

THE WORLD OF MYTH



AN ANTHOLOGY

DAVID
ADAMS
LEEMING

THE WORLD OF MYTH

This page intentionally left blank



THE
WORLD
OF
MYTH

David Adams Leeming

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
New York Oxford

Oxford University Press

Oxford New York Toronto
Delhi Bombay Calcutta Madras Karachi
Petaling Jaya Singapore Hong Kong Tokyo
Nairobi Dar es Salaam Cape Town
Melbourne Auckland

and associated companies in
Berlin Ibadan

Copyright © 1990 by Oxford University Press, Inc.

First published in 1990 by Oxford University Press, Inc.,
198 Madison Avenue, New York, New York 10016-4314

First issued as an Oxford University Press paperback, 1992

Oxford is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise,
without prior permission of Oxford University Press, Inc.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Leeming, David Adams, 1937–

The world of myth / David Adams Leeming.

p. cm. Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN-13 978-0-19-505601-3 978-0-19-507475-8

1. Myth 2. Mythology. I. Title.

BL311.L328 1990 291.1'3—dc20 89-48070

The following pages are regarded as an extension
of the copyright page

30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40

Printed in the United States of America
on acid-free paper

Text Credits:

New American Library for excerpts from Thomas Bulfinch, *Mythology: The Age of Chivalry* and *Mythology: The Age of Fable*.

Grafton Books for excerpts from Rex Warner, *The Stories of the Greeks*.

Search Press, Ltd., for excerpts from *Bulter's Lives of the Saints*.

Charles Boer, translator, for excerpts from *The Homeric Hymns*, published by Swallow Press and in revised edition by Spring Books.

Excerpts from Cornelia Dimmitt and J. A. B. Van Buitenen, eds., *Classical Hindu Mythology*. © 1978 by Temple University. Reprinted by permission of Temple University Press.

The University of California Press and Bowes and Bowes, Ltd., for excerpts from *The Prose Edda* of Snorri Sturluson, ed. by Jean Young. © 1954 Bodley Head, Ltd., and © 1964 The Regents of the University of California.

Sidgwick and Jackson, Ltd., for excerpts from *The Wonder that was India*, translated by A. L. Basham. *Parabola* and Paul Jordan-Smith for excerpts from the *Popol Vuh*.

Oxford University Press, Ltd., for excerpts from Julius Eggeling, *Sacred Books of the East*, and James Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth*.

Oxford University Press, Ltd., and Everyman's Library for excerpts from the *Bhagavad-Gita*, translated by R. C. Zaehner.

Houghton Mifflin Company for excerpts from Longfellow's "Song of Hiawatha."

The University of Chicago Press for excerpts from Sophocles, *Oedipus the King*, translated by David Grene, © 1942, by The University of Chicago; Sophocles, *Antigone*, translated by Elizabeth Wycoff, © 1954 by The University of Chicago. Both in *Sophocles 1: The Complete Greek Tragedies*, ed. David Grene and Richard Lattimore, © 1954, by The University of Chicago.

Dennis Hirota, translator, and Ryukoku University Translation Center for excerpts from Shinran, *Tanisho: A Primer*.

American Philosophical Society for excerpts from S. N. Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology*.

By permission from G. M. Mullett, *Spider Woman Stories*, The University of Arizona Press, Copyright 1979.

J. M. Dent and Sons, Ltd., for excerpts from *The Koran*.

Dover Publications, Inc., for excerpts from A. K. Coomaraswamy and Sister Nivedita, *Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists*.

Harrap, Ltd., for excerpts from Ramsay Smith, *Myths and Legends of the Australian Aborigines*, and Ananda Coomaraswamy, *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism*.

University of Nebraska Press for excerpts from George Bird Grinnell, *Blackfoot Lodge Tales*.

Excerpts from Jerome Rothenberg, "The Flight of Quetzalcoatl" in *Shaking the Pumpkin*. Copyright © 1972 by Jerome Rothenberg. Reprinted by permission of Sterling Lord Literistic, Inc.

Cooper Square Publishers for excerpts from Louis Grey, ed., *The Mythology of All Races*.

W. B. Yeats, "Leda and the Swan." Reprinted with permission of Macmillan Publishing Company from *The Poems of W. B. Yeats: A New Edition*, edited by Richard J. Finneran. Copyright 1928 by Macmillan Publishing Company; renewed 1956 by Georgie Yeats.

Excerpts from Hesiod's *Theogony*. Reprinted with permission of Macmillan Publishing Company from *Hesiod's Theogony*, translated and edited by Norman O. Brown. Copyright 1953 by Macmillan Publishing Company. Copyright renewed 1981 by Norman O. Brown.

Excerpts from R. T. Rundle Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*. © 1959 Thames and Hudson Ltd., London.

Excerpts from Edith Hamilton, *Mythology*. Copyright 1942 by Edith Hamilton, © renewed 1969 by Dorian Fielding Reid and Doris Fielding Reid. By permission of Little, Brown and Company.

Methuen and Co. for excerpts from H. J. Rose, *A Handbook of Greek Mythology*.

Excerpts from *Mythologies of the Ancient World* by Samuel N. Kramer, copyright © 1961 by Doubleday, a division of Bantam, Doubleday, Dell Publishing Group, Inc. Used by permission of the publisher.

American Anthropological Association for excerpts from T. P. Coffin, ed., *Indian Tales of North America*.

Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., for excerpts from Otto Rank, *The Myth of the Birth of the Hero and Other Writings*, edited by Philip Freund. Copyright 1932, 1936, © 1959 by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. Copyright renewed, 1960, 1964, by Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

Bear and Company, Inc., Santa Fe, New Mexico, for excerpts from Brian Swimme, *The Universe Is a Green Dragon: A Cosmic Creation Story*. Copyright © 1984 by Bear and Company, Inc.

Excerpts from *Lost Goddesses of Early Greece* by Charlene Spretnak. Copyright © 1978 by Charlene Spretnak. Reprinted by permission of Beacon Press and the author.

From James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts: Relating to the Old Testament*. Copyright © 1950, 1955, 1969 by Princeton University Press. Excerpt, pgs. 60–72, reprinted with permission of Princeton University Press.

From Heinrich Zimmer, *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*, ed. Joseph Campbell. Bollingen Series VI. Copyright 1946, © 1973 renewed by Princeton University Press. Excerpt, pgs. 3–11, reprinted with permission of Princeton University Press.

Excerpt from “The Prometheus Bound” of Aeschylus is reprinted from *Three Greek Plays*, translated by Edith Hamilton, by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. Copyright 1937 by W. W. Norton & Company, Inc. Copyright renewed 1965 by Doris Fielding Reid.

