



* On Tales, Tellings, Poetics *

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Myth-ing the Points: On The Mythic Mode of Telling Complexity as More-Than-Ordinary Reality

The notion of an extra-ordinary mode of language usage as important to knowing the complexities of human consciousness and the manyness of oneness in concurrent being is approached here through a concept of 'mythical telling.' The concern presented is not with myths per se, but rather 'how status is mythed.'

Myth as Thing and as Dynamical Mode of Representation

Attempts to define myth are numerous, diverse, and seemingly ever problematic. As a 'thing,' myth tends to be posed as a category of stories that concern super natural beings, creational origins, and larger-than-life heroes. Yet such a category might include tales from much of contemporary popular entertainment and even scientific explanations of phenomena. If what 'makes myths mythic' is approached as a sort of activity, as a 'way of telling or knowing' then defining it becomes a matter of discerning its dynamical qualities. Thusly one can conceive of 'myth-ing' and a mythical mode of representation rather than attempting to define the 'thing' myth.

Modernist societies tend to deny that they are mythical or 'believe in myths' because these are considered irrational and thus untrue. In contrast, tales generally regarded as mythical are associated with all pre-modern cultures. There are various themes that appear with great consistency in the mythical tales of most cultures across time and geography. But what such tales have most consistently in common might be their style of telling or 'figuring' selfhood—and the world in which it comes to self-awareness. Myth-ing as a mode of representation tends to involve extra-ordinary images and actions. From ordinarily practical perspective, this mythical mode is fantastic, imaginal,

unrealistic, irrational, bazaar, and often grotesque. It manipulates the familiar images and events of ordinary life into strange hybrids of animals and humans, posits superhuman or divine beings, describes magical or mysterious acts of creation and causation. Stylistically it might well be termed *metaphorically metamorphic*. Whatever meanings or manner of meaningfulness such style is intended to convey, it is evidently not that of ordinarily reductive or practical reasoning. If there is some genuine status of reality that such a mode of representation is suited to representing, it is most assuredly a more-than-ordinary reality. The dynamical mode of mythic telling thus appears to generate a 'knowing other wise than' is possible in any habitual, familiar, practically functional dynamic of knowing and understanding.

Metaphorically Metamorphic Style and Myth-ing the Singularity of Specific Points into Constellations of Multiplicity

The term metaphor is associated with notions of using words to characterize the status of things with which those words are not usually associated. Metaphors combine unlike or typically not associated concepts and conditions. An implicit comparison results between ordinarily unrelated qualities or status. Thus one is said to be 'buried under an avalanche of troubles,' 'swimming the river of darkness,' or 'hearing the shapes of sound.' Difficulties thusly represented become the crushing, suffocating mass of a mountainside of rock or snow. A person's struggle with them becomes a swim across a river not of water but darkness itself. Music becomes a tangibly special phenomenon of experience. This mode of meaning making derives its potency by way of its departure from more ordinary, literalistic language usage and causal thinking. It enables an unusual intensity to be added to depictions of how life 'really *really* is,' how it actually 'feels' emotionally and even physically — whether or not such psycho-somatic realities correspond reductively to mechanistic versions of 'the real.'

The term metamorphosis is associated with marked or even utter changes in appearance, character, or function. It is defined in terms of magical transformation and biological reconstitution of a body into a radically different form. Thus a metamorphic form is one in the midst of, or undergoing, metamorphosis. It is in a status of transformation. A metamorphic condition is thus partly one status and partly another and thereby not really one or the other but some mixture and thus a multiple or concurrent status.

Combining these terms in the phrase 'metaphorically metamorphic' is done here to indicate a quality of an extra-ordinary status of being constituted in an actively transient condition that is also strange or unfamiliar. Such a condition is not fixed, is of and between more ordinarily recognizable statuses, and thus has multiple, divergent, and conflicting associations. It is a status both dynamically peculiar and radically complex.

Extra-ordinary combinations of meanings and forms can result from metaphorically metamorphic representation. The figurative and semantic activity of this style of representation is referred to here as mythical dynamism because it appears typical of the style of telling manifested in what are generally regarded as mythic tales. It is also found to be dynamically appropriate to formally figuring the radically complex interactivities of many-ness in/as one-ness or concurrent being and becoming.

This peculiarly 'recombinant' style of representation, composed in more-than-ordinary associations of language elements, causal relations, and the evident forms of reality, reorders the particularities or separate one-nesses by which self and world are typically identified. As such, it 'myths' the reductive singularities of ordinary knowing into radically complex associations that 'constellate' an overt multiplicity of dynamical relations. These metaphorically metamorphic complexes of associations are more reflective of the interminable interactivity of concurrent being and becoming than more ordinary representations can be. It thereby enables a mode of inclusive yet non-reductive knowing that 'knows other wise' than the knowing of reductively singular, socially structured ways of sensing what is real and valid.

Mythic Style 'Reduced' to Popular Entertainment

However, the above claims for the potential effects of metamorphically metamorphic style on knowing and understanding are readily deflected by reductive contexting and interpretive intentions. In other words, whether or not mythically dynamic style actually 'myths' depends in part on how it is presented and received. When it is used to tell stories in a typically linear fashion that places primary emphasis upon relatively ordinary plots and characters, it can become mostly a 'decorative device.' Though much of popular entertainment appeals to the human imagination with extra-ordinary imagery and contexts (from science fiction to suspense, horror, and fantasy genres), the narratives typically reduce more-than-ordinary elements to a sort of 'hyper realism.' Special effects, unearthly creatures, and impossible events are typically used to tell the same plots that are encountered in literalistic popular movies and novels. The extra-ordinarily metamorphic is thus not granted the genuinely strange status of being radically complex and thereby capable of 'myth-ing' ordinarily singular modes of knowing and understanding. Fantasy can readily become simply a 'more entertaining form of reductive reality.'

That reduction of mythically dynamic aspects of telling is not incidental. Popular entertainments are not intended to transgress socially structured, thus reductively singular, notions of identity and reality. Rather, their use of extra-ordinary imagery serves to titillate ordinarily reductive attitudes without provoking any radical reflection upon its limitations for understanding self and world. Thus, in this contexting, more

ordinary concerns ‘flirt’ with images of a more radically complex status but do not become ‘relativized’ to the uncertainty and irreducible diversity of concurrent being and becoming. The occurrence of myth-ing in knowing and interpreting is forestalled. Thinking and comprehending by way of the ‘points’ of ordinary reality’s ‘singular reductions’ thus tend to remain unchallenged or ‘un-mythed’ in the context of popular entertainment. In archaic mythic tales that have not been socialized by modern ethical concerns, personal and human interests and preferences are often subordinated to those of ‘the gods’ and ‘fate’ — conditions of more-than-ordinary complexity in psyche and world. The appreciated status of mythical dynamism involves an experience of radical complexity figured as ‘not simply one way or another’ but rather ‘impossibly this way and that way.’ Such an experience is likely to be ‘more than entertaining.’

Further elaboration of these notions in Chapter One, Seven, and Eight of text **Manifesting the Many in the One** on page of that title

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