

QVAREIA - THE APPRENTICE

Module 5 - The Magical Tools

Lesson 7: Myths as Tools

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QVAREIA

WELCOME

Welcome to this lesson of the Quareia curriculum.

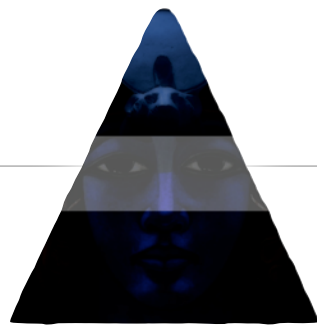
The Quareia takes a magical apprentice from the beginning of magic to the level of adeptship and beyond. The course has no superfluous text; there is no dressing, no padding – everything is in its place and everything within the course has a good reason to be there.

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So remember - in order for this course to work, it is wise to work with the lessons in sequence. If you don't, it won't work.

Yours,

Josephine McCarthy



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Module 5 - The Magical Tools

Lesson 7: Myths as Tools

The form of magic you are learning in Quareia is the underbelly of magical forms that draws on all sorts of streams of magic as opposed to a specific 'tradition.' There is a good reason for this. Many magical traditions, particularly in the West, have slowly been formed into quite rigid orthodoxies which can end up severely limiting the magician.

In the 1960s there was a shift in magical thinking in the West that gave birth to a stream of magic called Chaos Magic. This broke apart those narrow ways of thinking and opened up new vistas for magicians. Over time Chaos Magic developed its own orthodoxy in a strange sort of way, but it also profoundly changed how we thought of magic. A great deal of experimentation was done. Some of the new techniques worked well, some did not work, and some worked but with 'chaotic' outcomes.

That enabled magicians to look beyond the parameters of the narrow confines in Western magic, and understand that magic has underlying harmonics, patterns, and streams of energy that work well together (and some that do not) regardless of their cultural origins. Over the last thirty years, I have spent a lot of time tapping into these various different threads to find which of them work well in combinations, and which do not.

One of the things I discovered was that supposed mythic cultural expressions of magic were not actually connected to a specific culture at all;

rather they were connected to certain patterns of power that were sometimes connected with a landmass and sometimes not.

The mythologies and stories that have built up around these power patterns hold keys as to how to interact or tap into a particular type of magic, and use it, if it is compatible, with the land where you intend to work, or the situation you find yourself in. This method of approach works with the myths as tools and guides, as opposed to orthodoxies or streams to be immersed in.

Some schools of thought in magic tapped into those mythic streams and immersed themselves within them as an ‘operating system’: the myth became the backbone and main form of expression for the magic. The magician would strongly identify with a myth and would, by working closely within the mythic pattern over an extended period of time, find themselves ‘living the myth.’

The British stream of magic immersing itself in the Arthurian myth is a good example of this. But such immersion is very limiting and can quickly devolve down into psychology. It can also become a limiting cane that the magician leans upon: “If it’s not British and it’s not Arthurian, it’s not coming in”. You can see how quickly that narrows down the field of operation of the magician, and how such a practice can become a quasi-religion.

The other problem with such immersion is that often the magician can find themselves trapped in a mythic scenario where they are funnelled into reliving the pattern of the myth, frequently with difficult or sad outcomes.

The key is not to use these cultural myths as an identity or operating system for the magic, but simply use them as magical tools—which is I think what they were intended for in the first place. Rather than immersing themselves in one cultural myth as a magical identity, the magician taps into different myths from different places as they present themselves and when necessary, and works within them as tools for specific jobs. The myths become maps or guide books, and often tell you how to operate the main magical tools (dos and don’ts).

As you develop as a magician, you will come to realise that stories and myths are extensions of the magical sword and the gate of the east: the act of myth-making and storytelling is a technique, but the myth itself becomes a tool. It can act as a guide/teacher, but as an adept you will also learn how to

use myth and story as a magical filter for power to flow through. It is not an enactment of a myth; rather it is using a mythic pattern to contain and dispense energy and power.

And this is where it gets interesting. The magician often does not choose the mythical pattern. Instead, the pattern is indicated to the magician as the appropriate tool for the job by the beings and inner contacts that surround the magician, and by the situation they find themselves in. (The beings and inner contacts drop very large hints or put the myth in your path for you to find.)

Myths are not recipes that you can flick through to find the most useful keys: often the keys that the magician needs are not the most obvious ones. And the myth has to be the right 'fit' for the job. But when there is a particular myth that the magician needs to be working with, the magician will cross paths with that myth.