From *The Gods of the Greeks* by C. Kerényi. Copyright © 1951 Thames and Hudson. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Excerpt from *American Indian Mythology* by Alice Marriott and Carol K. Rachlin, editors. Copyright © 1968 by Alice Marriott and Carol K. Rachlin. Reprinted by permission of Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc.

Excerpts from *Plains Indian Mythology* by Alice Marriott and Carol K. Rachlin. Copyright © 1975 by Alice Marriott and Carol K. Rachlin. Reprinted by permission of Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc.

Excerpt from *Crowell’s Handbook of Classical Mythology*, edited by Edward Tripp. Copyright © 1970 by Edward Tripp. Reprinted by permission of Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc.

Excerpt from *The Beginning* by Maria Leach. Copyright © 1956 by Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc.

Excerpts from *The Woman’s Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets* by Barbara Walker. Copyright © 1983 by Barbara Walker. Reprinted by permission of Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc.

Cambridge University Press for excerpt from Jessie L. Weston, *From Ritual to Romance*.

Random House, Inc. for excerpts from Homer, *The Odyssey*, translated by Robert Fitzgerald.

From *The Aeneid*, by Virgil, translated by Robert Fitzgerald. Translation copyright © 1980, 1982, 1983 by Robert Fitzgerald. Reprinted by permission of Random House, Inc.

Charles E. Tuttle Co., Inc., for Johannes C. Anderson, *Myths and Legends of the Polynesians*.

The Book of the Hopi by Frank Waters. Copyright © 1963 by Frank Waters. Used by permission of Viking Penguin, a division of Penguin USA.

The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology by Joseph Campbell. Copyright © 1959, 1969 by Joseph Campbell. Used by permission of Viking Penguin, a division of Penguin USA.

Entropy by Jeremy Rifkin & T. Howard. Copyright © 1980 by Foundation on Economic Trends. Used by permission of Viking Penguin, a division of Penguin USA.

The Greek Myths, edited by Robert Graves. 2 vols. Copyright © 1953 by Robert Graves. Used by permission of Viking Penguin, a division of Penguin USA.

“The Story of the Flood” from *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, translated by N. K. Sandars (Penguin Classics, revised edition, 1964), copyright © N. K. Sandars, 1960, 1964.

Approximately 10,000 words from *The Metamorphoses of Ovid*, translated by Mary M. Innes (Penguin Classics, 1955), copyright © Mary M. Innes, 1955.

Reprinted by permission of S. G. Phillips, Inc., from *The New Golden Bough*, ed. Theodor H. Gaster. Copyright © 1959 by S. G. Phillips, Inc.

Penguin Books, Ltd., for excerpts from Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty, ed. *Hindu Myths*.

The Hamlyn Publishing Group, Ltd., for excerpts from G. Parrinder, *African Mythology*, and Pierre Grimal, *Larousse World Mythology*.

Lippincott and Crowell through Harper & Row, Publishers, for Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*

Sheed and Ward, Inc., for excerpts from Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*.

Estate of Padraic Colum for excerpts from Padraic Colum, *Myths of the World*.

Holt, Rhinehart and Winston for excerpt from E. O. G. Turville-Petre, *Myth and Religion of the North: The Religion of Ancient Scandinavia*.

Illustration Credits:

Facing p. 3: Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Facing p. 13: C. G. Jung, *Collected Works of C. G. Jung, Vol. 9, Part I: Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, trans. R. F. C. Hull; copyright © 1959, 1969 Princeton University Press. © 1987 renewed by Princeton University Press. Watercolor/picture 4 reprinted with permission of Princeton University Press.

Facing p. 92: By courtesy of the Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

Facing p. 216: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fletcher Fund, 1928 (28.77).

Facing p. 314: Photograph by Brian Philp. Courtesy of Pictorial Colour Slides, Kent, England.

*For
Pam
Margaret
Juliet
and Paul*

This page intentionally left blank

PREFACE

This collection of world myths, although comprehensive, is not intended to be exhaustive and might well be supplemented by a good general encyclopedia or dictionary of mythology, as well as by modern editions of the major Greek and Roman epics and the Greek tragedies. The myths selected are representative of the cultures in question, with some emphasis on myths that have influenced the creative arts in Western culture. These myths are used to illustrate a process by which an approach to myth is gradually revealed. This approach, essentially archetypal in nature, will be of particular use to students of literature and the other arts. It should also be of interest to a general, nonacademic, audience, as it stresses the connections between myth and our own everyday lives.

I wish to thank my daughter, Margaret Leeming, for researching the facts in this volume. Thanks also to Christine Jopeak for her editorial assistance as proofreader and indexer.

Stonington, Conn.
December 1989

D.A.L.

This page intentionally left blank

CONTENTS

Introduction: The Dimensions of Myth, 3

- Select Bibliography, 8

PART I COSMIC MYTHS 11

The Creation, 15

- The Creation Stories, 17
 - EGYPTIAN: THE BEGINNINGS, 17
 - MESOPOTAMIAN: *ENUMA ELISH*, 18
 - HEBREW: GENESIS, 24
 - INDIAN: THE *RIG VEDA* AND THE *BRHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD*, 29
 - GREEK: HESIOD'S *THEOGONY*, 32
 - CHRISTIAN: JOHN'S GOSPEL, 35
 - HOPI: SPIDER WOMAN, 36
 - BOSHONGO (BANTU): BUMBA'S CREATION, 39
 - MODERN: THE BIG BANG, 41
- Bibliography, 42

The Flood, 43

- The Flood Stories, 44
 - MESOPOTAMIAN: *UTNAPISHTIM*, 44
 - HEBREW: NOAH, 47
 - CHINESE: YÜ, 53
 - INDIAN: MANU, 55
 - GRECO-ROMAN: DEUCALION AND PYRRHA, 56
 - MAYAN: THE *POPOL-VUH*, 60
- Bibliography, 62

The Afterlife, 64

- **The Afterlife Stories, 65**
 - EGYPTIAN: OSIRIS, 65
 - GRECO-ROMAN: LANDS OF THE DEAD, 67
 - JUDEO-CHRISTIAN: HELL, PURGATORY, HEAVEN, 68
 - MUSLIM: HELL AND HEAVEN IN THE KORAN, 68
 - BUDDHIST: THE PURE LAND, 69
 - HOPI: THE KACHINAS, 72
- **Bibliography, 75**

The Apocalypse, 76

- **The Apocalypse Stories, 77**
 - HEBREW: THE DAY OF YAHWEH, 77
 - CHRISTIAN: ST. JOHN'S BOOK OF REVELATION, 79
 - INDIAN: THE END OF THE KALI AGE, 81
 - HOPI: EMERGENCE TO THE FIFTH WORLD, 84
 - NORSE: RAGNARÖK, 85
 - MODERN: ENTROPY AND HEAT DEATH, 88
- **Bibliography, 89**

