Introduction

A tribe’s mythology is its living religion, whose loss is always and everywhere, even among the civilised, a moral catastrophe.

C.G. Jung ("The psychology of the Child Archetype" 248).

Myth is one of those loose terms like culture, art and civilisation, which can mean almost anything one wants it to mean. From the time of Plato, scholars, depending upon their need, have defined myth in different ways. The numerous definitions given by various myth scholars reveal how vast the topic is, and how difficult it is to define and explain myth. As E. M. W. Tillyard once lamented, “The word myth, mythical, mythology and mythological have been dreadfully overworked in recent years and have a distressingly large range of significance”(11). The task of defining the term “myth” by itself is a daunting one. Philosophers, anthropologists, religious scholars, sociologists, historians, writers and literary critics have studied myths and each scholar has given his own definition of myth. As G. S. Kirk would put it:

Indeed the looseness of the term ‘myth’ itself and its wide range of applications in common usage as ‘fabrications,’ together with the failure of specialists, to offer special definitions suggest that it is a diverse phenomenon that is likely to have different motives and applications even within a single society – let alone in different cultures and at different periods ("On Defining Myths” 55).
The Oxford English Dictionary defines myth as a “purely fictitious narrative usually involving supernatural persons, actions or events, and embodying some popular idea concerning natural or historical phenomena . . . often used vaguely to include any narrative having fictitious elements.” The New Lexicon Webster’s Dictionary defines the term in almost similar terms: “An old traditional story or legend, especially one concerning fabulous or supernatural beings giving expressions to the early beliefs, aspirations and perceptions of a people and often serving to explain natural phenomena or the origins of a people etc . . . or such stories collectively.” The Encyclopaedia Britannica defines myth as:

A story, usually of unknown origin and at least partially traditional, that ostensibly relates actual events to explain some practice, belief, institution or natural phenomenon, and that is especially associated with religious rites and beliefs. The word mythology denotes both the study of myth and the total corpus of myths in a particular culture or religious tradition.

The ambiguity of the term permits scholars pursuing diverse fields of activities, in different ways. They have defined and used myth in diverse ways. Definitions are often determined by the discipline pursued by the scholars concerned. Anthropologists are concerned with primitive myths only, and define myth accordingly. The German indologist Max Müller, the greatest myth scholar of the nineteenth century, held the view that myths are “a disease of the language.”

James Frazer, who revived interest in myth studies in the twentieth century,
through his comprehensive work *The Golden Bough* defines myth in that seminal work as "a fiction devised to explain an old custom, of which the real meaning and origin has been forgotten" (iv. 153) and for the French structuralist Roland Barthes, who considered myth as a falsehood, created and perpetuated by the bourgeoisie, "myth is a type of speech" ("Myth Today" 93). “Myth is thus a vital ingredient of human civilisation;” swears the anthropologist S. Malinowski, “it is not an idle tale but a hard-worked active force; it is not an intellectual explanation or an artistic imagery, but a pragmatic charter of primitive faith and moral wisdom” ("The Role of Myth in Life" 199).

Anthropologists do not approve of the idea of modern mythmakers and recognise only primary myths. Henry A. Murray argues that “myth” should be restricted to its traditional meanings: “a narrative about supernatural beings and occurrences, composed and transmitted by primitive peoples, which is no longer credible and hence no more influential.” For him “modern myth” is a “contradiction in terms.” (217). For Joseph Campbell, “dream is the personalised myth, myth is the depersonalised dream; both myth and dream are symbolic in the same general way of the dynamics of the psyche” (Myths to Live By 19). A definition much preferred by anthropologists today is: “Myths are sacred tales”.

The anthropologists Ernst Cassirer and Claude Levi-Strauss have stressed the dynamic quality of myth. Cassirer avers that myth cannot be reduced to certain fixed static elements; but one must strive to grasp it in its inner life, “in its mobility and versatility and in its dynamic principle” (An
"The true constituent units of a myth," warns Levi-Strauss, "are not the isolated relations, and it is only as bundles those relations can be put to use and combined so as to produce a meaning" ("The Structural Study of Myth" 87).