The reason for this is that we humans are fairly limited in what we can perceive when it comes to the bigger picture in magic, whereas spirit beings and inner contacts have a wider overview: they can see which mythic pattern would fit for the magician to do a job. But in turn the inner contacts and spirits do not have physical bodies that can instigate physical actions: the union of magician and beings brings together two sets of very different skills and puts them into action.

This subject matter is complex, and spotting it in action can be even more complicated. Often the involvement of a mythic pattern is subtle enough to pass the magician by, but if you pay attention then the message gets through. Often these mythic patterns are entwined around the stories of traditional magical tools (swords, stones, wands, cups) and their stories tell you about them; other times they tell of more obscure tools that the magician can engage with.

In the past I was often submerged in a mythic pattern unknowingly, and bumbled my way through it without realising what was happening. It took until the last decade for me to learn to recognise where these patterns were active or had been activated, and how to work consciously with them rather than simply being swept along with them. So hopefully, through this lesson, you will learn far quicker than I did, which may come in very useful for you.

The magician doesn't work with mythic patterns all the time: some magicians will only touch on them once or twice in a lifetime. But some will repeatedly work with different myths at different times of their lives.

Let's take a look at some examples of when this scenario has actually come into play. That way you can see from a practical point of view how this works, and how these myths become tools. The myth itself becomes a 'how to' instruction manual, and the tools within the myth tell you which magical tools to use and how to wield them.

The best way to tell you about these mythic dynamics is through stories of my encounters with myths. There are no 'bullet points' for this sort of work; rather the magician has to develop the skill of listening to or reading a story, and allowing the keys to emerge through that process. This is why so many ancient systems used mythic stories as their foundations, and why it was considered so important to learn the stories and epic poems—a tradition that still exists to this day in many cultures.

Also bear in mind that when these myths trigger, it is usually because you as a magician are visiting or are living on a land where a job needs doing. Occasionally these myths will trigger to protect you or enable you, so that you can continue doing what you do. This is a dynamic I have spoken about a lot in magic: if you are working in service and doing what you are supposed to be doing, then the inner worlds, spirits, and contacts will step up and help you, protect you, and make sure you have what you need.

Examples of myths as tools in action

Here are a couple of examples from my own life and work of the different times that the myths triggered, and for what reasons. This will give you a better understanding of the different situations that can trigger the myths, and how the myths are applied.

Bear in mind when you read what follows that I can be extraordinarily dumb sometimes, so often the contacts really have to shove something in my face before I 'get it.'

To show you how these mythic patterns work and interact (in the weirdest ways), I will tell you the stories of what happened first, and then I will give you a break down of what was actually happening magically, and what that taught me about how to use the myths as tools rather than operating systems.

The first story is not about a traditional tool; rather it is about an act of rebalancing a debt between ancestral lines, faery beings, and the land. At the time, I had no clue what the hell was happening, and this strongly illustrates how, as magicians, we can be drawn into these mythic patterns without even realising. Then we will move on to a story about how the pattern of a myth was presented to me in order for me to do magical service in a land area. It shows how magical tools emerge in these myths, and how you use the myth to operate the tool.

The story of Ulster and Loughareema

When I first moved back to the UK in 2008, I was invited by some magical friends to go visit Ulster in Northern Ireland, and do some magical work with them. I put all of my focus into the magical work, thinking that was what I was going over for. The inner lot had a different agenda.

After we had finished the magical work, we went off to explore the northern coast and various features around Ulster. I have old blood connections with a line in Ulster, and we went around various places connected to those ancestors. I could feel a lot going on, but had no clue as to what it actually was.

The first mythic pattern kicked in (though I didn't realise at the time) when we visited a cairn of one of my ancestors, who was tied in with the kingship in Ulster (my drop of connected blood comes from his daughter). Before we went to the cairn itself, we visited the shoreline. I got a strong urge to pick up a stone to place on his cairn. I hunted around, and one stone in particular caught my eye: it was a stone shaped by the sea into the form of a penis. I thought this was hilarious. So I picked it up, and took it to the mound.

Once I got to the cairn, I went silent and tried to connect with this ancestor. Eventually I got a connection and told him that I had brought a penis stone for him. He told me that was all well and good, but his body was not in the cairn. I asked him where his body was. He pointed in two different, almost opposite directions, and said his body was in pieces and not in the cairn.