PART II MYTHS OF THE GODS 91

The Pantheons, 95

- **The Pantheonic Stories, 95**
 - EGYPTIAN, 95
 - The Gods of Heliopolis, 96*
 - The Separation of Geb and Nut, 97*
 - GREEK, 98
 - The Olympians, 98*
 - The Originators, 99*
 - The Children of Kronos and Rhea, 100*
 - The Children of Zeus, 103*
 - ROMAN: THE RENAMED OLYMPIANS, 117
 - NORSE (ICELANDIC): THE AESIR, 118
- **Bibliography, 121**
- **The God as Archetype, 123**
- **Stories of Archetypal Gods, 124**
- **The Supreme Being, 124**
 - INDIAN: KRISHNA-VISHNU-BRAHMAN, 125

HEBREW: YAHWEH, 130

MODERN: IMMANENT MIND, 133

- The Great Mother, 134

MESOPOTAMIAN: INANNA-ISHTAR, 136

MODERN: GAIA AS EARTH, 145

- The Dying God, 146

EGYPTIAN: OSIRIS AND ISIS, 147

BABYLONIAN–GRECO-ROMAN: ADONIS AND APHRODITE, 153

PHRYGIAN: ATTIS, 155

GREEK: DIONYSOS, 156

AZTEC/TOLTEC: QUETZALCOATL, 157

CHRISTIAN: JESUS, 157

NORSE (ICELANDIC): ODIN, 162

- The Trickster, 163

GREEK: HERMES, 163

INDIAN: KRISHNA, 165

SHOSHONI: OLD MAN COYOTE, 169

FON (DAHOMY): LEGBA, 171

- Bibliography, 172

Gods, Goddesses, and Lesser Spirits, 175

- Stories of Gods, Goddesses, and Lesser Spirits, 175

GRECO-ROMAN, 175

Prometheus, 175

Pandora, 177

Tiresias, Echo, and Narcissus, 178

Hyacinthus, 183

Eros and Psyche, 185

Daphne and Apollo, 185

Pan, 188

The Muses, 192

The Eumenides, 192

Zeus and Io, 192

Zeus and Europa, 196

NON-GREEK, 197

PERSIAN: MITHRAS, 197

JAPANESE: AMATERASU AND SUSANOWO, 199

POLYNESIAN: PELE AND HIIAKA', 202

INDIAN: INDRA AND THE PARADE OF ANTS, 207

- Bibliography, 213

PART III HERO MYTHS 215

- The Hero Stories, 221
- The Conception, Birth, and Childhood of the Hero, 221
 - NATIVE AMERICAN (TEWA): WATER JAR BOY, 221
 - GREEK: THESEUS, 224
 - INDIAN: KRISHNA, 225
 - INDIAN: KARNA, 226
 - GREEK: HERAKLES, 228
 - INDIAN: THE BUDDHA, 229
 - IRISH: CUCHULAINN, 233
 - BANTU: LITUOLONE, 234
- The Journey Quest of the Hero, 235
 - FRENCH: JOAN OF ARC, 235
 - GREEK: OEDIPUS, 237
 - GREEK: ANTIGONE, 239
 - CELTIC: KING ARTHUR, 243
 - GREEK: THESEUS, 244
 - HEBREW: MOSES, 248
 - CELTIC: PARCIVAL, 252
 - HEBREW: JONAH, 255
 - GREEK: JASON, 257
 - ROMAN: AENEAS, 258
 - HEBREW: SAMSON AND DELILAH, 260
 - INDIAN: THE BUDDHA, 262
 - NATIVE AMERICAN: WUNZH, OR HIAWATHA, 267
 - GREEK: HERAKLES, 274
 - AFRICAN: WANJIRU, 281
 - AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL: THE PLEIADES, 283
 - HEBREW: ABRAHAM AND ISAAC, 287
 - MESOPOTAMIAN: GILGAMESH, 288
 - GREEK: ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE, 292
 - GREEK: ODYSSEUS, 295
- The Rebirth, Return, and Apotheosis of the Hero, 298
 - BLACKFOOT: KUTOYIS, 298
 - CHRISTIAN: JESUS, 304
 - GREEK: HERAKLES, 307
 - AZTEC/TOLTEC: QUETZALCOATL, 307
 - CHRISTIAN: MARY, 308
 - GREEK: ALCESTIS, 309
- Bibliography, 311

PART IV PLACE AND OBJECT MYTHS 313

- **Stories of Places and Objects, 316**
- **The Mountain, 316**
HEBREW: MOUNT SINAI, 316
- **The City, 319**
GREEK: TROY, 319
HEBREW: JERUSALEM, 330
GREEK: DELPHI, 332
- **The Temple, 333**
JUDEO-CHRISTIAN: THE TEMPLE AT JERUSALEM, 333
EUROPEAN: THE CHAPEL PERILOUS, 335
- **The Genitals, 336**
GREEK: TIRESIAS, 336
APACHE: THE VAGINA GIRLS, 337
GREEK: THE FIG PHALLUS OF DIONYSOS, 338
- **The Stone, 338**
PHRYGIAN: THE AGDOS ROCK, 338
AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL: ERATHIPA, 339
HEBREW: THE BETHEL, 340
- **The Tree, 341**
INDIA: THE COSMIC TREE, 342
NORSE: YGGDRASIL, 343
HEBREW: THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE, 344
- **The Garden, the Grove, and the Cave, 344**
MUSLIM: MUHAMMAD'S CAVE, 345
- **The Labyrinth, 347**
GREEK: DAEDALUS AND ICARUS, 347
- **Bibliography, 348**
- Index, 349**

This page intentionally left blank

THE WORLD OF MYTH





INTRODUCTION: THE DIMENSIONS OF MYTH

In common parlance, a myth is an “old wives’ tale,” a generally accepted belief unsubstantiated by fact. Thus, it is a myth that professors are absent-minded or that women are intuitive rather than rational. We also classify as myths the stories of gods and heroes of cults in which we do not believe, tales that once had religious significance. The stories of the exploits of Zeus and Hera, Theseus, Perseus, and Odysseus are in this sense myths. Collections of the myths of particular cultures are called mythologies: the exploits of the characters just mentioned form parts of Greek mythology; the stories of Osiris and Isis are part of Egyptian mythology. We also use the word “mythology” to refer to the academic field concerned with the study of myths and mythologies. We can also speak of myth as an abstract reality, like religion or science.