This definition does not exclude traditional ones but it accepts only one kind of traditional tale. It seems that "traditional oral tales" is the only safe basis for a broad definition of myth. Even this will exclude whatever is meant by a 'modern myth'" (Kirk, "On Defining Myths" 57). G. S. Kirk points out the danger of too broad a definition: "Tolerance of different explanations of a myth can lead to over-determination" (60).

Literary scholars on defining myth lay emphasis on the narrative aspect of it. Thus for Michael Palencia-Roth, "myth represents a story, ritual, symbol or image which revealed to the conscious mind by the unconscious, either accounts for the origin and function of the universe or discloses the transcendental meaning and structure of reality and human existence" (14). "A myth," says John J. White, "is little more really than the equivalent of a simple plot, albeit a plot traditionally related to the action of gods or heroes. Its essential quality is that of a basic configuration of actions" (25).

Anthropologists may differ among themselves regarding the origin and nature of myths, but they are united in considering only oral tales as myths. While literary critics are united in their opinion that "myth" means "plot," "theme" or "story;" their agreement ends there. Not only do writers and literary myth critics offer different definitions of myth but the problem is compounded by the same scholar offering different and often contradictory theories of myth.
on different occasions.

The difficulty of defining 'myth' becomes apparent when one examines the different definitions the same critic has offered the term on different occasions. The American Literary critic Richard Chase Volney was determined to arrive at the essence of myth by removing all extraneous trappings from it. Despite his professed determination, we find Chase contradicting himself. He strongly upholds and defends the invention and use of modern myths. According to him: “literature is myth and therefore a matter of aesthetic experience and the imagination” (“Foreword” Quest For Myth VI). He held that the first critical step towards an understanding of mythical literature is to rescue myth from those who see it as only the means and ends of philosophy, religious dogma, psychoanalyses or semantics. Later, Chase says in that very same book that myth is literature, which “suffuses the natural with preternatural efficacy” (78). In another article “Myth as Literature,” Chase argues, “any narrative or poem which reaffirms the dynamism and vibrancy of the world, which fortifies the ego with the impression that there is a magically potent brilliancy or dramatic force in the world, may be called myth” (11). He has also said that myth is literature “functioning in a special way achieving special modes of expression” (qtd. in Douglas 124).

Wallace. W. Douglas accuses Chase of inconsistency. For Chase, “myth is a magical tale dealing with critical passages of life,” and in several reviews, Chase has written as if myth, rather than being a quality, “were a thing contained in literature, a part of the material in literature,” says Douglas (124). However, the definition that Chase himself most consistently held on to
throughout his illustrious career, appears in the article “Notes on Study of Myth,” where he states, “the fact is that the simplest meaning of the Greek word ‘myth’ is the right one: a myth is a story, myth is narrative or poetic literature. It need be no more philosophic than any other kind of literature. Myth is therefore art and must be studied as such” (68).

Similarly, both Northrop Frye and Roland Barthes have come up with diverse definitions of myth. In Anatomy of Criticism, Northrop Frye has tried to define myth: “In literary criticism, myth means ultimately mythos, a structural organising principle of literary form” (341). Frye has also held that a myth, “to me is primarily a mythos, a story, narrative, of plot, with a specific social function” (“The Mythical Approach . . .” 238).

Even more prolific has been Roland Barthes in his theories on myth. “Mythologies,” he theorises “is an accord with the world, not as it is, but as it wants to be” (Mythologies). Even within a single article “Myth Today” Barthes defines myth in so many diverse ways. He says: “Myth is a type of speech: A system of communication, that is a message” (“Myth Today” 93). Barthes argues that: “Ancient or not, mythology can only have a historical foundation, for myth is a type of speech chosen by history: it cannot possibly evolve from the ‘nature’ of things” (“Myth Today” 94). He doesn’t identify mythical speech with language. He considers myth to belong to the province of general science, coextensive with linguistics, which is semiology. According to him: “However paradoxical it may seem, myth hides nothing. Its function is to distort, not to make disappear” (“Myth Today” 107).