I felt bad for him, and asked him if in that case the stone was a waste of time. Should I find his body (or part of it) and put the stone with it? The answer came back as no; I was to place the stone on the cairn as he could still use it (the mind boggles). I placed the stone in the centre of the mound, opened my eyes, and talked to the historian that was with us.

He confirmed that there was no body in the cairn: he had been beheaded and his head had gone to Dublin (placed on a spike outside Dublin Castle). The rest of his body had been buried somewhere locally.

I didn't give the penis stone much more thought, and after spending a little time communing with the ancestor, who was still very much upon and within the land, we left and continued our adventure.

We went to a place called Loughareema, a vanishing lake in the middle of nowhere. It is a curious and magical place where a lake occasionally 'vanishes,' leaving behind an area of mud. It is not tidal; rather it is semi-plugged with mud. When the mud shifts, the lake empties down into the water table and the caverns below. It's a very magical place, with a moon pool, windswept moorland, and a strong sense of land/faery power.

When we arrived, the lake had vanished and left behind swirls of mud that reached downwards, a bit like a plughole. I was strongly drawn to the 'plughole' (me and my love of 'red buttons'). The others wanted to explore the moon pool and the ridge beyond. So off I went, and I climbed down and down, closer to the plughole. As I got close to where the lake vanishes into the underworld, I got stuck in the mud. At first I didn't think anything of it, and just hauled my way through the mud. Then I realised I was sinking quickly into the mud up to my calves, and it was getting dangerous.

I could just see my friends on the hill, and I waved madly at them. They waved back, smiling. I gesticulated wildly that was I was in trouble and was sinking fast. One of them got the message and came running over. Even-

tually, they hauled me out of the mud and pulled me onto the bank of the lake. My left shoe was left behind, and the mud swallowed it.

I staggered out of the mud, with one shoe on, and went to rest on a stone by the moon pool. A really strong contact talked out of the moon pool and asked for my other shoe, which was soaking wet and covered in mud. So I took the shoe off and left it on the stone by the moon pool. As I took it off, I joked with my friends that the moon pool wanted my shoe. “Of course it does, the shoes/water is a major connection to the kingship in Ulster,” two of them replied. I had, at that time, no idea what they were talking about, but I was happy to be able to do what the pool wanted: give it my shoes.

Looking back, this was a turning point for me in regards to connecting with the land in a powerful way: shortly after this event, I was manoeuvred by fate to go live in the very magical place that I now live in. Where I live now is a place steeped in mythic patterns that connect strongly to the pre-Roman Britain myths and powers.

So what the hell was going on? (which was something I asked myself repeatedly at that time). I could feel all sorts of powerful things happening, but was totally clueless as to what it meant. First I will tell you the mythic patterns that were triggering, and then what it led to, how it worked, and why it worked.

THE MYTHIC PATTERNS

The first pattern that triggered, which I was working within without realising it, is the mythic pattern of Osiris. Osiris, who is an Egyptian deity heavily connected to kingship, is dismembered. Isis cannot find his penis as the fish had eaten it, so she gave him a new one, one she fashioned using magic. This restored the power of the kingship/deity.

The second mythic pattern that triggered was the myth of Fergus mac Leda and the Wee Folk. To cut a long myth short: one morning King Fergus of Ulster finds a faery couple, Lubdan and Bebo, trapped in a cauldron of porridge that was prepared the night before. He cannot believe his luck: he hauls them out of the porridge but will not let them go; he decides to hold them hostage.

Eventually he relents, on condition that Lubdan gives him a special faery treasure (a magical tool) that belongs to Lubdan: the Water Shoes that

will allow the wearer to travel upon and under the water. Lubdan grudgingly gives him the Water Shoes, and Fergus releases the couple. As aside, if you are interested in Celtic lore, this story has an interesting poem in it recited by Bebo that tells of which tree wood to use for what purpose.

So we have two totally and seemingly unrelated mythic patterns playing out. How and why? Let's have a look.

THE MYTHIC PATTERNS IN ACTION

The first mythic pattern that kicked in when I visited the cairn of an ancestor was the pattern that can be found in the myth of Osiris. Osiris is cut to pieces by Set, and Isis, devastated, sets out to find his body parts. She cannot retrieve his penis, as the fish have eaten it. (This is probably the root of the taboo against eating fish in some parts/periods of ancient Egypt.) So Isis fashions him one using magic and restores him, which in turn restores the inner power of the kingship (Osiris and kingship are tightly linked).

