



The Mythos of Gargoyles and Sprites World in Bethany C Morrow's *A Song Below Water*

Dr. R. Dulasi, Assistant Professor of English
N.M.S.S. Vellaichamy Nadar College, Madurai
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3076-6368>
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Abstract

The Mythos is related with the world of unreality. The English Literary writers use the mythos in their work to give the sacred stories to explain the experience of man and world. Bethany C Morrow is an American writer. She has used the different mythos in her work "A Song Below Water". She focuses the mythos of gargoyles, Sprites, Elokos and sirens to retell the ancient stories of different countries with the modern view. Thus this paper analyses the mythos of gargoyles and sprites with the teenage characters Tavia and Effie. It also reveals how the black people are targeted through social media. This article delineates the Mythos of Gargoyles and Sprites World in Bethany C Morrow's work "A Song Below Water".

Keywords: Mythos, Gargoyles, Sprites, Bethany C Morrow *A Song Below Water*

Introduction

Mythos is a Greek word for the term myth. It means "tale" or "word". The word mythos is generally related with the world of unreality. The stories in mythos are usually an invented one. It has no reality. It is also a system of beliefs particularly dealing with the forces of supernatural beings. It deals with the characteristics especially on the cultural or religious groups.

Mythos in Literature

Mythos plays an important role in literature. It particularly focuses on the part of an event or a hero in a story. It is very popular in the culture of western people. Most of the myths influence many English writers for centuries. The English writers have used the heroes and gods from various myths as their subjects for their literary works. Zsolt Virágos says "In the twentieth century, myth has been called upon to serve a wide variety of diverse roles and functions, the common denominator of these latter being that myth, ancient or modern, has proven itself essential, or very close to essential, within the cultural and social scheme of things". (49) The mythological writers are given much importance to the reality of fragmentation in the contemporary literature. They tried to focus the various myths and its elements through their characters. The world of mythos reflects the nation's history. Slotkin expresses "[a] myth is a narrative which concentrates in a single dramatised experience the whole history of a people in their land".

Some mythological writers from various countries are Hesiod, Homer, Christopher Dewdney, Sir James George Frazer, Lady Augusta Gregory Oskar Ernst Bernhardt, John Lemprière, Man and His Symbols by Carl Jung, Edith Hamilton, Mircea Eliade, Grace Lin, Ramesh Menon, Joseph Campbell, Robert Graves, Immanuel Velikovsky, Robert Graves, Edith Hamilton, Bethany C Morrow etc. They have written their work on the mythology of Greek, Indian, European, African and Chinese.

Literature of America indicates the traditions and beliefs that originate from the

frontier days of nation. “The presence of mythology in American Literature is something of a paradigm for the interplay of tradition and innovation in the growth of the cultural identity of the United States”

Bethany C. Morrow

An American writer Bethany C Morrow is the greatest novelist in English Literature of the present day. She has completed her B.A. sociology at the University of California. She also completed Clinical Psychological Research at the University of Wales. She writes the fiction for the audiences of adult and young adult. She wrote *A Song Below Water*, *A Chorus Rises*, *Mem* and *So Many Beginnings: A Little Women Remix*. Morrow is also the editor for *Take the Mic*, YA Anthology. This anthology won her the award of 2020 ILA Social Justice. The first and notable work of Morrow is *Mem*, which was released in 2018.

Bethany C. Morrow’s *A Song Below Water*

Her debut novel *A Song Below Water* is a YA novel The author released this novel in June 2020. This novel is a fantasy fiction. The novel sets in the mythical city of Portland. The magical creatures are oppressed in the city. Bethany is our today’s author and presented the novel with different creatures of sirens, gargoyles, elokos, and sprites. The mythic and magical creatures are taken from the world of Greek, European and African myths. The novel *A Song Below water* is a new attempt in retelling the old mythological story of supernatural creatures.

The Mythos of Gargoyle and Sprites

Gargoyle: The gargoyle is a supernatural being. In mythology, it represents a fantasy monster and inspires by the architectural element of Gargoyles. It is also believed the gargoyles are driven away the bad spirits. In recent notion, the statues are physically getting a life. They are animated magically. They often work as a guardian in the place of cathedral or castle. Gargoyles are found in the mythology of Rome, Greece and Egypt.



