how they came to be, for how the world works - or doesn't. Every culture has a mythos and, with this paper, we will examine some of the cross-cultural interrelations and speculate on their meaning, from within a Christian perspective. But it's such a huge topic that we can only figuratively skip a stone across the surface of this water.

We're presenting this paper to propose that there is a core truth to mythology, even some of the very wild mythologies! There is an underlying reality which the myth tries to communicate.

Growing up in religious families the U.S.A., we both embrace the Christian mythos as “true myth,” to acknowledge C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien's view of it. I (Lynn) was fortunate to grow up in a three-generational household with my great-aunt, a Latin teacher who told me the Greek and Roman myths instead of fairy tales, and in my early 20s I played with contemporizing the myths as fiction; this has since been done by several authors (Rick Riordan springs to mind). Ironically, I didn't take the Bible very seriously until my mid-20s, so, other than a general knowledge of the “dying god” and world-flood myths, I didn't see a lot of scriptural overlap with other mythologies until I began to seriously study the Bible.

{Courtney} My interest in myths began when my Dad read to us C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien. From there, I fell in love with the Arthurian legends and read the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as well as *Bulfinch's Mythology* from which I get my knowledge of the Greek/Roman myths. Growing up, I had already known that there are overlaps between mythology and the Bible; therefore, when I read, *Bulfinch's Mythology* in particular, I noticed overlaps and similarities between the Bible and other myths.

For instance, the Roman and Greek creation myth resembles the Bible story: according to *Bulfinch's Mythology*, it begins by saying that there was nothing in the universe

except Chaos which was “a confused and shapeless mass” that was then separated into the sky, the earth, and the sea. Following the creation of the earth and all of the animals, Bulfinch continues: “Prometheus took some of this earth, and kneading it up with water, made man in the image of the gods. He gave him an upright stature, so that while all other animals turn their faces downward and look to the earth, mankind raises his head and gazes on the stars”.*

This description of the creation of humans resonates strongly with the account from Genesis: “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them... And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul”*.

Additionally, there is a similarity between Eve in the Bible and Pandora in Greek/Roman myth. Both were created after man, and each did something they were not supposed to do: Eve ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden, and Pandora opened a jar that brought evil into the world. Bulfinch points out: “The comparison of Eve to Pandora is too obvious to have escaped Milton, who introduces it in Book IV. of ‘Paradise Lost’*.

{Lynn} The promise of redemption hovers around both women: in the case of Eve, Genesis 3:15 prophesies that the seed of the woman will crush the head of the serpent and the serpent will bruise his heel; Christianity recognizes the ‘seed of the woman’ as Jesus the Messiah. Pandora either releases all evils upon mankind or loses the assorted blessings from the gods - but in both accounts of Pandora, hope remains.

The creation story in Norse mythology is similar: the man Ask and the woman Embla are created by the gods and given “breath” / “spirit” and “ectasy” / “inspiration” and “vitality” / “health” and then they are given Midgard for their dwelling place. They are not created directly from the earth but rather from two tree trunks which wash ashore upon the newly formed earth; the pair then bring the entire species into existence.

* (*Bulfinch’s Mythology*, page 12)

* Genesis 1:27, 2:7

* (*Bulfinch’s Mythology*, pages 17-18)

{Courtney} Not only does the Greek and Roman creation myth resonate with the Biblical account, there is also a global flood. According to Bullfinch, mankind began in an age of innocence and happiness but devolved into a later age full of “fraud and cunning, violence, and the wicked love of gain.” Bullfinch continues: “The earth was wet with slaughter, and the gods abandoned it one by one, till Astraea alone was left, and finally she also took her departure”*. Zeus then called the gods together and decided to destroy the earth with its inhabitants and replace them with those “who would be more worthy of life, and much better worshippers of the gods”. He decided to destroy the world with water. In the resulting flood, all of the earth was submerged, leaving a lone mountain peak on which remained a man and his wife, Parnassus and Deucalion, who Zeus allowed to live because they served the gods faithfully. Then the waters that covered the earth were drawn back, and Parnassus and Deucalion survived to repopulate the earth.

(Lynn) The Bible says, “And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart.”

In both accounts, a god determines that humanity has fallen short in such a profound way that a “do-over” is necessary; a human breeding pair survives on a mountain to repopulate the earth (the Bible specifies Noah, described as “perfect in his generations,” and his wife, as well as their three sons and their wives).

(Courtney) In Norse mythology, *Ragnarok* resonates with both the Flood stories and the end of the earth as prophesied in the Bible. As with Noah’s Flood, mankind is wicked:

“Hard is it on earth, | with mighty whoredom;
Axe-time, sword-time, | shields are sundered,
Wind-time, wolf-time, | ere the world falls;
Nor ever shall men | each other spare.

(Poetic Edda)”

and the earth is covered with water and “sinks in the sea”. But it is also destroyed with fire. In Ragnarok, the gods and the giants fight together, and the world is destroyed with fire and water; in Genesis 7, we read, “In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.... And the waters prevailed

exceedingly upon the earth; and all the great hills, that were under the whole heaven were covered... And all flesh died that moved upon the earth.”