Now this is where we look at the myth as power keys/patterns, not as a story to be followed. The keys in this myth that reflect a pattern which then played out in my visit to Ulster were: the female of a line giving the dismembered body of a king a replacement penis, and a woman who does not eat fish (I don't, ever, yuck, won't touch fish). This restores an inner power of kingship: the wrong was 'righted.'

My role was as that female: I fitted keys of the pattern. I have a drop of the right blood, and that created a tenuous connection; I found a replacement penis and restored something. What did that job do? I had no idea. But the second mythic pattern gave me a clue.

The second mythic pattern of King Fergus (thought to be a chieftain rather than a king) tells of a man taking a faery power under duress while the faery beings were trapped in porridge. (Mud...porridge is like mud....pah.) He held the faery beings to ransom. Bad juju. That leaves a bad feeling between an ancestral kingship and the faery beings of the land.

By going to a faery lake (Loughareema is a faery power spot) and relinquishing my 'watered' shoes under duress while trapped in mud (I would have died in that sinking mud if I had not been pulled out—I was directly over the hole that the lake vanished into), I mythically 'gave back' something that had been taken so long ago. I have direct female blood from the Ulster

kingship line, albeit far in the past, and that fact, woven with giving back shoes, in a water situation, trapped in mud, at a faery lake, were the keys that triggered something to happen at a deep level. Note that the myth reversed itself: this time it was the mortal who was ‘trapped in the porridge’ and had to relinquish the water shoes.

I did not know about this myth at the time I was at the lake, but I knew that I had to answer the demand for my shoes. And I did not give them up lightly. It was March in Northern Ireland, cold, wet, and far from anywhere. I was in cold, muddy bare feet for a chunk of the day. (And no one could find shoes small enough for me—I have faery feet, they are tiny. Even the smallest person in the group had bigger feet than me.)

And as an odd aside that ties into this myth, years before as a dancer, I had ‘danced upon a lake.’ As a publicity stunt for a major festival, a platform had been constructed just under the waterline, and I was photographed seemingly ‘dancing upon the water.’ The watery shoes had come from a mortal who had danced upon the water. (See how weird and tenuous the mythic links can be?) Here is a pic:



It was not until much later, when I had repeated dreams that replayed that event, that I looked up the myth of Fergus in depth and sort of ‘got’ what that event had been all about.

So why was a pair of cheap muddy shoes so important? This is how the mythic patterns play out. We place far too much emphasis on what we consider to be the ‘sparkly bits’ in a myth, and will re-enact them to the letter, when in fact it is often the simple, seemingly innocuous aspects of the story that hold the power keys. These days we also get into very serious role-play, ritual and drama around the use of mythic patterns, which causes the magician to totally miss the point.

Like fate patterns, mythic patterns are often triggered by simple, seemingly meaningless or random aspects of the myth: if you have the right base ingredients, the right time, place, and people, it clicks something into action.

I was in the right place, at the right time, with the right ingredients to trigger a shift that would bring some sort of deep change in the relationship between the ancestral lines, the living humans, and the land: I fitted the keys of some mythic patterns and was willing to ‘give.’ I followed my instincts and found a penis, and I followed my instincts to climb down into the vanishing lake, becoming trapped and ‘held to ransom.’ So it all worked.

What was my link to the Egyptian myth of Osiris? Well, I have worked with Egyptian goddesses for decades, and a lot of my visionary work had connected for years with some of the patterns that flow through Egyptian magic. So I am presuming that is what triggered that myth, along with the pattern of an ancestral kingship power that needed something putting back in place.

The thing to note in all of this is that the mythic triggering was not for me, or about me: it was for the land and the ancestral connection with the land. Something needed a catalyst to bring change, and I was that bumbling catalyst.

We had a ‘restoration’ and recreation of an organ of the body of a king (righting a wrong and adding to a completion), and then a descendant of a king giving back watery shoes to a faery place in a reversal of the ransoming (righting a wrong, settling a debt). In return, I was given a safe place to live that is steeped in powerful faery contact. But my ‘giving’ had to be without condition or the expectation of receiving in return.

The story of the monster in the lake/ Beowulf

This is a story that tells you a lot about the interaction between a magician, a magical tool, and a mythic pattern. I have mentioned this once before in one of my books, but I think it will be most useful to tell it again here. It is a story that shows how these mythic patterns can work even when ‘off’ their original lands, and it also tells us a lot about magical swords in particular.

When you read what I did, and then read about the different swords of Beowulf, you will start to see how the mythic story of Beowulf passes on wisdoms about how different swords work, and how you are to behave with them. First we will look at my encounter with the Beowulf story, and then look at what it tells us about swords and about beings that can inhabit water and cause problems for us.