Barthes’ attitude to myth is ambiguous. Viewing myth from a Marxist
and rational angle, he is critical about its impact: "Myth," for Barthes, "is the apolitical language through which the bourgeois [sic] beguiles itself and its victims. It freezes the possibility of analyses, reflexion of and change into the images that deny them" ("Myth Today" 109). Barthes holds that myth is not defined by the object of its message; but by the fashion in which it presents it. There may be formal limits to myth but not one of substance, so anything may be a myth. A phrase, processed food – stuff, or image in a Paris match, a song, the smile on Greta Gabo’s face – all may take their place among myths.

From the range of definitions, it will be apparent that the word “myth” is used in such a bewildering variety of contexts that as Frye put it, “anyone talking about it has to say first of all what his chosen context is” and Frye states emphatically that in the context of literary criticism, “myth always means, first and primarily, mythos, story, plot, narrative” ("The Koine of Myth" 3).

Thus, whatever anthropologists may say about the meaning of the word “myth,” critics legitimately extend or alter its sense to the needs of their own discipline: namely, story. For the myth critic, then, the term may refer to the author, to his work, or to the society, which attends to both. Accordingly, it acquires manifold dimensions: psychological, rhetorical or semantic, and ideological or sociological. What is essential is not reduction to a single definition but skill in discriminating the meaning relevant to the occasion. For instance, one speaks of the myth in Franz Kafka’s works and refers to a projection of its author’s psychosis. Used of James Joyce’s Ulysses or Thomas Mann’s Joseph and His Brothers, myth means a formal extrapolation of an
ancient story.

Most definitions exist at a very high level of generality and an admission of the multiple nature of the subject is built into them. There is usually agreement on the factor of narrative. According to René Wellek: “Myth is narrative, irrational . . . and comes to mean any anonymously composed story telling of origins and destinies (5). The problem is compounded by the very difficulty of writing about the subject. The degree of overlap in usages, the way in which contexts are subtly altered, or even the relative appropriateness of several meanings to the same context, show the difficulty of controlling the connotations of the word “myth.”

A large number of critics are of the opinion that literature — or any art, for that matter — cannot exist in isolation, cannot be restricted to the development of a pattern within the framework imposed by an art form, but must be seen as part of the totality of human experience. These critics view literature as part of a social situation and they approach literary works primarily as modes of collective beliefs and action. Myth and ritual, then, become essential qualities of literary expression. “Genuine imaginative art,” says Collin Still, “is the result of an unconscious process whereby expression is given to perceptions of which the artist may or may not be conscious” (7).

It may be difficult to define literature and myth succinctly, it has to be admitted, but it may be agreed that narrative is common to both. It will be noticed that most myth critics tackle the problem from this angle — the angle of narrative — giving them a narrower, clearer perspective. The myth scholar has to specify the peculiarities of each field — myth and literature — before he
identifies the points of convergence, similarity and divergence of narrative found in both fields. As the presence of narrative in myth is self-evident, most of the definitions of myth whether formulated by ethnologists, psychologists or literary critics emphasise its narrative aspect to such an extent that the most basic definition of myth seems to be: a story. Since it can be easily proved that narrative forms an integral part of literature, it remains for the myth scholar to find out where the two types of story hinge together, and speculate how literary narrative can "exploit mythical narrative, or be like it" (Astier 725). If narration is fundamental to both literature and myth what is the difference between the two and how do they co-relate? To attempt to answer this question, an awareness of how narration operates in the two fields of myth and literature is necessary.

The primary, if not the only, criterion of story in myth is intensity. This is because myth presents events on a large, gross scale. Colette Astier elaborates on the difference between narrative as used in literature and mythology in the article "Literary and Mythological Narratives":

It depicts violent situations crudely; it expresses forcefully what is in itself forceful, it shows a liking for images and events with impact. Rather than being called a crude story; myth could be defined as the crude story of what is in itself crude. Myth, however, is defined not solely in terms of the intensity of the scenes it evokes, but also by the organisation it imposes on them, and one of the laws governing the privileged structuring of mythology is that of contrast (727).