In the Poetic Edda, translated by Henry Adams Bellows, it says:

“The sun turns black, | earth sinks in the sea,”

The stanza goes on to describe the fire that destroys the earth:

“...The hot stars down | from heaven are whirled;
Fierce grows the steam | and the life-feeding flame,
Till fire leaps high | about heaven itself”

The destruction of the earth by fire in Ragnarok sounds rather like 2 Peter chapter 3, verse 10: “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”

Other aspects in Ragnarok resonate with the Flood story of Genesis, for not only does the earth get submerged with water and everything is destroyed but also a new earth rises up from the waters. In one of the following stanzas of the Poetic Edda (Voluspo), it says:

“Now do I see | the earth anew
Rise all green | from the waves again;
The cataracts fall, | and the eagle flies,
And fish he catches | beneath the cliffs”

The song “A New World” sung by Sassafrass at Mythcon last year also tells it: “But a new world will rise from the waters,/ And new life will stir in her seas...” Líf and Lífthrasir are rescued from the destruction and repopulate the new earth that rises from the waters:

“But a new world will rise from the waters,
And new eyes will wake to her dawn,
And the last pair: Líf and Lífthrasir,
The woman and husband

Will guard in their hiding place
Life and the will to live on”

This event is very similar to what is recorded in Genesis and Greek and Roman mythology: there are survivors who escape the destruction of the water, allowing the human race to continue to live and repopulate the new earth.

Another final resonance between Ragnarok and the Bible is that the world that follows Ragnarok appears to be perfect:

“Then fields unsowed | bear ripened fruit,
All ills grow better, | and Baldr comes back;”

That stanza says that there are ripened, untended fields and no ills. To me, this sounds like a perfect world. According to the Bible, the world will one day be destroyed with fire and replaced with a new, perfect world -- one not cursed by the Fall in the Garden of Eden. Isaiah 65:17 says: “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come to mind.”

(Lynn) If the flood is history which Greek and Roman myths remember and of which the Bible gives account, why does Ragnarok tell of a massive flood and destruction of the world by fire, as if it were a single event? Is it possible that Ragnarok is both *remembering* the Flood and *foreseeing*, by prophetic vision, the end of the world?

One of the dynamics of biblical prophecy is the way it “floats” across time: a prophecy fulfilled by Jesus during His incarnation appears right next to a prophecy yet to be fulfilled, one associated with His “second coming.” There may be a similar dynamic at work in various world myths: Ragnarok resonates both with the flood of Noah and the end of the world. This has lead me to believe that sometimes the answer is not “either/or” but “both/and”....

This “both/and” phenomenon happens frequently in the Bible; why not in the Poetic Edda as well?

Norse mythology indicates that humanity is violent and without mercy, leading to its destruction; Greek and Roman mythology indicate that humanity is violent, unworthy of life, and not faithful worshippers, leading to its destruction. The Bible says that humanity was violent and wicked and inclined only toward evil, so much so that God was sorry He even created mankind, leading to its destruction.

But before the Bible tells us that God was sorry He created humans, it gives us more specific groundwork for the flood: “Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose... The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who *were* of old, men of renown.”

Bene Elohim, translated “the sons of God”, is used in the Hebrew scriptures to reference angelic beings, so what we see are non-human entities who rebelliously chose to come to earth and procreate with human females - it sheds a rather different light on the extreme measure of cleansing the earth by flood if one recognizes that humanity had a gene-pool problem.

In other words, minor “gods” mated with human women and hybrid offspring were born. THAT resonates with Greek and Roman mythology! In fact, an exhaustive list of Greek and Roman human/god hybrids would get downright tedious.**

We speculate that Myth is mankind’s default mechanism for remembering things which may be too difficult or too scary to remember in a more straightforward way, a way to express things which are “bigger” than simple history can accommodate. Memories have been corrupted over the years and maybe we fill in the gaps and the holes when we don’t have hard data to do the job.

{Courtney} If mythology is a way that humanity has remembered past events, then it makes sense that the Greek, Roman, and Norse creation and flood myths resonate and overlap so much with the Biblical accounts.

(Lynn) Norwegian writer Karl Ove Knausgaard said:

I love apocryphal versions of reality, and the people who obstinately dedicate their lives to vindicating them. One of my favorite books is by Felice Vinci, an Italian nuclear engineer: “The Baltic Origins of Homer’s Epic Tales.” His theory is that the events described in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* really occurred in Nordic lands. That Ithaca was a Danish island, and that the strait between Scylla and Charybdis was in fact Moskstraumen, a strait far to the north of Norway. Vinci’s idea was that the descriptions in the Homeric poems didn’t match the geography of the Mediterranean.

But if you move the setting northward, everything fits. The explanation, according to Vinci, was that the Greeks first lived in the north, but were forced to move south for climate reasons.

One of my observations is that the Bible, while full of mythic stories, doesn't read like myth but more like history, providing details like the day and month and year in which an event occurred.

{Courtney} Genesis 1-3 reminds us that the world which we now inhabit is not the perfect world as it was created and that, in fact, humans are the cause of that radical change.

Genesis 6-9 remind us that there is contention in heavenly places and creatures which do not have our best interests at heart will try to corrupt us in every possible way, including the hybridization of the species - YHWH put an end to it with the great Flood, saving Noah ("perfect in his generations") and his 3 sons and all their wives.

{Lynn} There are different ways to interpret these scriptures: there are those that teach the *Bene Elohim* refers to the godly line of Seth while 'the daughters of men' refers to the fallen line of Cain. But humans breeding with humans don't result in super-human hybrid offspring, nor is it theologically sound to associate fallenness with women and godliness with men - after all, as Saint Paul observes, Eve was deceived but Adam sinned.