During the time I lived in the USA, there was a time when I lived on the edge of a lake. It was a small community, and the land was very powerful in a strange and disturbed way. Every night I would have nightmares, and my energies got lower and lower: I thought I was getting sick. During this time, when I was at work, people kept talking to me about Beowulf in various ways. I was teaching teens at the time, and different students kept showing me projects, books, paintings, etc. to do with Beowulf. This went on for months and I still did not realise that a large hint was being thrown my way.

My weakness got more and more intense, and when I started talking to the locals, I found that they all had the same problem: nightmares and feeling very weak all the time. During this time, I got a strong message to drop my magical sword into the water. I did readings to see why, and the reason was obscured from me; but the readings also showed that the instinct was right and had a definite purpose. This magical sword was a working tool, had never shed blood and had never been used in anger: it was used only to limit, guard, and balance.

So late one night, a friend and I set out onto the lake in a boat, and I dropped the sword into the lake at the centre, in the deepest part of the water. At first (because I am dumb) I did not make the connection between the weakness that was affecting everyone who lived by the lake, and the dropping of the sword (duh). But a few days later it did occur to me that some-

thing magical was happening. So I started to pay more attention to what was going on. To cut this part of the story short, I discovered that strange parasitic beings were coming out of the water and literally sucking the life out of people.

I watched this happen repeatedly for a while, and then decided I needed to do something about it. Around that time I was also finally starting to get the Beowulf hint, so I sat down and read the epic poem. I still didn't get it (like I said, dumb). One night, just before a full moon, I decided that this was the night to tackle this problem. I waited until the strange parasitic beings came out of the water, and then I went in vision into the lake to see where they were coming from. I dived down and down, and found myself in a strange sort of hall with a huge fat monster-like creature at the bottom of the lake.

It was undefended and seemed to ignore me totally, as if I could not possibly be of any danger to it: it was so used to being unchallenged, it had become complacent. It was then that I spotted my magical sword, hanging on a 'wall' and beaming brightly. I grabbed the sword and shoved it up to the hit into the neck of the being, killing it instantly. I dropped the sword, swam back up to the surface and went back to my body. By my body was one of the strange parasites, and it was dying: they were extensions of the big mother being in the lake, and when it was killed, it killed all of them.

I started to get stronger, the nightmares stopped, and the locals also started to get better. Shortly after that I was 'moved on,' something that used to happen to me a lot: I would do a job in a land area where I lived, and as soon as the job was done, I would suddenly be put in a situation where I had to move. I sat down and read Beowulf again, carefully this time, and finally I spotted what had been going on, why Beowulf had been shoved in my face for so long, and that the mythic poem was in fact a 'how to' myth about dealing with these strange and powerful beings that can reside in lakes and affect people badly. If I had not been so dumb, I would have picked up on the Beowulf hint a lot earlier, read it, figured out what needed doing, and done it. However it did eventually get done, and thankfully I followed the hidden advice in the poem and heeded the warnings without realising it. Note how the myth is from a very different land, yet it was still relevant to the situation. These days, if a myth suddenly gets thrust repeatedly in my face, I take the time to sit down and read it. Even if I still do not understand

why it has suddenly appeared, the act of reading it a few times puts the keys into your head so that when you come to wield a magical tool in a mythic pattern, you heed the advice and warnings, which in turn teach you about how the tool works.

So let us take a look at the hints and keys that lie hidden in Beowulf, and how they gave directions about how to deal with a magical land issue. And we will look at how the ‘patterns’ fitted for me so that I could do the job (the same dynamic that played out in the Ulster story).

BEOWULF: SOME KEYS

The first key that fitted the lock was that Beowulf was from ‘over the sea’ and sailed to Sjøælland. I came to the US from a place over the sea: I was a stranger that crossed a sea. I came to a place where a ‘monster’ lay deep underwater and whose offspring terrorised the locals. The dropping of the magical sword that had shed no mortal blood (magically or otherwise) into the water became the sword of giants in the Beowulf poem that eventually worked to kill the monster.

In the battle between Beowulf and Grendel's mother, he takes a sword given to him by Unferth for the task, a sword known as Hrunting:

And another item lent by Unferth

at that moment of need was of no small importance:

the brehon handed him a hilted weapon,

a rare and ancient sword named Hrunting.

The iron blade with its ill-boding patterns

had been tempered in blood. It had never failed

the hand of anyone who hefted it in battle...