In the Western world, myths have traditionally been tales of pagan (i.e., non-Judeo-Christian) religions. We speak of Egyptian and Greek myths and sometimes of Hindu and Buddhist myths, but until recently even atheists have rarely spoken of Jewish or Christian myths. Yet if “myth” has always implied falsehood, if we have not believed in Zeus or the Golden Fleece, we have accepted the mythical tales of cultures we value—especially Greco-Roman culture—as somehow important and worth teaching our children. One of the assumptions of this book is that Greco-Roman myths (and those of other cultures) are not only worth teaching but are essential to our education.

The English word “myth” is derived from the Greek *mythos*, meaning word or story. Human beings have traditionally used stories to describe or explain things they could not explain otherwise. Ancient myths were stories by means of which our forebears were able to assimilate the mysteries that occurred around and within them. In this sense, myth is related to metaphor, in which an object or event is compared to an apparently

dissimilar object or event in such a way as to make its otherwise inexplicable essence clear: Thus, when Yeats speaks of "Two girls in silk kimonos, both / Beautiful, one a gazelle," the girl in the poem is, in fact, not a gazelle; but something true about her grace and her presence is conveyed when the image of a gazelle is substituted in our minds. In the same way, something of the sense of loss and death we may feel in winter is conveyed by the story of the abduction of Persephone. In short, both as story and as extended metaphor, myth is the direct ancestor of what we think of today as literature. The meaning of myths, like the meaning of any literature, is, as Northrop Frye has said, "inside them, in the implications of their incidents" (*Fables of Identity*, p. 32).

But, as has already been implied, in its explanatory or etiological aspect myth is also a form of history, philosophy, theology, or science. Myths helped early societies understand such phenomena as the movement of the sun across the sky and the changing of the seasons, as well as such events as the ancient struggle for the control of the Dardanelles and such mysteries as the Creation and the nature of the gods. Myths also served as the basis for rituals by which the ways of humanity and those of nature could be psychologically reconciled. Many of these myths and rituals are still operative in the world's religions. The anthropologist or sociologist will properly study a myth as the expression of a social ethos. For example, the Sumerian myth of Inanna perhaps indicates a matriarchal tradition, whereas the myths of Narcissus and Hyacinth might suggest a practice of ritual human sacrifice.

In recent times we have gradually broadened our understanding of myth. Psychologists, linguists, and anthropologists have taken us beyond an appreciation of myths as primitive literature, science, or history to a realization of their importance in our own lives today. When we study mythology now, we tend to concern ourselves with basic assumptions that define a person, a family, or a culture—with the informing reality that resides at the center of being. We find ourselves talking not only about pagan tales but also about national, religious, and aesthetic essences. We find architects like Bruno Zevi discussing the mythic implications of architecture, or scientists discussing Newtonian mythic structure as opposed to that of "the new physics." We can refer to the common millennial myth that pervades the Judeo-Christian and Marxist traditions or to the myth of the American Dream. In each case we are considering something intangible, perhaps not literally real, that is nevertheless "true" in some higher sense. In other words, we have come to think of myths as conveyors of information rather than odd examples of pagan superstition, and we have learned that the mythic tales of particular cultures are masks for a larger, less tangible mythic substructure that we all share.

Throughout recorded history, the stories and patterns that we call myths have dominated human experience. If the purpose of our existence in the larger organism we call earth is to make that organism conscious of itself, we have tended to do so by means of myths—contained in stories,

songs, rituals, and paintings—that accomplish such real tasks as the justification of power, authority, ideologies, and political acts. God, personified as the patriarchal figure with the long white beard is not merely a superstition but the embodiment of a myth, possessing real power, who has dominated our spiritual and temporal world for millennia. He inhabits not only our churches and temples but our male-dominated governments, families, and schools, from London to Djakarta. Similarly, the story of the quest has been used to justify not only denial of physical needs for the sake of spiritual growth but even murder and genocide.

Joseph Campbell has written that “the chronicle of our species, from its earliest page, has been not simply an account of man the tool-maker, but—more tragically—a history of the pouring of blazing visions into the minds of seers and the efforts of earthly communities to incarnate unearthly covenants” (*The Masks of God*, I,3). Thus, myths are not to be regarded lightly. The stories in this book are cultural versions of universal tendencies. They are sometimes funny, occasionally bizarre, but they must always be taken seriously. One culture’s cleansing ritual, based on myth, can become another culture’s holocaust. Never was this dangerous aspect of myth so obvious as in Germany during the Third Reich, when Hitler used Germanic myths, particularly as popularized by Wagner in his operas, to justify the concept of an Aryan master race in a German fatherland.

A more positive impetus for the reemergence of myth as a phenomenon to be taken seriously was provided by a host of great anthropologists and psychologists around the turn of the century, who saw in myth a rich source of material for their study of human nature. Such names as Sir James Frazer, E. B. Tylor, Franz Boas, Bronislaw Malinowski, Adolf Bastian, and Ernst Cassirer come to mind, as do those of the two great founders of modern psychology, Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung. The emergence of psychology as a science has probably done more than any other recent development to remind us of the significance of myth in our own lives. Both Freud and Jung recognized motifs and patterns that were common to the mythic and subconscious worlds. Such phrases as “Oedipus complex” and the “Elektra complex,” which arise from Freudian psychology, are now a part of our general vocabulary. Jung, in particular, made use of myths in his approach to questions of self-realization, stressing the existence of archetypes, or inherent psychic tendencies, in our “collective unconscious”—tendencies that take form as motifs or themes common to individual dreams and tribal myths. Among such archetypal themes are the femme fatale, the journey quest, the figure of the wise old guide, and many others.

The connection between dreams and myths is crucial for a proper understanding of the significance of the latter. An assumption of modern psychology popular at the turn of the century was that dreams are a symbolic language by which information about the dreamer is conveyed. More specifically, with the help of an analyst—a sort of modern-day shaman—the individual can find reflected in dreams messages drawn from the inner

self, the self buried beneath the debris of childhood training, adult repression, and mental prejudice. When the dreams of an individual are studied as a whole, a pattern—a personal mythology—emerges. When the dreams of many individuals are compared, a universal dream language, a language of dream symbols, takes form.

Like the dreams of an individual, the myths of a given group are created unconsciously, as it were. As Claude Lévi-Strauss has written, “Myths are anonymous . . . they exist only as elements embodied in a tradition,” they develop on their own, they come from “nowhere” (*The Raw and the Cooked*, p. 18). Yet few anthropologists would deny that to read a culture’s myths is to glean information about that culture—about its inner identity, hidden beneath the mask of its everyday concerns. To go one step further, when we study the world’s mythologies and discover the archetypal patterns (also common to our individual dreams) that essentially unite those mythologies, we study what we might reasonably call the dreams of humankind, in which we find information about the nature of humanity itself. In a real sense, the world reveals its inner self through its common mythology.