The Bible clearly references intelligent creatures which are not human; Saint Paul refers to them as thrones, dominions, powers, principalities, rulers, world forces of this darkness, and spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Saint Peter refers to angels, authorities, and powers. And Saint Jude refers to the Lord's holy ones, angelic majesties, and "angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode." (*fn1)

What is the "proper abode" (*Strongs G3613* - place of habitation) and what does it mean to abandon it? These powerful creatures are currently kept in bondage, awaiting the judgment of the great day, because they indulged in gross immorality and went after "strange flesh".

If you're an angelic being, just what is "strange flesh"? To be frank, that would be us: human flesh. Cue the Twilight Zone theme!

Listeners to the popular overnight radio program, Coast-to-Coast, may be familiar with the theories of Zecharia Sitchin whose modern mythology attributes the creation of the human species to extraterrestrials... angelic beings, fallen or otherwise, are literally “extraterrestrials” in that they’re not of this earth. Humanity was created by YHWH but the corruption of the species is certainly something of which Sitchin’s “E.T.”s may be guilty, or at least guilty of attempting.

From within the Christian mythos, Jesus is not the typical “dying god” - He is not a part of this creation but He is the transcendent, outside-of-space-and-time Creator of the Universe who enters into His own creation in order to save it.

So, whether one believes the Genesis passages or understands them the same way that we do, what can we learn from world mythologies and their similarities? How do they shape our identities? How do they help, inspire, and warn humanity?

(end)

Citing your sacred-texts link, HOW MUCH it resonates both with creation in Genesis and other citations of YHWH meeting with “the gods” or “the sons of God” (as angels are identified in the Hebrew scriptures) --and-- with the creation myth as told in the Silmarillion - have you read that? Another *fascinating* book, although we don't have time to bring it into the mix (well, maybe we don't) is by Fr. G. Ronald Murphy, *Tree of Salvation: Yggdrasil and the Cross of the North* <http://amzn.to/29Jb66l> - he's been a scholar GOH at Mythcon and has twice won the Mythopoeic Scholarship award) - you would enjoy it and I'll bet your Dad would, too.

2. I remember yet | the giants of yore,
Who gave me bread | in the days gone by;
Nine worlds I knew, | the nine in the tree
With mighty roots | beneath the mold.

3. Of old was the age | when Ymir lived;
Sea nor cool waves | nor sand there were;
Earth had not been, | nor heaven above,
But a yawning gap, | and grass nowhere.

4. Then Bur's sons lifted | the level land,
Mithgarth the mighty | there they made;
The sun from the south | warmed the stones of earth,
And green was the ground | with growing leeks.

5. The sun, the sister | of the moon, from the south
Her right hand cast | over heaven's rim;
No knowledge she had | where her home should be,
The moon knew not | what might was his,
The stars knew not | where their stations were.

6. Then sought the gods | their assembly-seats,
The holy ones, | and council held;
Names then gave they | to noon and twilight,

Morning they named, | and the waning moon,
Night and evening, | the years to number.

...

9. Then sought the gods | their assembly-seats,
The holy ones, | and council held,
To find who should raise | the race of dwarfs
Out of Brimir's blood | and the legs of Blain.
... (here there is an exposition on the Dwarfs)

17. Then from the throng | did three come forth,
From the home of the gods, | the mighty and gracious;
Two without fate | on the land they found,
Ask and Embla, | empty of might.

18. Soul they had not, | sense they had not,
Heat nor motion, | nor goodly hue;
Soul gave Othin, | sense gave Hönir,
Heat gave Lothur | and goodly hue.

19. An ash I know, | Yggdrasil its name,
With water white | is the great tree wet;
Thence come the dews | that fall in the dales,
Green by Urth's well | does it ever grow.

20. Thence come the maidens | mighty in wisdom,
Three from the dwelling | down 'neath the tree;
Urth is one named, | Verthandi the next,--
On the wood they scored,-- | and Skuld the third.
Laws they made there, and life allotted
To the sons of men, and set their fates.

**LM: is this true? How universal is the god/human breeding/hybrid story in world mythologies?

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_hybrid_creatures_in_mythology#Partly_human

{{ Norse god/human hybrids - what about Hindu deities? It's almost irrelevant since the Hindu worldview doesn't necessarily see any difference between god & human, it's all ultimate reality oneness...!

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hindu_deities In ancient and medieval era texts of Hinduism, the human body is described as a temple,^{[33][34]} and deities are described to be parts residing within it,^{[35][36]} while the **Brahman** (Absolute Reality, God)^{[18][37]} is described to be the same, or of similar nature, as the **Atman** (self, soul), which Hindus believe is eternal and within every living being.^{[38][39][40]} Deities in Hinduism are as diverse as its traditions, and a Hindu can choose to be polytheistic, pantheistic, monotheistic, monistic, agnostic, atheistic or humanist.^{[41][42][43]} **Reference 118** Christopher John Fuller (2004), *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India*, Princeton University Press, **ISBN 978-0691120485**, pages 30-31, **Quote:** "Crucial in Hindu polytheism is the relationship between the deities and humanity. Unlike Jewish, Christian and Islamic monotheism, predicated on the otherness of God and either his total separation from man and his singular incarnation, Hinduism postulates no absolute distinction between deities and human beings. The idea that all deities are truly one is, moreover, easily extended to proclaim that all human beings are in reality also forms of one supreme deity - Brahman, the Absolute of philosophical Hinduism. In practice, this abstract monist doctrine rarely belongs to an ordinary Hindu's statements, but examples of permeability between the divine and human can be easily found in popular Hinduism in many unremarkable contexts".

http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/09/14/connecting-hindu-gods-and-humans/?_r=0}}

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scylla> - disastrous hybridization (origin:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scylla#Mythology>)

The flood across various world mythologies.