Image 1: Gargoyles

Sprites: Sprites are generally portrayed as fairy creatures. The derivation of the word sprite is from the Latin word spiritus ("spirit"). In European mythology, it is a supernatural entity.



Image 2: Sprites

The mythos of Gargoyle and Sprites in *A Song Below Water*

In *A song Below Water*, Morrow focuses the various myths around the black people. Morrow uses the world of sirens in Portland. The mythological characters are very supernatural beings in the story. The main characters in the story are Tavia and Effie. Tavia is



a Siren and Effie is a mermaid. After the death of Effie's mother, she lives with Tavia's family. When Effie was young, Sprites turned her friends to stone. She cannot believe that she had any supernatural powers. In the upcoming season, she likes to focus herself as Euphemia the mer. Tavi and Effie are like sisters. Among the web of challenges and lies, Tavia has to face every day to make her work. The Black girls are hard to grow up in a white part city of America. The two black girls are school going girls. They study at Black High School in the city of Portland. The city is full of black people in which few of them have gifted with magical powers. "Sirens might be exclusively Black women, but all Black women aren't sirens. We're not even only sirens." (19) Throughout this story the reader can understand a true history of sirens.

Tavia usually watches Camilla Fox's eponymous YouTube channel. She has studied her wash-and-go technique. Camilla is a patron to Tavia. When she couldn't face her real life, she escapes into the virtual world. Tavia is the subscriber of Camilla's YouTube channel. "Camilla's face should be the first thing I see" when she opens the app. There's another face staring back at her. Another girl is a black woman from Southern Oregon. The woman is only the dead black woman Rhoda Taylor. A black siren Rhoda Taylor was killed by a young man. News on the death of Rhoda and her picture spreads all over the city through media. "Rhoda Taylor. Recent murder victim. Suspected siren." (4)

Tavia has a powerful voice. She has some struggle to be quiet. Effie has some secret of mysterious thing. They save themselves from the gossiping of others at school. They involve in Ren Faires and contradict to their ideas on racism at various levels. There is another thing that the Gargoyle takes up the residence of their house roof. "There's something on the roof, a large something. Made from stone, it's a hulking figure that's crouched and gripping the edge with long talons. Hello, gargoyle." (11).

Gargoyle returns to the house of Tavia. It is going to roost that night. It also looks different. When Tavia's dad arrived to the home, he was terrified with the hulk figure Gargoyle on the roof. "The gargoyle returned to roost tonight, the way it's done for the better part of three years. It all mixes together and makes my dad terrified and angry." (12)

Tavia explains about the gargoyle. She has heard it that they're the only gargoyle mythos

"I've heard is that they're created, chiseled by a master out of solid stone. Which, full disclosure, I saw in a cartoon when I was little. No one ever disputes it, but who would. Other than the odd publicity stunt that turned out to be a load of crap, there aren't any known gargoyle masters chiseling new beasts to life, and as far as anybody knows, gargoyles don't speak for themselves. Who knows if they even can. What we know is that there's one gargoyle in Portland, and he chose us. Three years he's been roosting here. You don't think the neighbors are wondering why? What about our house is different, what makes a gargoyle choose us, what's he protecting?" (13)

Effie couldn't find her keys. She has forgotten her keys on the hook next to the bedroom door. She has checked her room's nooks and crannies to find keys. It's all sprite activity. "Sprites aren't thieves because they always bring things back." It has only done the mischief on everyone in Portland. "But Portland is a hub of sprite activity and I don't lose my keys. Ever. Not since Paw Paw handed them to me." (27) Later she found her keys at the bottom of her swim bag. It is a mischief done by sprites.