When we study a dream or a myth, or a series of dreams or myths, we are simultaneously studying difference and commonality. On the surface of a dream we find material reflecting the dreamer’s immediate circumstances and environment. The setting and the characters of the dream will contain mysteries, to be sure, but they will also reflect people and places known to the dreamer. By the same token, the external surface of a myth is likely to reflect the experience of the culture in question. American Indian myths are populated by ravens, buffalo, and other North American animals, while in East Indian myths we find elephants and cobras. But at a deeper level, the dreams of an African, the myths of a Native American, and those of an East Indian are unified by a common symbolic and archetypal “language” or “deep structure.”

This psychological analogy can be taken one step further. Just as dreams help us to determine our identity as individuals and tribal myths help to establish a tribe’s identity, so world mythology, considered as a whole, is the eternal story of humanity’s quest for self-fulfillment in the face of entropy, the universal tendency toward disorder. Whether the hero of a myth is Indian, Norse, African, or Polynesian, whether he or she is on a quest for nirvana, self, the Kingdom of God, or the Golden Fleece, this figure is on a universal human quest for identity and individuation, as Joseph Campbell and Mircea Eliade, two of our greatest modern mythologists, have so eloquently taught us. This is a quest that we all understand, for only humans are endowed with the ability to be conscious, at any given time, of the universal scheme of things, of *mythos*, of the beginning, middle, and end of a given process. In that sense we are all ultimately questers, voyagers on the mythical “road of life,” the “path,” the “Tao.”

A question that inevitably arises in connection with mythology is that of authorship. Who wrote the myths or, more accurately, who first told

them? Almost invariably the answer must be the people themselves. The myth, like its close relative the fairy tale, has its origins in the collective “folk” mind. Perhaps it was individual priests or shamans who gave some specific form to the “primitive” speculations concerning the reason for spring, the origin of earth, and the nature of death; but the essential similarities within those various forms, irrespective of chronology and geography, indicate a collective authorship, the human mind wrestling en masse with the mysteries, attempting to make earth conscious of itself. Of course, much later there arose great literary mythmakers, early poets who, like the shamans, medicine men, and priests, were somehow individually inspired—even possessed—to the point that they could achieve self-identity only by breathing a new conscious literary life into the old tales. These poets were, like the folk mind itself, true mythmakers to the extent that they found new ways to convey the universal human story in terms suited to their own cultures. It was at about the time of Homer—himself a figure of mythic proportions—that human beings began to associate particular names with their mythmakers. We do not know the name of the poet of the Gilgamesh epic, through which much of Sumerian mythology is known to us. There are many literary versions—which were eventually written down—of Indian, Chinese, Egyptian, and Hebrew myths as well, but we do not know their authors. If there was a historical Homer, he can be called the first identifiable mythmaker, unless it was the Indian counterpart of Homer, the legendary Vyasa, who was said to have composed the *Mahabharata*. The Greek poet Hesiod is among the first truly historical mythmakers, renowned for his descriptions of the mythological past in such works as the *Theogony*.

After Homer the mythmakers become more consciously literary, better known, and further removed from their folk sources. The Romans, primarily Virgil (the *Aeneid*) and Ovid (the *Metamorphoses*), are perhaps more accurately described as professional poets than mythmakers; the creators of the oral epic tradition, such as Homer and Vyasa were still straddling the folk world and the self-conscious literary world. In the *Odyssey*, Homer gives us a brief portrait (perhaps a self-portrait) of one of these inspired voices of the folk mind, a mythmaking minstrel at the court of the Phaiakians, who in his songs gave new form and life to the ancient tales of prehistory:

*The crier soon came, leading that man of song
whom the Muse cherished; by her gift he knew
the good of life, and evil—
for she who lent him sweetness made him blind.*

*In time, when hunger and thirst were turned away,
the Muse brought to the minstrel's mind a song
of heroes whose great fame rang under heaven.*

(*Odyssey*, VIII, p. 139 [trans. Robert Fitzgerald])

Like the Homer of legend, Demodocus, the minstrel described, is blind. He may lack sight but he possesses insight, being closer to the gods, as it were, and to the folk imagination than to what we usually think of as "literature." In the *Odyssey* itself, Odysseus is certainly a literary hero, but he is also a mytho-religious figure whose journey is firmly rooted in a ritual pattern involving loss, descent, and rebirth. In this sense he resembles Job in the Old Testament or the Pandava brothers in the *Mahabharata*. In a way, the early poetic mythmakers told stories that the collective mind already knew. In those stories humanity could see itself in proper perspective; creation could step back and look at itself. It should be pointed out here that the modern artist is a direct descendant of the ancient mythmaker. The true artist explores the inner myth of life in the context of a particular local experience. If the story of Odysseus is humanity's story of loss and rebirth leading to transformation, so is *War and Peace* in a nineteenth-century Russian context and so, perhaps, is Picasso's *Guernica* in a twentieth-century European one.

In this book the great mythic tales of the world are introduced and arranged in such a way as to make the universal tale they tell as clear as possible. Four types of myths serve as the organizing principle: cosmic myths, theistic myths, hero myths, and place and object myths. Cosmic myths are concerned with the great facts of existence (e.g., the Creation, the Flood, the apocalypse). The theistic myths involve cultural hierarchies (e.g., the Twelve Olympians, the Egyptian gods). Hero myths, perhaps the best known, are stories dealing with individuals (e.g., Achilles, Odysseus, Theseus, Jesus, Moses). Place and object myths concern either mythic places (e.g., Atlantis, the Labyrinth) or objects (e.g., King Arthur's sword, the Golden Fleece).