Henotheism (Greek ἕνας θεός *henas theos* "one god") is the belief in and worship of a single god while accepting the existence or possible existence of other deities.

Norwegian writer Karl Ove Knausgaard said:

I love apocryphal versions of reality, and the people who obstinately dedicate their lives to vindicating them. One of my favorite books is by Felice Vinci, an Italian nuclear engineer: "The Baltic Origins of Homer's Epic Tales." His theory is that the events described in the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey" really occurred in Nordic lands. That Ithaca was a Danish island, and that the strait between Scylla and Charybdis was in fact Moskstraumen, a strait far to the north of Norway. Vinci's idea was that the descriptions in the Homeric poems didn't match the geography of the Mediterranean. But if you move the setting northward, everything fits. The explanation, according to Vinci, was that the Greeks first lived in the north, but were forced to move south for climate reasons.

There, they named the landscape using names from their previous home, just as the immigrants to America used names from home when they arrived in the new continent in the 18th century. New York, New Hampshire, New Amsterdam, but also just Paris, Oslo, Rome, London — or Alexandria.

Identity is not something we invest in the landscape, not in the lake or the forest or the mountain. Identity lies rather in our notions about the landscape and in the names we give it, names that are densely layered with meaning. Naming is obviously a way of making the unknown known, of creating a sense of belonging, but the names soon take on a life of their own, embodying history, myths, conceptions and misconceptions — “New York,” I write, and what you are thinking of is not the daily changing of diapers, the stomach upsets or a damp coffee filter that rips so that the grounds spill onto the floor. Seen in that light, it was irrelevant whether the Kensington Runestone was authentic or fake, for what it testified to was the fact that some people *wanted* it to be seen as authentic, some people *wanted* the Vikings to have made it to Minnesota and these people were in all probability Scandinavians, who thus would no longer merely be destitute peasants driven to the new country by need but people with a proud past who were directly descended from the very first Europeans in America, who had not simply been content to spend a winter on a spit of land way up in the northeast, but had made their way as far as the Midwest, where almost all Scandinavians ended up, and who wanted in this way to endow themselves with a history, which is one of the many forms that a sense of belonging takes.

(from

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/01/magazine/karl-ove-knausgaard-travels-through-america.html>)

So, whether one believes the Genesis 6:1-4 passage or understands it the same way that (we) do, what can we learn about world mythologies and their similarities. How do they shape our identities? How do they help, inspire, and warn humanity?

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One of the dynamics of biblical prophecy is the way it “floats” across time: a prophecy fulfilled by Jesus during His incarnation appears right next to a prophecy yet to be fulfilled, one associated with His “second coming.” There may be a similar dynamic at work in various world myths: Ragnarok resonates both with the flood of Noah and the end of the world. This has lead me to believe that sometimes the question is not “either/or” but “both/and”

Some common misunderstandings: that YHWH's commandment to have no other gods before Him is redundant because there are no other gods; the Bible doesn't teach this. In fact, the Bible teaches that YHWH is the Creator of all things, including other spiritual entities, beings which Christianity references as angels and devils. Angelic beings, which come in a variety of types, are aligned with YHWH and do His will. Devils (or demons) also come in a variety of types, defined by their rebellion against YHWH. There is, indeed, war in Heaven.

In the new testament, the Greek scriptures, Jesus simply refers to powers.

*fn1: For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. (Colossians 1:16)

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:38-39)

“But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. (Matthew 24:29, Jesus speaking, also in Mark 13 and Luke 21)

Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, so that you will be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. (Ephesians 6:11-13)

For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the* just for *the* unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the [fn]spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits *now* in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through *the* water. Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him (1 Peter 3:18-22)

And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode (*Strong's G3613*), He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, (Jude 1:6)

For example, in the first three chapters of Genesis (the first book of the Bible) we are told that God created **everything** - the universe, the solar system, the animals and fish and birds and ultimately mankind. Almost immediately man (in the form of Adam and Eve, the first man and first woman) disobey the ONE restriction that God gave them: they eat of the tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil.

[Courtesy: I also have a second way of presenting the material after this one]

Ragnarok resonates with both the Flood story and the destruction of the world as recorded in the Bible. As the Flood of Noah, the earth becomes covered with water and “sinks in the sea”*, but also like the final and ultimate destruction of the world according to the Biblical account, the earth is destroyed with fire. In Ragnarok, the gods and the giants fight together, and the world is destroyed with fire and water: The destruction of the earth by water corresponds to the Flood story recorded in Genesis 7:11,19,21a: “In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights...And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the great hills, that were under the whole heaven were covered... And all flesh died that moved upon the earth.” In the Poetic Edda, translated by Henry Adams Bellows, it says:

* <http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/poe/poe03.htm>

“57. The sun turns black, | earth sinks in the sea,”
(<http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/poe/poe03.htm>).

The stanza goes on to describe the fire that destroys the earth:

“...The hot stars down | from heaven are whirled;
Fierce grows the steam | and the life-feeding flame,
Till fire leaps high | about heaven itself”
(<http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/poe/poe03.htm>).