Tavia and Effie see the Gargoyle still perching on the roof. Tavia and Effie draw more attention to the stone master on their roof. The gargoyles are young guys in silver paint "sometimes with prosthetics to extend their arms so they can mimic the perch, but it's far from enough" It is the bodyguard of Tavia. The both girls manage to keep their cool until the



gargoyles out of our rearview and then she looks back. Tavia wants the gargoyles to protect her in the entire situation. “I’d want him to stay, too. How many people have their own personal bodyguard” (30)

Gargoyle comes and goes for these three years. It offers the protection to Effie. One night Tavia comes out of her house. She looks up her street and feels night’s chill. She walks further up the hill. She looks back to see the house and her iron fence. There is the gargoyle. The gargoyle’s head turns slowly and steadily. He is not the kind of menacing and hulking. She wants to get some fresh air. She is standing in the middle of her street. The gargoyle head still turned toward her. The gargoyle wants to protect her. So he watches her all the ways.

Tavia and Effie go to theatre. Effie is welcomed by a white boy in the theatre. He likes to talk with her. After returning home from the theatre, Tavia thinks about her life. Her life is a mysterious one. She wishes to take away the siren call from her. She thinks that the arrival of gargoyle indicates the bad omen. He didn’t here for three years. The gargoyle’s shoulders rising and falling before he lifts one massive fist from the roof. “I know you’re here for me, I mean that’s what everyone thinks.”(136). The gargoyle behaves like a human. His stone eyes needs lubricating. She needs a favor from him. Tavia needs help from him. She needs the gargoyle to take her to a lot near St. Johns. He also carries her to visit the place at night. She wished to meet her Gramma at night and so gargoyle carries her to the place. When they return home, she has raised many questions to gargoyle. But he never answers to the questions of Tavia.

Effie, Tavia and some others to take part in the Vancouver protest. “The people and the police and the noise and the street are all replaced by wilderness.” Gargoyle carries away Tavia from the place of protest. “His face is made of stone, it’s not like I could guess how old he is. And I don’t know much about gargoyles aside from them being big and brick, except that they don’t have any history-affecting qualities or traits that the general population envies.”(197) Effie further explains “gargoyles aren’t born, they’re sculpted”. It is the part of their mythos, and the belief that all the gargoyles which will exist already do.

All dressed up and go to the ball. Near Cafeteria, Mama Theo locked her in a room to protect everyone from Effie. “Maybe because it isn’t normal when your hair moves on its own and your skin peels off your body like you’re a lizard or a snake. Maybe seeing water mirages on dry land isn’t something that happens to normal teens” (207). There is the noise of camera phone clicking sound. Someone took a picture or started video. Wallace is on the ground beside Effie, covering his arms around her. He is trying to cover her hair and to shield her entire body.

Wallace’s white shirt tore against the broadening of his back. The wings are unfurling from that. He grew like a giant before all eyes. The scene stuns everyone to go back. The people had never seen a gargoyle close up. They didn’t expect this one. It becomes massive within seconds. “Wallace—the boy who watched Effie swims—is her guardian, Gargy. Gargy—the stone behemoth who’s been perched on my roof for three years—is the guy my sister’s falling for.” (200). Naema says that both of her secrets are out. She is going to release it in social media. Tavia begs Naema to give the recorded video in the phone. Gargoyle carries Tavia and Effie from that place.

Effie comes to know the reality. She is the only reason for changing her friends into stones. She feels for that. In the end of the novel Tavia uses her siren calls to awaken the statues of children. They come to life one by one. Their parents are very happy to see their children. Parents have thought that the sprites were only responsible for that spell. The children begin their game. They hold the children tight while the sprites sing above their



heads. “Effie, Effie!” the sprites whisper-sing, enchanted the way that I was when I first saw her true form. “Do the trick! Play again!” (235). In the last section of the novel, when Tavia goes to her work, she sees the gargoyle hanging out near the Hidden Scales. It is still doing his same duty. Tavia and Priam are reunited.

Thus the story is the most interesting story of the black girls with magical creatures like elokos, sprites, sirens and gargoyles. Morrow explicates her new innovative ideas with the modern world view of the different people in the society. She also depicts how the black girls are suffered through the hands of social media. Thus the gargoyles play their important role from the first part of the story to the last section of the novel. Morrow clearly shows how the ancient mythological creatures are related with the story of the modern world. Kirkus Reviews *A Song Below Water*, "an exciting new contemporary fantasy. In this parallel world, black female empowerment is standing up for yourself and others while simultaneously navigating love, physical and emotional violence, and the responsibility of immense supernatural power."

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