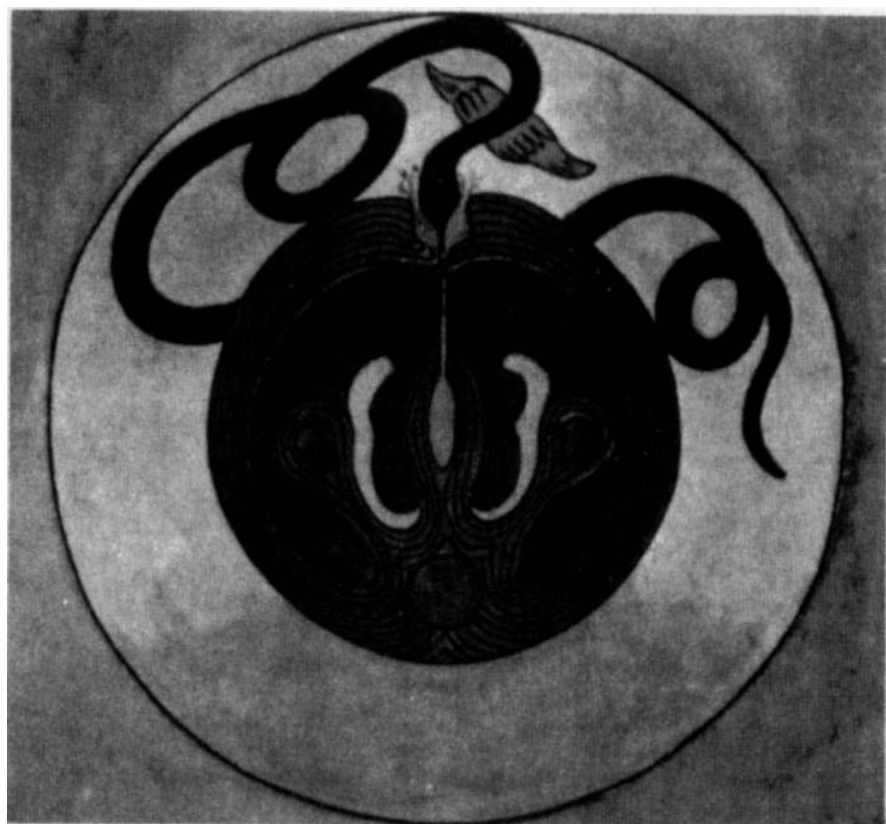
As we explore the world of myth, we should remember that we are journeying not through a maze of falsehood but through a marvelous world of metaphor that breathes life into the essential human story: the story of the relationship between the known and the unknown, both around and within us, the story of the search for identity in the context of the universal struggle between order and chaos. The metaphors themselves may be Indian, Greek, Native American, or Egyptian. The story they convey belongs to us all. It is what Joseph Campbell called "the wonderful song of the soul's high adventure" (*The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, p. 19).

Select Bibliography

The following works are intended as background reading not only for this introduction but also for the subject of mythology as a whole. The selection of individual titles reflects the approach adopted by the author. Additional bibliographical listings may be found at the end of each section of the book.

Aarne, A. A. *Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography*. Trans. Stith Thompson. Helsinki, 1961.

- Beltz, Walter. *God and the Gods: Myths of the Bible*. New York, 1983.
- Bodkin, Maude. *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry*. Oxford, 1934.
- Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. 1959. Princeton, N.J., 1968.
- . *The Masks of God*. 4 vols. New York, 1970.
- . *The Mythic Image*. Princeton, N.J., 1974.
- . *The Way of the Animal Powers*. San Francisco, 1983.
- . *Transformations of Myth Through Time*. New York, 1990.
- Cassirer, Ernst. *Language and Myth*. New York, 1946.
- Chase, Richard. *Quest for Myth*. Baton Rouge, La., 1949.
- De Santillana, Giorgio, and Hertha von Dechend. *Hamlet's Mill: An Essay on Myth and the Frame of Time*. 1969. Boston, 1977.
- Doane, T. W. *Bible Myths and Their Parallels in Other Religions*. New York, 1971.
- Eisenberg, Diane, et al. *Transformations of Myth Through Time: An Anthology of Readings*. New York, 1990.
- Eliade, Mircea. *Birth and Rebirth*. New York, 1958.
- . *Mephistopheles and the Androgyne*. New York, 1965.
- . *Myth and Reality*. New York, 1963.
- . *The Myth of the Eternal Return*. New York, 1954.
- . *Patterns in Comparative Religion*. New York, 1958.
- . *The Sacred and the Profane*. New York, 1959.
- , ed. *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. 16 vols. New York, 1987.
- Frazer, Sir James. *The Golden Bough*. 12 vols. London, 1905–17.
- Freud, Sigmund, *Totem and Taboo*. New York, 1918.
- Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism*. New York, 1970.
- . *Fables of Identity: Studies in Poetic Mythology*. New York, 1963.
- . *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*. New York, 1983.
- Gaster, Theodor. *Myth, Legend and Custom in the Old Testament*. New York, 1969.
- Grimal, Pierre, ed. *Larousse World Mythology*. New York, 1973.
- Hamilton, Edith. *Mythology*. 1942. New York, 1953.
- Harrison, Jane. *Mythology*. New York, 1963.
- Hillman, James. *The Myth of Analysis: Essays on Psychological Creativity*. New York, 1978.
- Jung, Carl Gustav. *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*. Princeton, N.J., 1959.
- . *Symbols of Transformation*. Princeton, 1956.
- , ed. *Man and His Symbols*. New York, 1968.
- Leeming, David A. *Mythology*. New York, 1976.
- . *Mythology: The Voyage of the Hero*. New York, 1981.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *Myth and Meaning*. New York, 1979.
- . *The Naked Man: Introduction to a Science of Mythology*. New York, 1981.
- . *The Raw and the Cooked*. Trans. John and Doreen Weightman. New York, 1969.
- Luke, Helen M. *Woman Earth and Spirit: The Feminine in Symbol and Myth*. New York, 1987.
- Thompson, Stith. *The Folktale*. New York, 1946.
- . *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*. Bloomington, Ind., 1958.
- Thompson, William Irwin. *The Time Falling Bodies Take to Light: Mythology, Sexuality and the Origins of Culture*. New York, 1981.
- Walker, Barbara. *The Woman's Encyclopedia of Myths and Secrets*. New York, 1983.
- Watts, Alan. *Myth and Ritual in Christianity*. Boston, 1968.





PART I

**COSMIC
MYTHS**

This page intentionally left blank

Cosmic myths are myths of the cosmos (Greek *kosmos*, meaning “order”). They belong to a science called cosmology, the study of the order of the universe as a whole. Under this category can be included such myths as those of Creation and the Fall, the Flood, the other life or afterlife, and the end of the world. Each culture has its own mythic cosmology. Each cosmology reflects the experience of the culture that produced it. At the same time, all cosmologies reflect a universal human concern with the outer boundaries of existence. In our cosmologies, we humans have established ourselves at the very center of time-space. The cosmic myths give us purpose and significance in the larger perspective of the universe itself. In creation stories we are given a context; in flood myths we express a cosmic basis for the pervasive idea of the cleansing sacrifice; in afterlife and apocalypse myths we celebrate the immortality of human consciousness against the background of personal and universal physical decay.