The earth is also destroyed by fire in Ragnarok, like it will be some day, according to 2 Peter 3:10,11b: “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up...the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with a fervent heat...”

Additionally, other elements in Ragnarok resonate with the Flood story of Genesis, for not only does the earth get submerged with water and everything is destroyed but also a new earth rises up from the waters. In one of the following stanzas of the Voluspo, it says:

“59. Now do I see | the earth anew
Rise all green | from the waves again;
The cataracts fall, | and the eagle flies,
And fish he catches | beneath the cliffs”
(<http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/poe/poe03.htm>).

In the song “A New World” sung by Sassafrass, it also tells: “But a new world will rise from the waters,/ And new life will stir in her seas...” Líf and Lífthrasir are rescued from the destruction and repopulate the new earth that rises from the waters:

“But a new world will rise from the waters,
And new eyes will wake to her dawn,
And the last pair: Líf and Lífthrasir,
The woman and husband
Will guard in their hiding place
Life and the will to live on”
(“A New World, Sassafrass).

This event is very similar to what is recorded in Genesis: there are survivors who escape the destruction of the water, allowing the human race to continue to live and repopulate the new earth.

Another final resonance between Ragnarok and the Bible is that the world that follows Ragnarok appears to be perfect:

“62. Then fields unsowed | bear ripened fruit,
All ills grow better, | and Baldr comes back;”

That stanza says that there are ripened, untended fields and no ills. To me, this sounds like a perfect world. In Isaiah 65: 17, it says: “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come to mind.” According to the Bible, the world will one day be destroyed with fire and replaced with a new, perfect world -- one not cursed by the Fall in the Garden of Eden.

Ragnarok contains similarities that resonate with events in that are in the Bible: the Flood and the end of the world. (Could the two stories of these two events have slowly been melded together over time until they became Ragnarok?) Could these similarities be because they are ‘both/and’?

(this is just another way to say/organize what I said above:)

Speaking of the Flood story and its appearance in Greek and Roman mythology, the Norse Ragnarok contains elements of it as well. Its appearance in Ragnarok is most evident because the earth is covered completely by water and reemerges from it:

“(Stanza) 57. The sun turns black, | earth sinks in the sea...
(Stanza) 59. Now do I see | the earth anew
Rise all green | from the waves again;
The cataracts fall, | and the eagle flies,
And fish he catches | beneath the cliffs.”

Another element in Ragnarok resonates with the account of the Genesis Flood because there are survivors who, like Noah and his family, escape the destructive water, allowing the human race to continue to live and repopulate the new earth:

“But a new world will rise from the waters,
And new eyes will wake to her dawn,
And the last pair: Lif and Lifthrasir,
The woman and husband
Will guard in their hiding place
Life and the will to live on”
(from “A New World, Sassafrass).

This event is very similar to what is recorded in Genesis: there are survivors who escape the destruction of the water, allowing the human race to continue to live and repopulate the new earth.

While resonating with the Flood account in Genesis, Ragnarok also resonates with the Biblical account of the destruction of the world. After describing the earth as it sinks into the sea, the Poetic Edda continues, describing the fire that destroys the earth:

“...The hot stars down | from heaven are whirled;
Fierce grows the steam | and the life-feeding flame,
Till fire leaps high | about heaven itself”

According to 2 Peter 3:10,11b: “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up...the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with a fervent heat...” The element of fire in the destruction of the world is similar to the Bible’s account of the end of the world.

Another final resonance between Ragnarok and the Bible’s account of the destruction of the earth is that the world which follows is perfect:

“62. Then fields unsowed | bear ripened fruit,
All ill grow better, | and Baldr comes back;”

That stanza says that there are ripened, untended fields and no ill. To me, this sounds like a perfect world. In Isaiah 65: 17, it says: “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come to mind.” According to the Bible, the world will one day be destroyed with fire and replaced with a new, perfect world -- one not cursed by the Fall in the Garden of Eden.

Ragnarok contains similarities that resonate with events in that are in the Bible: the Flood and the end of the world. (Could the two stories of these two events have slowly been melded together over time until they became Ragnarok?) Could these similarities be because they are ‘both/and’?

([Courtney]If mythology is a means by which mankind has recorded past events: either because they are too frightening to record it in any other way or because the true tale has been corrupted over the years, then when one looks at the mythologies together, their similarities should have significance. As all mythological systems tend to contain a flood story of some sort or another which mankind survived, one could presume that at some point the earth must have been covered with water at some point in the past. ????)

List of flood myths - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_flood_myths: “The **flood myths** or **deluge myths** are, taken collectively, myths of a great flood. These accounts depict global flooding, usually sent by a **deity** or deities to destroy **civilization** as an act of **divine retribution**. Flood stories are common across a wide range of cultures, extending back into prehistory.” (wikipedia) (Courtney: note the India one)

The Roman and Greek myths of the creation of the world and a flood also resemble the stories of those events which are also found in the Bible. Referencing *Bulfinch's Mythology* as my source, the Greek/Roman creation myth begins by saying that there was nothing in the universe except Chaos which was “a confused and shapeless mass” that was then separated into the sky, the earth, and the sea. Following the creation of the earth and all of the animals, Bulfinch continues: “Prometheus took some of this earth, and kneading it up with water, made man in the image of the gods. He gave him an upright stature, so that while all others animals turn their faces downward, and look to the earth, he raises his head, and gazes on the stars” (*Bulfinch's Mythology*, page 12). This description of the creation of mankind resonates strongly with the description recorded in Genesis: “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them... And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (1:27; 2:7). Like the Roman/Greek creation myth where man is created in the image of the gods and made of earth, so in the Bible, man is created in the image of YHWH who formed him from the earth and gave life to. Additionally, there is a similarity between Eve and Pandora in Greek/Roman myth. Both were created after man, and each did something they were not supposed to do: Eve ate of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden, and Pandora opened a jar that brought evil into the world. Bulfinch points out: “The comparison of Eve to Pandora is too obvious to have escaped Milton, who introduces it in Book IV. of ‘Paradise Lost’...” (*Bulfinch's Mythology*, pages 17-18).