—Heaney, Seamus. Beowulf. USA: Norton, 2000. (Lines 1455–1457)

This is the first lesson that the poem gives: a sword that has been blooded in battle is a battle sword; it is not a magical sword. An inner being (with no physical form) cannot be slain with a blood sword which has torn human flesh or harmed a mortal with magic; it can only be slain by a magical sword that had never been used against a mortal (the sword of giants). The first sword, Hrunting, was a blood sword and so of course it did not kill Grendel's Mother. The giant's sword that he grabbed in the struggle was a magical sword, and so it worked.

However (and this is another key in the myth), Beowulf then did something he should not have done: he decapitated Grendel's Mother to show off her head. As a result, the sword melted and was no more. This is an important key with magical swords. It was fair and just to kill the being that had been terrorising and feeding off of others (the locals), but it was not fair and just to then strike the body once more even though it was dead, and for the reason of strutting/revelling in the death. That is an unbalanced use of the sword and went beyond solving a problem: the magical sword is about restoring balance, but nothing beyond that. So the sword was taken from him and its magic dissolved.

Later, when Beowulf had need of a magic sword once more, this time to slay the dragon, it was not there for him. Instead he used Naegling, a battle sword of ancient origin, which snapped when Beowulf used it. The poem relates that Beowulf's strength snapped the sword as he thrust it into the dragon. Beowulf still was not getting that it is the magic in a sword that slays magical beings, not its battle history nor the strength of the fighter: his battle hardness was at odds with the magical element of the situation. This theme also appears in the Arthurian story of Caliburn and Excalibur. The magical sword Caliburn is used in battle (big no no) to draw blood, and so it breaks.

From my point of view in the work that I did, the magical sword in the bottom of the lake gave me the weapon to slay the being. I did not then do anything else to the being (no magical bindings, no attacks or disfigurements, nothing), I just left it dead, and also left the sword there.

When I left that area and moved back to England, another magical sword was waiting for me and was of the same power as the sword I had given to the lake: it came back to me in a strange, roundabout way so that it could be used again in the future.

Let's backtrack and dissect the sequence of events from a magician's perspective so that you can see clearly how these mythic cycles trigger for a magician, and how a magician should spot them and work with them. That way you are more likely to recognise when this happens in your own life and will be able to act accordingly. This is not really apprentice stuff, but these situations can trigger for any level of magician, so it is better that you are able to spot and recognise this dynamic in action from the early stages of your training (and hopefully therefore not be as dumb as I was).

DISSECTION OF EVENTS

A myth repeatedly presented itself, and was subsequently ignored (my first mistake). The myth presented itself because a magician was in a place of danger, and also in a place where they could work in service to change the dangerous situation.

The magician had a magical tool that would do the work. The myth gave warnings and advice about the use of the tool for a successful outcome. Although I did not use the myth as a proper guide, I had enough inner contact around me to nudge me into the right action.

The myth of Beowulf told me about the situation I was facing (even though I didn't get it at first), what needed to be done, and how to do it. The inner contacts and beings that work around me placed the myth under my nose to give me a guidebook.

My magical training ensured that I acted to cause just the right amount of impact on the being, without crossing any lines of unbalanced behaviour—something that the myth also outlines strongly: a magical sword slays magical beings, but should not be used to bolster the ego, to dishonour, show off, or attack/harm a mortal. If Beowulf had stuck to that rule (not decapitated Grendel's Mother and dishonoured her body), the giant's sword would not have melted and would have stayed with him to slay the dragon in the future.

I was willing to let my sword go for the good of the land, and so it was returned to me. The problem was solved, and everyone moved on.

How the magician can use this method

Sometimes the myth is placed in your path by the inner contacts that work around you. This signals that there is a job to be done, and that the myth will act as a guidebook to help you, if you follow it. Most of the time for contacted magicians, this is how it works. Sometimes the hints can be very subtle and can come to you via other magicians.

The way to work with these subtle hints that are nudging you towards myths and keys is to think sideways and not try to be logical. Inner hints are like water and will flow through the path of least resistance. A single key will present, and once the magician picks up on that key, if they follow their curiosity without trying to form a logical path, the other keys will start to appear. If you try to 'nail it down' through logical study and analysis, the connection will close down (your logical mind will discount frail connections).

Once you know what myth is presenting, read the story and take particular note of the tools/weapons in the story. Also take note of the mistakes the hero/heroine makes and understand why they were mistakes, and look at the story of the beast/spirit/deity that is causing the problem.

