



June/Summer 2020 Theme  
**MYTHOLOGY**  
*the practice of telling our stories*

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*The intention of the themed year is to help Unitarian Universalists build a robust spiritual and ethical vocabulary. The themes are points of departure for religious liberals seeking to think, speak and act theologically, prophetically and prayerfully. The themes reclaim religious language, casting old terms in a new key to deepen spiritual grounding and sharpen moral reasoning. More at: [wbuuc.org/themes](http://wbuuc.org/themes) or sign up for a circle at [wbuuc.org/classes](http://wbuuc.org/classes).*

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### QUESTIONS

Why are stories more interesting than facts?

Why do stories have such impact?

What stories of myth and legend have stuck with you the most? What do they tell us about you?

### QUOTATIONS

"I believe in everything until it's disproved. So I believe in fairies, the myths, dragons. It all exists, even if it's in your mind. Who's to say that dreams and nightmares aren't as real as the here and now?" ~ John Lennon

"I liked myths. They weren't adult stories and they weren't children's stories. They were better than that. They just *were*" ~ Neil Gaiman, [The Ocean at the End of the Lane](#)

"Mythology is not a lie, mythology is poetry, it is metaphorical. It has been well said that mythology is the penultimate truth--penultimate because the ultimate cannot be put into words. It is beyond words. Beyond images, beyond that bounding rim of the Buddhist Wheel of Becoming. Mythology pitches the mind beyond that rim, to what can be known but not told. ~ Joseph Campbell, [The Power of Myth](#)

"Of Giving The Lie" Painting myself for others, I have painted my inward self with colors clearer than my original ones. ~ from Michel de Montaigne,

That specific "I" is, of course, a construction. I continually make her up as I go along out of whatever materials come to hand. ~ Nancy Mairs, from "Prelude"

Writing is a form of imposture: I'm not at all sure I am anything like the person I seem to a reader. ~ E.B. White

## POETRY

*These two poems are from little bit long time by ali cobby eckerman. Ali Cobby Eckermann is an Australian poet of Aboriginal Australian ancestry. She is a Yankunytjatjara / Kokatha woman born on Kurna land in South Australia.*

### **little bit long time**

*For all our old mob who told us true*

'Stay here'

he whispers gruffly holds her roughly  
hugs her then hides her  
little bit long time.

Big eyes young face stare from hiding place  
watch her Dad pause check nature's laws  
sniffing the air eyes filled with despair  
little bit long time.

He just wants some water to give to his daughter  
he steps from the trees crawls on his knees  
squats in the sand drinks with his hands  
little bit long time

Her eyes do not waver good lessons he gave her  
sees Dad fall over strange there a hole in his brains  
gun noise fills her ears her eyes los their tears  
little bit long time.

Rough white hands snatch her cruel voices scratch her  
she's too scared to run she's learnt respect for the gun  
two different eyes clash she knows in a flash  
this killer had watched them

little bit long time.

### **Black**

*For Mum Audrey, a true activist*

**1**

My father is a unicorn  
The mythical beast  
Hidden behind clouds  
Of gossip.

My mother grasps curtains  
Shreds them with anxiety  
Plaits ribbons  
In an empty church.

My nana opens windows  
Weaving songs  
And gently tells  
Real myths.

**2**

My father thinks I am not his  
My mother thinks she knows me  
My nana thinks I am her heart  
But I am none of these

I am white  
I am grey  
I am black.

*This is an excerpt of 'The Shoes of Wandering' in The Book of Nightmares by Galway Kinnell*

4

The witness trees  
blaze themselves a last time: the road  
trembles as it starts across  
swampland streaked with shined water, a lethe-  
wind of chill air touches  
me all over my body,  
certain brain cells crackle like softwood in a great  
fire  
or dies,  
each step a shock,  
a shattering underfoot of mirrors sick of the itch  
of our face-bones under their skins,  
as memory reaches out  
and lays bloody hands on the future, the haunted  
shoes rising and falling  
through the dust, wings of dust  
lifting around them, as they flap  
down the brainwave of the temporal road.

