

If there is any limit to Reddy's work, it is her unilateral reading of the white, male, heterosexual subject that is put forth in Hammett and Chandler. Several contemporary critics have indicated the split nature of the hard-boiled ethic, suggesting that a hysteric demand for the dissolution of identity frequently accompanies the more manifest desire for entrenchment (cf. Abbott, Forter, and Plain). A conversation with such criticism would certainly be fruitful; however, so too is the author's suggestion that the genre is intractable on these questions.

Reddy's study is an excellent introduction to the history and presence of race in detective fiction, for both the lay reader and specialist. The extensive bibliography, tireless examples of lesser known authors, and rigorous theoretical perspective ensure that *Traces, Codes, and Clues* will remain an indispensable text on the topic for some time to come.

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*Tree of Souls: The Mythology of Judaism.* Howard Schwartz. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

If your library includes the major collections of mythology, you will want to add *Tree of Souls: The Mythology of Judaism*, the first anthology of Jewish mythology in English. Howard Schwartz, the author and editor of thirty volumes, is an expert in Jewish folk and traditional literature at the University of Missouri in St. Louis.

Schwartz defines mythology as "a people's sacred stories about origins, deities, ancestors, and heroes. Within a culture, myths may serve as the divine charter, and myth and ritual are inextricably bound" (xliv). But his unofficial definition is that of Joseph Campbell, who explained myth as "the collective dream of a people." Schwartz's collection of nearly seven hundred tales establishes that is there an extensive Jewish mythology which remains vigorous as an essential influence in the popular cultures of Jewish communities all over the world and throughout Jewish history.

In his illuminating foreword, "The Resonances and Registers of Jewish Myth," Elliot K. Ginsburg writes that "Obscure manuscripts

and well-known texts reside cheek-by-jowl; so too, polished literary works and oral narratives.” Texts written in Rabbinic Hebrew and Aramaic sit alongside passages from Yiddish, German, and Middle-Eastern vernacular. The multi-streamed Rabbinic tradition is represented not only by a stunning array of Talmudic and midrashic texts, but also by later kabbalistic myths with gnostic and sometimes rapturous undertones, hasidic *mayser* (tales), and ethical tracts. The global meets the local as Talmudic understandings of soul enter into dialogue with an Afghani Jewish tale from an oral archive—the Great Tradition imbricated with the so-called “Little Tradition” (xxxv).

Acknowledging the continuation of the Midrashic tradition (commentary and interpretation of Biblical texts) Schwartz includes material from commentators as recent as Kafka. The key to this rich literary tradition is the rabbinic acceptance of the Oral Torah. These oral explanations were originally used to explain and justify problems in the biblical text. For example, the rabbis identified a contradiction between the two creation stories. The first telling, Genesis 1:26, male and female He created them, suggests a simultaneous creation of the first man and woman. This differs from the second, sequential creation of Adam and Eve. “The sages explained that male and female He created them referred to the creation of Adam’s first wife, bringing the myth of Lilith into being. This myth was embellished in the rabbinic texts. By the Middle Ages Lilith had become identified in Jewish folklore as the Queen of Demons” (lxxvi), while kabbalistic texts viewed her as the incarnation of evil. In the 1960s, the myth took an unexpected twist when feminists identified Lilith as a role model, based on her independent ways. *Lilith Magazine*, founded by Jewish feminists, flourishes to this day. Schwartz includes an entire cycle of Lilith myths.

Another segment traces the “Shekhinah” concept. Its original use by the Rabbis referred to God’s presence in this world, but the word evolved in kabbalistic texts into a goddess-figure. In the radical Zohar myth she abandons her spouse—God—after the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, and goes into exile with her children, the Children of Israel. Readers will find a complete cycle of Shekhinah myths here.

Schwartz has identified ten major mythic themes, each consisting of at least fifty myths, organized into cycles. They are: Myths of God, Myths of Creation, Myths of Heaven, Myths of Hell, Myths

of the Holy Word, Myths of the Holy Time, Myths of the Holy People, Myths of the Holy Land, Myths of Exile, and Myths of the Messiah. Likewise, readers will discover a rich collection of myths about the afterlife.

With its extensive appendix and index, *Tree of Souls* is appropriate for courses on mythology, folklore, Judaic studies, and comparative religion, and is also a treasure trove for storytellers.

Susan Koppelman

*Living Dangerously: The Adventures of Merian C. Cooper, Creator of King Kong.* Mark Cotta Vaz. New York: Villard, 2005.

Mark Cotta Vaz, coauthor of *The Invisible Art: The Legends of Movie Matte Painting* and author of books on *Star Wars*, *Spider-Man*, and *Batman*, has written the first biography of Merian Caldwell Cooper (1893–1973), the creator of King Kong. Vaz effectively mined Cooper's papers at Brigham Young University, interviewed Cooper's family members, and colleagues such as Fay Wray, and used taped interviews that film historians Kevin Brownlow and Rudy Behlmer conducted with Cooper. The engrossing text with detailed source notes is enhanced by eighty photographs and drawings.

Born in Jacksonville, Florida, Cooper served as a pilot in World War I. After the war, Cooper collaborated with Ernst B. Schoedsack on several documentary adventure films. Their moviemaking philosophy was "Keep it distant, difficult, and dangerous" (7). Vaz details their collaboration and the hardships of filming on location. Their first film *Grass* (1925), which was released by Paramount, was shot on location in Persia, which is now Iran. The second film was *Chang* (1927), filmed in the jungles of Siam, which is now Thailand. Another project was *The Four Feathers* (1929), which made movie history because footage shot on location in the Sudan region was interspersed with scenes filmed on Hollywood sets.

Vaz devotes several chapters to the making of *King Kong* (1933), which was Cooper's brain child, and discusses some of the autobiographical elements of the film. For instance, he notes that the movie producer in *King Kong*, Carl Denham, portrayed by Robert