Once you have those keys, then look at your own life and your surroundings, and see if there is a connection with something that is happening or has happened around you. Once you join the dots up, follow the advice in the myth, regardless of whether or not that myth is local or foreign, and do your job.

One thing to look out for is that sometimes more than one myth at a time will be playing an advisory role. This is because the myth is not an operating system; rather it is working for you as a tool (like in the Ulster story). Fragments of behaviour in different myths tell you various steps that need to be taken in order to achieve something. This is why it was very important in many magical traditions to spend time in the early phase of training learning diverse mythic poems, stories and songs from different lands and cultures: it's like learning your mathematical times tables. They are embedded deep in your subconscious so that they can rise back up when needed: a tool is not always something you can hold.

Myths can be like circuit boards: they are pathways that present themselves when certain powers are flowing and operating in a certain way. And this is the thing that often confounds me: humans write the myths to tell a story, but often a landscape or area will present the elements and keys of a myth not only in its natural landscape, but also in the man-made structures upon that land area (so which came first, the myth or the structure?).

Practical Work

The practical work in this lesson is reading and exploring myths, songs, epic poems, and local legends. Have a notebook handy when you are reading, as you will likely come across snippets of text that will tell you something about tools, land, powers, etc. that will come in useful to you. Just note down the snippet and also the myth it comes from. These are not notes to be submitted to mentors; they are just for yourself.

HOW TO RECOGNISE AND WORK WITHIN MYTHIC PATTERNS

The first step to engaging consciously with this process is to learn the myths, legends, and stories of the land area upon which you live. The next step is to look around you, look at the land itself, and then look at the current happenings in the land/people/communities to see if the myths or fragments of the myths are playing out in any way. If so, are they playing out in a good way (and therefore need no help) or are they playing out in a bad way (like the Beowulf story)?

It is also important not to connect too deeply with the myths: they are tools, not clothing for you to wear. One of the mistakes that people make when working with myths is that they personally identify with the hero/heroine and start to live the mythic life. To do that steps you into the magical current of the myth in full, which in turn will immerse you fully in the challenges, burdens, and dangers of the hero. If you wish to do that, then all is fine: just realise that you cannot then simply step out of it should it all start going badly wrong. Once you have stepped into a mythic pattern with

the intent of living the myth, it is really hard to step back out of it: the mythic struggles start to play out through your life, and you can end up on a hamster wheel of challenges.

This is why many magicians engage with the myths as simple working tools and guidebooks, not as life paths or identities. You can extract the wisdom and advice of a myth without having to live it for the rest of your life. To step into the mythic pattern also steps you out of your own fate and places you in a fate pattern that has played like a bad record for centuries: this is the trap of myths. The role of the magician is to learn how to operate tools, paths, gates, etc. without becoming stuck or tied to any of them in particular: you keep your own fate path, and the tools assist your journey rather than dictate it.

Tasks

Look up your local legends and myths (if you can find them), and if you cannot find anything on the net, look in your local city library archives. See how they relate to the landscape, see what ‘monsters’ they tell you about, what tools, what rules of behaviour, what mistakes are made, etc.

Important!! Ensure that they truly are ancient or very old myths and legends that come from a culture or peoples. Do not fall into the wide and sharp-toothed trap of using modern hero stories, fantasy stories, or movie themes (and don’t use movies for mythical keys... they are never very accurate at all). Modern fantasy can be used in magic, but in a very different way. It is vitally important to understand the difference between modern fantasy and ancient myth, as they can appear similar, but in fact they are very different from a magical perspective.

In working with traditional myths, you are learning the keys of wisdom that were acquired centuries or even millennia ago. They are not just stories; they hold magical skills and knowledge within them in story form so that the wisdom can travel down the ages.

Once you have figured out local myths, if you can find them, then start to browse bookshops for other epics, poems, stories and myths. Look at classical, mythical, and historical sources. Do this with physical books rather