Not only does the Greek/Roman creation myth resonate with the Biblical record but the Greek/Roman flood myth also does as well. After telling of the creation, Bulfinch continues to describe the world, saying that “the first age was an age of innocence and happiness” which after several other ages came changed to be an age into which “came fraud and cunning, violence, and the wicked love of gain” (pages 14-15). He continues: “The earth was wet with slaughter, and the gods abandoned it one by one, till Astraea alone was left, and finally she also took her departure” (page 15). Zeus then called the gods together and decided to destroy the earth with its inhabitants and replace them with those “who would be more worthy of life, and much better worshippers of the gods” (page 16). The tale goes on to say that Zeus was going to destroy the earth with fire but decided not to because it would also destroy the heavens. Instead, he decided to flood the world with water (page 16). In the resulting flood, all of the earth was drowned with water, leaving a lone mountain peak on which remained a man and his wife, Parnassus and Deucalion, who Zeus allowed

to live because they served the gods faithfully. Then the waters that covered the earth were drawn back, and Parnassus and Deucalion survive to repopulate the earth (pages 16-17). This myth resonates strongly as well with the Genesis account of the Flood. In Genesis 6, it says: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD (YHWH) that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him in His heart. And the LORD said, 'I will destroy man whom I created from the face of the earth...The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence'" (6:5-7a; 11). Like in the Greek/Roman myth, the world was incredibly wicked and was condemned to be destroyed with water because of it. The similarities continue as there are humans rescued from the flood waters in both. In the Greek/Roman myth, they were Parnassus and Deucalion; and in the Bible, they were Noah and his family who were saved by YHWH in an ark. Additionally, both were on a mountain top when the waters abated. If mythology is a way that man has recorded past events that could not be expressed in any other way, then the Greek/Roman creation and flood myths show this strongly as they resonate with the Biblical account in many, many ways.

...}}

(From the beginning):

MYTHOLOGIES: Remembrance of Things Past... and Future?

The Maiden and The Crone together consider Myth and hypothesize that mythology is a way for humanity to safely remember dangerous and/or difficult things. From the Bible to Harry Potter and Percy Jackson, myths warn of folly and dangerous paths, offer solutions, counter solo suffering, and provide a seed of hope.

Lynn Maudlin and granddaughter Courtney Riojas will look at a variety of specific myths and examine the ways in which they have served us - and continue to serve us.

Genesis 1-3 reminds us that the world which we now inhabit is *not* the perfect world as it was created and that, in fact, humans are the cause of that radical change.

Genesis 6-9 remind us that there is contention in heavenly places and creatures which do not have our best interests at heart will try to corrupt us in every possible way, including the hybridization of the species - YHWH put an end to it with the great Flood, saving Noah ("perfect in his generations") and his 3 sons and all their wives.

(from Bruce Leonard: Great idea. Perfect for Mythconers. Also myths profer hope, solutions, warn of dangerous paths, and counter solo suffering. You guys go for it.

At last Mythcon my grandson was so excited by a couple of Potter myth papers he actually talked of reading. He is tasked with getting vacation time in August so he can help his grandpa get to Mythcon. Marcy says, "Returns to her as well."

Hug you in months,

Bruce

So - playing with the idea of Myth as mankind's default mechanism for remembering things which are too difficult or too scary to remember in a plain or straightforward way. A way to express things which are "bigger" than simple history can accommodate... a way to fill in the gaps and the holes when we don't have the data to do the job.

Ancient mythologies: Looking at Genesis 6 and Greek/Roman mythologies as the non-Biblical way to remember what happened when the Nephilim (the "fallen ones") came down and interbred with human females (and possible other creatures on the earth - no reason not to think the genetic experimentation was limited to humanity, although certainly humanity was the primary focus. From the Judeo-Christian standpoint, corrupting the human genome would mean that humanity wouldn't exist for Jesus to redeem - for Him to redeem us required that humanity continued to exist!

Medieval mythologies: Looking at the plethora of Jesus-as-a-child myths, mythic stories of saints, etc.

Modern mythologies: ...Darwinian evolution! Do we dare look at that?! Global warming...!
Hmmm, let's NOT get all political - it's a presidential election year and it could be explosive!!

I think we should consider the mythic elements of the Harry Potter world - one of my “pet peeves” in the book is the consistent way that lack of communication interferes with solutions and adds to problems - a whole lot of those stories would have been SHORT stories if Harry had simply gone to Dumbledore or McGonigal (insert specific teacher to specific problem)--!