This page intentionally left blank



THE CREATION

A myth of creation, a cosmogony (Greek kosmos, meaning “order,” and genesis, meaning “birth”), is a story of how the cosmos began and developed. Typically, though not always, cosmogonies include the creation of the world, the creation of humankind, and the fall of humankind from a state of perfection, or the struggle in heaven between various groups of immortals.

Each person’s birth is the subject of a story that is somehow revealing about that person. The events surrounding one’s birth are a celebration of the miracle of individuality. The same applies to cultural myths of origin. Origin stories are sacramental—outward and visible signs of an inner truth about the individual or culture in question. Mircea Eliade has called the creation myth the “narration of a sacred history,” the story of the “breakthrough of the sacred” into time (Myth and Reality, p. 6).

That the creation story is a metaphor for birth is indicated further by the frequent presence in cosmogonies from around the world of the motifs of the primal egg or the primal waters. These essential female symbols remind us that it is the Great Mother, perhaps breathed on by an intangible ultimate source, who gives form to life. It is she who is the prima materia without which life cannot be born:

*The mother of us all
the oldest of all,
hard,
splendid as rock*

*“The Hymn to the Earth,”
(Homeric Hymns, trans. Charles Boer, p. 5)*

In the analogous mythic motif of the hero's birth, even God, if he chooses to participate in the human experience, must be born of a Maya or a Mary or an Isis, the living embodiment of Creation itself.

For us, the creation myth, like the myth of the hero's birth, inevitably has a psychological meaning. In the fact that cosmos is born out of chaos or nothingness, or the fact that a hero is born of a virgin, we find a metaphor for the awakening of consciousness from the unconscious. In the Creation myths themselves, the creation of the human being is a necessary step. In the Judeo-Christian Genesis myth we find explicitly stated what is nearly always implied in creation myths, the idea that human beings are created to be namers, to apply their godlike powers of consciousness to recording creation and thereby providing it with significance.

The creation myth, then, establishes our reason for being, the source of our significance. As such, it is often used to help individuals or groups to regain health or order. When we are broken, we return to our origins to become whole again, whether on the psychiatrist's couch or in the shaman's hut. So it is that the ancient Sumero-Babylonian creation myth, the Enuma elish, was read aloud at the Babylonian New Year festival. And so it is that many curing ceremonies, such as the Navajo and Buddhist sand-painting ceremonies, begin with the recitation of the creation myth. The sand painting is itself a mandala, a sacred circle representing creation in its original wholeness. When the patient sits in the sand painting and has the creation myth recited over him by the shaman (medicine man), he is returning to the womb of nature in the hope of being reborn into nature's wholeness, of reenacting the creation myth in his own life. An equivalent of the curative sand painting for the Christian, for example, would be the church building. It is in "Mother Church," where the sacred meal is administered or "celebrated" by a priest—the spiritual descendant of a hero born of the Virgin Mother—that the Christian is reborn into spiritual health. There is obvious significance in the fact that in certain branches of the church, the Christian version of the creation story from the first book of John's Gospel ("In the beginning was the Word . . .") is recited before the dismissal of the congregation at the end of the Eucharist, the sacred soul-curing liturgy.

But if humans are born to make Earth conscious of itself, why must they (or warring immortals) fall from grace so soon after creation? The answer would seem to lie in the nature of the created world. Life, by definition, implies death. To be alive is to be imperfect, to be on an evolving path toward death, toward the entropic equilibrium of chaos. To be in the world is to be a part of the life-defining struggle to create order out of chaos. The bodies we live in, the chairs we sit in—all in process of decaying—are models of that struggle and, as such, models of creation. Works of art are even more obviously so. A poem lives insofar as its form holds chaos at bay, and its very being is a celebration of the skill that enables it to do so. The fall from grace at the end of the creation story perhaps suggests this necessary freedom of the created sphere of time and space from the formless perfection of the supreme source.

THE CREATION STORIES

Egyptian: The Beginnings

The Egyptian cosmogony developed in various directions over the centuries between the beginning of the Old Kingdom in c. 3000 B.C.E. and the end of the ancient civilization in the third century C.E. Our sources for Egyptian mythology are the ancient Pyramid Texts inscribed in hieroglyphs on inner chamber walls of Old Kingdom (3000–2200 B.C.E.) pyramids, the somewhat later Coffin Texts of the Middle Kingdom (2134–1660 B.C.E.), and the *Book of Going Forth by Day* (often called the *Book of the Dead*), an early New Kingdom work (c. 1550 B.C.E.) that is derived from the earlier texts.

The central priestly source for the Egyptian creation myth is the cult of Atun or Re, the sun god of Heliopolis (near Cairo). In the various versions of the myth we find an original spirit or Word; the High God as an emerging deity called Khoprer or Khepri (meaning “form”); a cosmic egg; a creating eye (the sun); creation by way of the High God’s androgynous act of masturbation; and creation through the god Shu’s separation of Sky (Nut) and Earth (Geb). We also find a primeval mound of earth, sometimes in fusion with the sun—a combination perhaps symbolized by the great pyramids themselves. We are not surprised to learn that rituals and myths of the Creation were repeated by the ancient Egyptians at funerals as well as at coronations and other important rites of passage.

What follows is a series of fragments that convey some idea of the Egyptian sense of the Creation. Many of these motifs of the Egyptian cosmogony are found in the creation myths of later cultures.

•

I am the Eternal Spirit,
 I am the sun that rose from the Primeval Waters.
 My soul is God, I am the creator of the Word.
 Evil is my abomination, I see it not.
 I am the Creator of the Order wherein I live,
 I am the Word, which will never be annihilated
 in this my name of “Soul.”

. . .

The Word came into being.
 All things were mine when I was alone.
 I was Rê in [all] his first manifestations:
 I was the great one who came into being of himself,

who created all his names as the Companies of the [lesser] gods,
 he who is irresistible among the gods.

The battleship of the gods was made according to what I said.
 Now I know the name of the great god who was therein.

[An early gloss adds, "Perfume of Rê is his name."]

I was that great Phoenix who is in Heliopolis,
 who looks after the decision of all that is.

[An early gloss adds, "That is Osiris, while as to all that is,
 that is eternity and everlastingness."]

I fulfilled all my desires when I was alone,
 before there had appeared a second to be with me in this place;
 I assumed form as that great soul wherein I started being creative
 while still in the Primeval Waters in a state of inertness,
 before I had found anywhere to stand.

I considered in my heart, I planned in my head how I should
 make every shape
 —this was while I was still alone—I planned in my heart how I
 should create

other beings—the myriad forms of Khopri—and that there
 should come into being their children and theirs.

So it was I who spat forth Shu and expectorated Tefnut
 so that where there had been one god there were now three as
 well as myself

and there were now a male and a female in the world.

