



Guest editorial: publishing with Unbound

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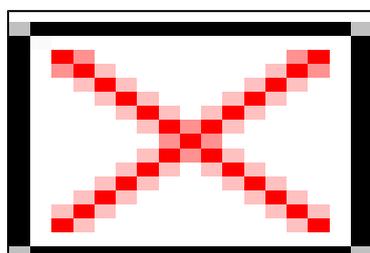
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Loosing **The Arrow of Apollo** with Unbound

*Author **Philip Womack** describes his experience of crowdfunding*



I've always been interested in classical myth, but whilst researching my 2016 novel, [The Double Axe](#) [3], which re-imagined the story of the Minotaur with an unusual slant, I rediscovered a spark that had been fairly dormant for a decade or so. With an avidity I hadn't felt for years, I gobbled down the ancient texts, re-reading the ones I knew, savouring the ones I didn't, delighting in finding connections and comparisons between them. Once more, I was hooked.

The mythology is vast. The source texts don't always agree on details, but you swiftly garner a general sense of the way that most of the myths operate, and also of a chronological order. First are the stirrings of Chaos, then the adventures of the gods, followed by the heroes like Hercules, who knew the gods, and finally the men like Achilles and Odysseus, who were all too human, and all too mortal. But then what?

I became fascinated by the edges of things. The cycle of Agamemnon's story, the House of Atreus, begins with the terrible crimes of his ancestor Tantalus, who tried to serve up his own son as lunch to the gods, and finishes with his son Orestes, absolved at last from matricide, returning home.

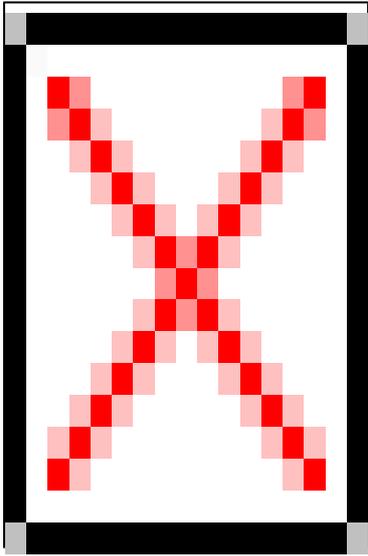
But how did Orestes live with the knowledge of tragedy in his own family? What of the children of Orestes? Did they grow up knowing their father was a murderer? These were the questions that consumed me as I read.

And so were sown the seeds of what was to become **The Arrow of Apollo**. I imagined a world in which the gods were growing tired of mortals. They had found other places in the universe where they could indulge themselves on their own private planets. One by one, they departed, leaving behind only Apollo, who loved mankind too much, and Hermes, who liked to be at the centre of the action.

Looking into Apollo, I rediscovered the story in which he slays Python. This, it turns out, is how Apollo won the Oracle

at Delphi. But what if Python hadn't been slain? What if he was simply waiting, biding his time, till he could regain his old powers?

The plot all fell into place, into a nice, neat structure, much more easily than any other novel I've ever written. My characters were all there. Silvius, the son of the Trojan Aeneas, who is called to help find the magical Arrow of Apollo; and Tisamenos, the son of Orestes, who is fighting against a conspiracy in his own palace. With them, too, is Elissa, the daughter of a Carthaginian, who would have her own part to play in the final confrontation with Python.



I have not crowdfunded a book before, having published six children's novels with traditional publishing houses. But, after much thought and many discussions, I decided to publish with **Unbound**. Firstly, as they produce exceptionally beautiful books, and I knew that I would be able to guarantee maps and even illustrations if I could raise the funding for it, and that I would have some say in the process as well. And secondly, I had faith in Greek myth as a draw for young readers.

To say that crowdfunding is not easy is an understatement. I had the idea for the book in about 2015, around the time my son was born. I finished the first draft in December 2016. It went to Unbound as a second draft in October 2017, and we launched the campaign to fund it. The sum of money we would have to raise seemed to me as impossible as one of Hercules's labours. And I'm not very much like Hercules.

It's a wonderful thing, to give money on trust for something that does not yet exist, and I will be grateful for ever to the supporters of The Arrow of Apollo, who have surprised me, delighted me, and enchanted me.

There was an initial rush of pledges, which lent a firm glow to my cheeks. We zoomed up to 40% of the funding target pretty quickly. This would be easy, I thought. Alas, I was wrong. The doldrums followed. There were a lot of doldrums. Every day, before work, I would send out ten emails (that was the limit, we were told). And every day I would wait, and every day there would be nothing.

The fund hovered around the 60% mark for a month, two months. Then, with no apparent cause, there would be another rush, and the percentage would shoot up; only to plateau again.

There was relief. As the planners at Unbound had predicted, once the target reached the late 80s/ early 90s, and readers could see that the book was certain to be published, the pledges began piling in. I was pushed into 100 % by a late night

text in February 2019. And that was that. I could now retire with a large glass of wine and some chocolate.

Or so I thought. After the heavy lifting of the funding, then came the usual heavy lifting of preparing a manuscript for publication.

First was the structural edit. I was exceptionally lucky with my editor, who delivered her thoughts with sensitivity and clarity. I spent weekend after weekend huddled over my computer whilst everybody else enjoyed the sunshine, early morning after early morning making sure everything was right. Then the second pass, tidying up any loose ends; the copyedit; and then, finally, the stage I am at as I write, which is the read through of the typeset pages. I never get over the glorious rush of seeing the text looking just like an actual book.

Equally exciting was the cover process, and I am immensely proud of the dynamic, enticing cover, which demonstrates beautifully (I hope) the drama and the matter of the book. I am also very lucky to have Emily Faccini illustrating the maps.

One of the major reasons I wrote the book was to further the spread of classics in children's reading. I wanted to bring some of my passion into my fiction, and to show readers that myth is not a difficult place, but one that is full of excitement and wonders. And to have it all encased in a beautiful hardback copy is a dream come true. Will I be doing it again? We'll have to wait and see.

Find out more about [Unbound and The Arrow of Apollo](#). [4]

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