Courtney, you mentioned Sassafras and their song about Ragnarok

<https://sassafrass.bandcamp.com/album/sundown-whispers-of-ragnarok>

Interesting quote from an unrelated blog post:

“I love apocryphal versions of reality, and the people who obstinately dedicate their lives to vindicating them. One of my favorite books is by Felice Vinci, an Italian nuclear engineer: “The Baltic Origins of Homer’s Epic Tales.” His theory is that the events described in the “Iliad” and the “Odyssey” really occurred in Nordic lands. That Ithaca was a Danish island, and that the strait between Scylla and Charybdis was in fact Moskstraumen, a strait far to the north of Norway. Vinci’s idea was that the descriptions in the Homeric poems didn’t match the geography of the Mediterranean. But if you move the setting northward, everything fits. The explanation, according to Vinci, was that the Greeks first lived in the north, but were forced to move south for climate reasons. There, they named the landscape using names from their previous home, just as the immigrants to America used names from home when they arrived in the new continent in the 18th century. New York, New Hampshire, New Amsterdam, but also just Paris, Oslo, Rome, London — or Alexandria.

Identity is not something we invest in the landscape, not in the lake or the forest or the mountain. Identity lies rather in our notions about the landscape and in the names we give it, names that are densely layered with meaning. Naming is obviously a way of making the unknown known, of creating a sense of belonging, but the names soon take on a life of their own, embodying history, myths, conceptions and misconceptions — “New York,” I write, and what you are thinking of is not the daily changing of diapers, the stomach upsets or a damp coffee filter that rips so that the grounds spill onto the floor. Seen in that light, it was irrelevant whether the Kensington Runestone was authentic or fake, for what it testified to was the fact that some people *wanted* it to be seen as authentic, some people *wanted* the Vikings to have made it to Minnesota and these people were in all probability Scandinavians, who thus would no longer merely be destitute peasants driven to the new country by need but people with a proud past who were directly descended from the very first Europeans in America, who had not simply been content to spend a winter on a spit of land way up in the northeast, but had made their way as far as the Midwest, where almost all Scandinavians ended up, and who wanted in this way to endow themselves with a history, which is one of the many forms that a sense of belonging takes.”

(from

<http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/01/magazine/karl-ove-knausgaard-travels-through-america.html> Karl Ove Knausgaard, Norwegian author, in the NY Times)

This is part of my “both/and” theory of things--!

NEW: Ask ([Old Norse](#) *Askr*, “Ash Tree”) and Embla (Old Norse *Embla*, “Water Pot”^[1]) are the first two humans (male and female respectively) in Norse mythology. After the [Aesir](#) gods [created the cosmos](#), they fashioned Ask and Embla from two tree trunks that had washed up onto the beach of the landmass the gods had recently raised out of the primordial waters. The gods, in this case led by [Odin](#), endowed these newly-enlivened beings with *önd* (“breath/spirit”), *óðr* (“ecstasy/inspiration”), and *lá* (an otherwise unattested Old Norse word; no one really knows what *lá* means, but most scholarly suggestions have something to do with vital processes and health). Ask and Embla were then given [Midgard](#), the world of human civilization, for their dwelling-place. They became the father and mother of the entire human species.^[2]

As sparse as this tale is, it’s bristling with meaning. We’ll look at two of these shades of meaning below.

Ask and Embla as Gender Archetypes

One of our two main sources for the narrative of Ask and Embla’s origin is the *Völuspá* (“The Insight of the Seeress”), one of the poems in the [Poetic Edda](#). The stanza that follows the account of Ask and Embla reads, in English translation:

There stands an ash called Yggdrasil,

A mighty tree showered in white hail.

From there come the dews that fall in the valleys.

It stands evergreen above Urd’s Well.^[3]

In the original Old Norse text, the first word of this stanza is “Askr.” As Henning Kure has pointed out, someone hearing this poem for the first time would have immediately assumed that “Askr” referred to the human male of the preceding verses until it became clear that this “Askr” is the ash tree [Yggdrasil](#), the central pillar of the cosmos that holds the [Nine Worlds](#) in its branches and roots.[4] Yggdrasil rises above the [Well of Urd](#), a body of water whose depths hold several mysterious powers. Among these are the [Norns](#), “three exceedingly wise maidens” who have more sway over the course of [destiny](#) than any other beings, and the [runes](#), immense cosmological forces that are symbolized by the shapes of the earliest Germanic alphabets. The waters of the Well of Urd nourish Yggdrasil, and dew drops from the tree’s leaves back into the well, replenishing it.

In addition to being a model of the [cyclical unfolding of time](#), the tree and the well provide an image of what historians of religion call a “hierogamy” or divine marriage between a sky god and an earth goddess, a conception common to all of the [Indo-European](#) peoples – including, of course, the Norse and other Germanic peoples. The rain (or, in this case, dew drops from a tree whose crown reaches high enough to be compared to a snow-capped peak) is analogous to semen, and the earth (or, in this case, the well) is analogous to the womb. From the union of earth and sky come fertility and new life, something which we observe in the physical world – literally or metaphorically – every time it rains.

This sexual symbolism works on what one might call a visual level as well. The upright trunk of the ash tree is quintessentially phallic, and the concave basin of the well is quintessentially vaginal.

By calling the first man *Askr* (“Ash Tree”) and the first woman *Embla* (“Water Pot”), and by linking this first human couple to the image of the tree and the well in the structure of their mythic poetry, the heathen Norse were showing masculinity and femininity to be complimentary, intertwined, and reciprocal cosmological principles, both of which are just as essential to the promotion of life and well-being as the other. One need only peruse the first few chapters of *Genesis* to see how favorably this model of the relation between the two

sexes compares to that envisioned by the monotheistic religions whose ideology dominates the modern world.