Shu and Tefnut rejoiced thereat in the Primeval Waters in which
 they were.

After an age my Eye brought them to me and they approached
 me and joined my body, that they might issue from me.

When I rubbed with my fist my heart came into my mouth in
 that I spat forth Shu and expectorated Tefnut.

But, as my father was relaxed . . . ages . . . serpents . . .

I wept tears . . . the form of my Eye; and that is how mankind
 came into existence.

I replaced it with a shining one [the sun] and it became enraged
 with me when it came back and found another growing in its
 place.

Mesopotamian: *Enuma elish*

One of the world's oldest written creation myths is the Babylonian *Enuma elish* ("When on high"), composed no later than the reign of Nebuchadrezzar in the twelfth century B.C.E. and perhaps much earlier. It is in part

a creation myth and in part a celebration of the high god Marduk. As a creation myth, it contains several familiar motifs: the emergence of order from chaos, the primal waters as a source of creation, a war in heaven, the emergence of a king god, and the creation of earthly matter from the body of the first mother.

Much has been made of the connection between this myth and that of the Old Testament story of Genesis. Several scholars have pointed out the inevitable diffusion of ideas in the early days of the great Middle Eastern cultures.

•

When on high the heaven had not been named,
 Firm ground below had not been called by name,
 Naught but primordial Apsu,¹ their begetter,
 (And) Mummu²-Tiamat,³ she who bore them all,
 Their waters⁴ commingling as a single body;
 No reed hut had been matted, no marsh land had appeared,
 When no gods whatever had been brought into being,
 Uncalled by name, their destinies undetermined—
 Then it was that the gods were formed within them.⁵
 Lahmu and Lahamu⁶ were brought forth, by name they were called.
 For aeons they grew in age and stature.
 Anshar and Kishar⁷ were formed, surpassing the others.
 They prolonged the days, added on the years.
 Anu⁸ was their son, of his fathers the rival;
 Yea, Anshar's first-born, Anu, was his equal.
 Anu begot in his image Nudimmud.⁹
 This Nudimmud was of his fathers the master;
 Of broad wisdom, understanding, mighty in strength,
 Mightier by far than his grandfather, Anshar.
 He had no rival among the gods, his brothers.
 The divine brothers banded together,
 They disturbed Tiamat as they surged back and forth,
 Yea, they troubled the mood of Tiamat
 By their hilarity in the Abode of Heaven.
 Apsu could not lessen their clamour
 And Tiamat was speechless at their ways.
 Their doings were loathsome unto [. . .].
 Unsavoury were their ways; they were overbearing.
 Then Apsu, the begetter of the great gods,

Cried out, addressing Mummu, his vizier:
 "O Mummu, my vizier, who rejoicest my spirit,
 Come hither and let us go to Tiamat!"
 They went and sat down before Tiamat,
 Exchanging counsel about the gods, their first-born.
 Apsu, opening his mouth,
 Said unto resplendent Tiamat:
 "Their ways are verily loathsome unto me.
 By day I find no relief, nor repose by night.
 I will destroy, I will wreck their ways,
 That quiet may be restored. Let us have rest!"
 As soon as Tiamat heard this,
 She was wroth and called out to her husband.
 She cried out aggrieved, as she raged all alone,
 Injecting woe into her mood:
 What? Should we destroy that which we have built?
 Their ways are indeed troublesome, but let us attend kindly!"
 Then answered Mummu, giving counsel to Apsu;
 Ill-wishing and ungracious was Mummu's advice:
 "Do destroy, my father, the mutinous ways.
 Then shalt thou have relief by day and rest by night!"
 When Apsu heard this, his face grew radiant
 Because of the evil he planned against the gods, his sons.
 As for Mummu, by the neck he embraced him
 As (that one) sat down on his knees to kiss him.
 (Now) whatever they had plotted between them
 Was repeated unto the gods, their first born.
 When the gods heard (this), they were astir,
 (Then) lapsed into silence and remained speechless.
 Surpassing in wisdom, accomplished, resourceful,
 Ea,¹⁰ the all-wise, saw through their¹¹ scheme.
 A master design against it he devised and set up,
 Made artful his spell against it, surpassing and holy.
 He recited it and made it subsist in the deep,¹²
 As he poured sleep upon him. Sound asleep he lay.
 When Apsu he had made prone, drenched with sleep,
 Mummu, the adviser, was impotent to move.
 He loosened his band, tore off his tiara,
 Removed his halo (and) put it on himself.
 Having fettered Apsu, he slew him.
 Mummu he bound and left behind lock.
 Having thus upon Apsu established his dwelling,
 He laid hold on Mummu, holding him by the nose-rope.

After he had vanquished and trodden down his foes,
 Ea, his triumph over his enemies secured,
 In his sacred chamber in profound peace he rested.
 He named it "Apsu,"¹³ for shrines he assigned (it).
 In that same place his cult hut he founded.
 Ea and Damkina, his wife, dwelled (there) in splendour.
 In the chamber of fates, the abode of destinies,
 A god was engendered, most potent and wisest of gods.
 In the heart of Apsu¹⁴ was Marduk created,
 In the heart of holy Apsu was Marduk created.
 He who begot him was Ea, his father;
 She who conceived him was Damkina, his mother.
 The breast of goddesses did she suck.
 The nurse that nursed him filled him with awesomeness.
 Alluring was his figure, sparkling the light in his eyes.
 Lordly was his gait, commanding from of old.
 When Ea saw him, the father who begot him,
 He exulted and glowed, his heart filled with gladness.
 He rendered him perfect and endowed him with a double godhead.
 Greatly exalted was he above them, exceeding throughout.
 Perfect were his members beyond comprehension,
 Unsited for understanding, difficult to perceive.
 Four were his eyes, four were his ears;¹⁵
 When he moved his lips, fire blazed forth.
 Large were all hearing organs,
 And the eyes, in like number, scanned all things.
 He was the loftiest of the gods, surpassing was his stature;
 His members were enormous, he was exceeding tall.
 "My little son, my little son!
 My son, the Sun! Sun of the heavens!"
 Clothed with the halo of ten gods, he was strong to the utmost,
 As their awesome flashes were heaped upon him.

. . .

Disturbed was Tiamat, astir night and day.
 The gods, in malice, contributed to the storm.
 Their insides having plotted evil,
 To Tiamat these brothers said:
 "When they slew Apsu, thy consort,
 Thou didst not aid him but remaindest still.
 Although he fashioned the awesome Saw,¹⁶
 Thy insides are diluted and so we can have no rest.
 Let Apsu, thy consort, be in thy mind
 And Mummu, who has been vanquished! Thou art left alone."