5

Is it the foot,  
which rubs the cobblestones  
and snakestones all its days, this lowliest  
of tongues, whose lick-tracks tell  
our history of errors to the dust behind,  
which is the last trace in us  
of wings?

## READINGS & EXCERPTS

### **Exerpt from a Review of *The Phantom Menace* from 1999 by Steve Persall, Petersburg Times Film Critic**

"Every culture has them, and they're essentially the same story," said Liam Neeson, who plays Jedi master Qui-Gon Jinn in *The Phantom Menace*. "We immediately recognize them in some way, and we feel the need to have them told."

"We're living in such a complex world, with so much confusion each time we turn around, that we want to see something that makes the world more palatable. (Myths) just remind you of those basic pillars of wisdom that everybody should have."

... Lucas is the first mass media mythologist, which causes some academics to question placing him among the elite creators of legends. Ancient myths thrived on the power of their stories alone, not mass communication "There is the test-of-time thing to consider," Feder said. "A lot of people would hesitate to put the label of 'myth' on something relatively new like Star Wars. But, a myth is

And is it  
the hen's nightmare, or her secret  
dream,  
to scratch the ground forever  
eating the minutes out of the grains of  
sand?

6

On this road  
on which I do not know how to ask for  
bread,  
on which I do not know how to ask for  
water,  
this path  
inventing itself  
through jungles of burnt flesh, ground  
of ground  
bones, crossing itself  
at the odor of blood, and stumbling on,

I long for the mantle  
of the great wanderers, who lighted  
their steps by the lamp  
of pure hunger and pure thirst,

and whichever way they lurched was  
the way.

a myth, no matter what trappings we put on it. Give them light sabers instead of swords and it doesn't matter."

**from the preface to Volume II of her family history, by Peg Guilfoyle**

Even if Irish history and genealogy had been continually recorded, it would be marked by cataclysm in that country and this one: colonization by England and survival and transformation of the peasantry, the Famine with mouths green from eating grass, the hard crossings, the adjustment to an American society that did not want the Irish, the brawling rise of Chicago's industries, epidemics of diphtheria and flu. All of these come equipped with a latticework of fact, but swathed in mythology and story. Somewhere in those mists, the Gradys and the Condons, the Laffans and the Shanahans, and Sextons and the Hacketts and all their kin walked their lives out, born squalling, lovingly raised or not, marrying or not, bearing children in their turn, losing strength and declining, and eventually taking their place in the graveyards. We look across a landscape which grows dim with distance and time, and glimpse what we can. It is impossible to see much detail, but important to remember that their lives were as full of incident as our own, small and large, humorous and tragic, humdrum and wearying. We hope they had their measure of joy. We can hope their shades appreciate this look, and the attempt to delay their entire loss to memory.

**MUSIC**

Saturn Returns from Myths and Hymns by Adam Guettel <https://youtu.be/439s6tHXr94>

Long ago, I tasted something sweet.  
It's an echo, it's a memory in retreat.  
Like a feeling of fullness,  
Like the knowing of quiet fortitude, of ancient heroes.  
It was something I trusted somehow.  
But now,  
But now it's gone, and I am incomplete.  
In the darkness, and the hollow, in the heat.  
If I flash on the future  
I see only the empty future shock, an afterimage.  
There is only I want, I want, I want.  
I don't know what I hunger for,  
I don't know why I feel the hunger more  
And more with every passing day.  
I don't know from where the hunger springs,  
But that it's there and that it sings of someplace far away.  
So get me up, and get me out, and let me never return  
To the darkness and the hollow, and to the burn.  
I want out of this hunger,  
To take me up to a higher altitude.

Take me all the way,  
I'm out of here.  
I am going there.  
I am gone!  
Oh, get me up like Icarus,  
And give me wings like Pegasus.  
Just get me out and get me high!