Humanity's Place in the More-than-Human World

We have records of several different versions of the pre-Christian mythology of the Norse and other Germanic peoples. Some of these variants present what, at first glance, are contradictory accounts of the origins of humanity. In several places, humans are described as descending from gods.[5][6][7] In another instance, humanity (or at least a particular tribe) comes from a certain grove of trees.[8]

However, when viewed more closely, these accounts, including the tale of the creation of Ask and Embla, all ultimately convey the same idea. Stating that humankind comes from trees, whether on a beach or in a grove, and stating that we come from gods are, in a traditional Germanic perspective, different ways of saying the same thing. As the Roman historian Tacitus wrote of the Germanic tribes of the first century CE, “Their holy places are the woods and groves, and they apply the names of deities to that hidden presence which is seen only by the eye of reverence.”[9] In this view, gods and goddesses aren't distinct from the world, as they are in monotheistic religions. Rather, they're the invisible [animating](#) forces that lurk behind and within the visible world – trees and forests very much included. Even in the late Viking Age narrative of Ask and Embla, the visible world had earlier been shaped from the corpse of the slain [giant Ymir](#). All life, including trees and by extension humanity, is descended from this divine figure.

Just as there isn't any sharp line that divides deities from the world that manifests them, there's no sharp line between humans and the rest of the world. “Nature,” a part of the world from which humanity is by definition excluded, is a concept foreign to the indigenous Germanic worldview. All species are unique in some way, of course, but there's nothing that sets humanity apart as being *uniquely unique*. Humanity is as much a part of the normal order of the more-than-human world as are trees. Our origins lie in this greater realm, our lives are

lived entirely within it, and we remain within it when we [die](#). We're not strangers in an alien "vale of tears;" the more-than-human world is our home.

Courtney:

Ragnarok: A Memory of the Flood and the End

<http://www.sacred-texts.com/neu/poe/poe03.htm> -has a translation from the Poetic Edda; tells of Ragnarok.

<http://norse-mythology.org/tales/ragnarok/> -has a decent summary of Ragnarok and some interpretations of it. (not Christian.)

(These are just a random notes which I will make into a more unified and coherent form)

Parallels between Ragnarok and the Flood:

- "...The sun turns black, | earth sinks in the sea, (Poetic Edda)"
God (YHWH) covers the earth with water to destroy it. (Genesis 7)
- "Now do I see | the earth anew/ Rise all green | from the waves again; (Poetic Edda)"
"But a new world will rise from the waters, ("New World" Sassafrass Song)

The waters that covered the earth abated and left (Genesis 8)

- Two people, Líf and Lífthrasir, (a man and a woman) are saved from the destruction and repopulate the new earth (norse-mythology.org).
"...And new eyes will wake to her dawn,
And the last pair: Líf and Lífthrasir,
The woman and husband
Will guard in their hiding place
Life and the will to live on. ("New World" Sassafrass Song)"
Noah and his family are saved by YHWH from the Flood. (Genesis 7-8)
- Mankind appears to be wicked (was in middle of the prophesy about Ragnarok; Don't know if I can say this; ???):
"Hard is it on earth, | with mighty whoredom;
Axe-time, sword-time, | shields are sundered,
Wind-time, wolf-time, | ere the world falls;
Nor ever shall men | each other spare. (Poetic Edda)"
YHWH declares that man is wicked and corrupt on the earth. (Genesis 6).

Ragnarok apparently is thought to be the end of the world according to the Norse and that the new world that would follow it would be perfect (from what I've read). When I read the story, I can really only see one thing: the Flood. The fact that the world was supposed to be perfect troubled me and I asked, Dad about it. He said that compared to the world before it, it would have seemed perfect, probably. (Just thinking aloud so that you can see it). I've

found the parallels between the Flood story and Ragnarok. The first three points are solid, but the last one... I don't really know...

Perhaps the Norse combined the Flood story to their knowledge of the end of the World as they believe that it will be perfect afterward.

Will add more later...

I thought of some examples of what Mr. Bruce was suggesting: Harry Potter and Ron and Hermione as they take turns wearing the locket Horcrux so that it doesn't effect the wearer as much as it could would be an example of countering solo suffering or in this case working together to bear a burden in order to protect each other. (Sam and Frodo also with the Ring.).

Also, the consequences of miscommunication or not hearing the entire story: in *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* where he doesn't hear the entire conversation between Dumbledore and the adults and retreats to his room, panicking that he might have Voldemort inside him/ be him. (There are a *lot* more examples of that in the Potter books too.

Warning of wrong paths: Lord of Minas Tirith: he despaired once he saw the might of Sauron that Sauron showed him and believed that their enemy was undefeatable. Borimir and the Ring: temptation (but he realized his error in the end, but was a reason why the Fellowship to split.).

Proffering Hope: Defeat of evil and triumph of good in both *The Lord of the Rings* and in *Harry Potter* books. Basically, evil is defeated, and good is victorious.

If we want to go into an example from Greek/Roman myth: Midas perhaps?

LM:

Article by Diana Paxson (another Mythie friend of mine, don't think you've met her)
<http://hrafnar.org/articles/dpaxson/norse/utgard/>