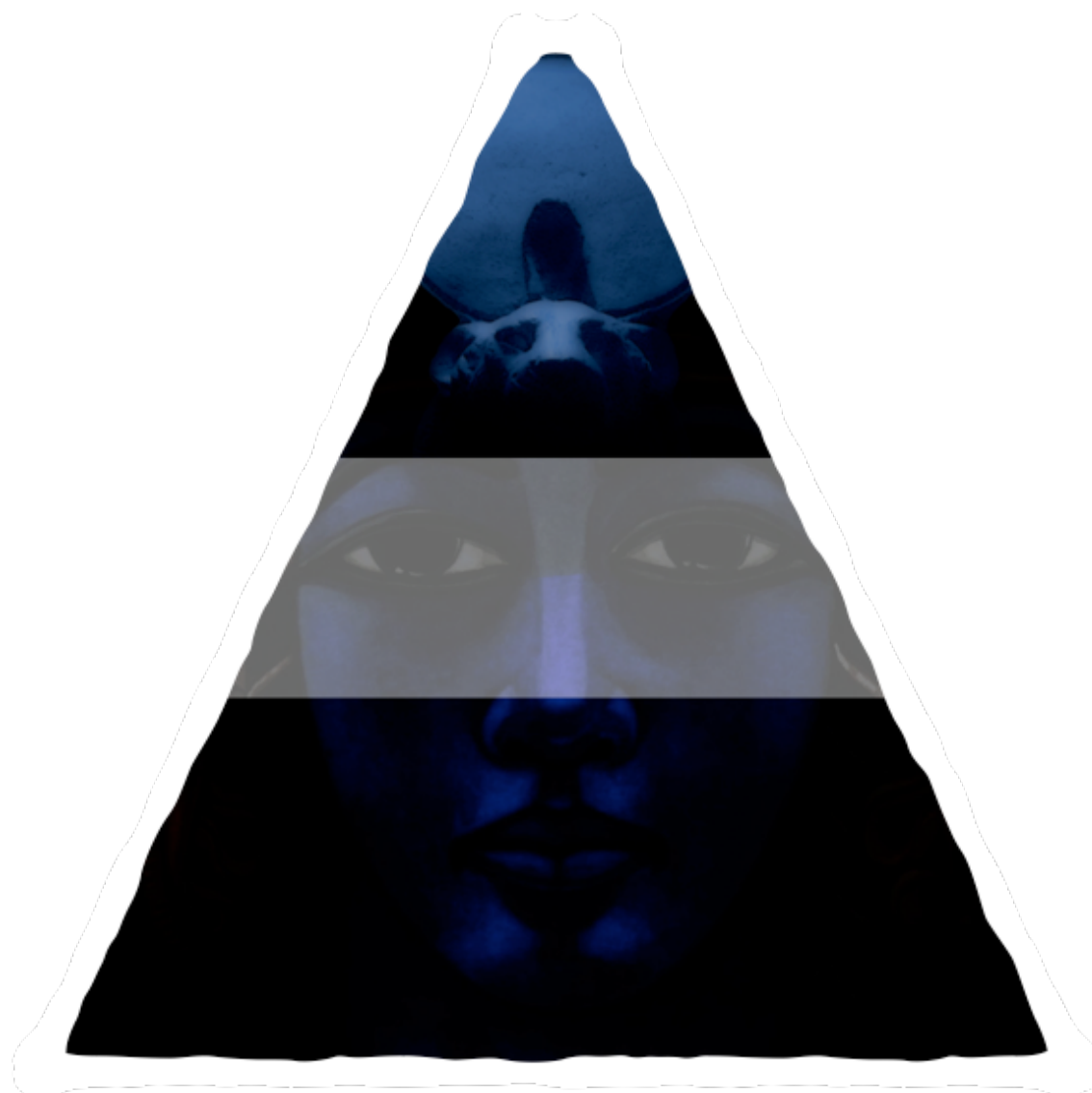
than online. The reason for this is it is much easier for inner contacts to guide you and connect you up with the right myths when there is a physical bridge (your hand on the book, for example). However, this dynamic might be different for people who have grown up with the internet, so use your own judgement. But I often find that books will jump out at me from the shelf, sometimes literally (one falling and smacking me on the head).

Don't buy up every mythic book you can find: remember the flow of water... see where your curiosity takes you, and also be on alert for something that repeatedly keeps showing up, being discussed, or one myth in particular that keeps being presented to you. When you get the book, get a physical book, not an ebook or online file. There is still a strong dynamic between the inner pattern of a physical book and its transmission to the magician (it works along the inner library pattern). Not only do you read the book, but you hang out with it, sleep with it under your pillow, or keep it close to you.

Once you have absorbed the myths, you may be put to work or presented with a situation straight away, or it may be a matter of you storing the information in your mind ready for something that will come up in the future. Also, many of the mythic patterns have a great deal of information and wisdom that is pertinent to the magician: see what you can spot. You will find that the patterns you have learned in magical practice will turn up in certain myths and will tell you a little more about them.

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