While agreeing that narrative is common to both myth and literature, it
would be worthwhile to bear in mind the fact that though myth is the common fact of many literary forms, to confuse myth as literature or literature as myth is to fall victim to an instance of "genetic fallacy." In Philip Rahv's words, "myth is a certain kind of objective fantasy to which literature has had frequent recourse for its materials and patterns; but is in itself not literature" (112).

Literature is analogous to myth but is not itself myth though Richard Chase has consistently held that the two are one. In *Quest for Myth* and *Herman Melville* (both in 1949) he defined myth as "the aesthetic activity of man's mind." But there are inherent differences between the two. Myth and literature are separate and independent entities, although myth cannot be considered in isolation. As Stanley Edgar Hyman, the anthropologist argues, "for literary purpose, all myths are not one: however much they may be one, the mono-myth or ur-myth, in essence of origin." According to him "What such modern writers as Melville and Kafka create is not myth but an individual fantasy expressing a symbolic action, equivalent to and related to the myth's expression of a public rite (57).

Hyman holds that no one, not even Melville can invent myths or write folk literature. This is the typical view of anthropologists on myth and literature. These two contrary views, one expressed by the literary critic, Chase and the other by an anthropologist Hyman, amply reflect the inherent differences between anthropologists and literary critics on the relationship between myth and literature.

Similarly there are inherent differences between the technique of narrative as used in myth and in fiction. Narrative in fiction is elaborate,
discursive and detailed. In mythology, on the other hand, narrative is direct, straightforward and set at a quick pace. Colette Astier elaborates on the essential difference between the two:

Narrative in the novel makes obvious use of a number of different registers covering probability, contingency, reference, logic or the conventional appearance of any one of these, or in the modern novel, of devises acknowledged to be arbitrary and set rules; mythological narrative on the other hand goes straight to the point. It does not clutter itself up with anything external to itself. It goes from one point to the next, and is characterised by a sort of violent brevity (728).

Unlike mythological narrative, literary narrative permits digression and accepts padding. What brings myth and fiction together is the notion of story. John, J. White distinguishes between mythical fiction and fiction with mythological motifs: “While the former does not offer myths as analogies but make them their principal subject-matter or structural principle, the role of the latter is analogical, describing the modern world in the light of readily available set of models” (7).

T. S. Eliot has expressed the essential relationship between the use of narration in myth and literature. Elaborating on James Joyce’s use of mythology in Ulysses he says:

In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him. They will not be
imitators, any more than the scientist who uses the discoveries of an Einstein in proving his own, independent, further investigations. It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and significance of the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history (201).

Having said that narrative in fiction and myth are different, the crucial question to be answered is how do they meet; what are their similarities and differences? What are their points of convergence and what are their respective capacities to grasp or exclude each other? The separation of myth and literature does not prevent them from being superimposed or overlaying one another. "A mythical story remains mythical and is recognisable as such" claims Astier, but the more specific question to be answered is "how literature can grasp the foreign body which myth represents for it and use it for its own purpose" (730).

Among post-modern writers, the horizons between myth and literature crumble down and they resort to the crude and brutal language of myth. O. V. Vijayan resorts to crude language in *The Saga of Dharmapuri* and Gabriel García Márquez in *The Autumn of the Patriarch*.

The quarrel between the defenders of myth and its critics has always been intense. Euhemerus was the first rationalist to critique myth. His thesis is that myths developed when primitive man used his imagination to deify his heroes and made immortals of mortals. Euhemerism is the theory that the gods are deified men, who once lived on earth as conquerors, rulers or renowned philosophers and that myth is history distorted by the fancy of storytellers.
Euhererus wrote a book called *The Sacred Record*, in which he describes a journey he made to the island of Panchea off the coast of Arabia. In this book Euhererus says that Zeus was a king who was born in Crete and ruled over an extensive area in the east where he was worshipped as a god. Similarly, according to him, the Greek gods Ouranos and Kronos were also Greek kings who came to be deified as gods. The theory that gods are the deification of mortals came to be known as euhemerism. Indeed euhemerism has been a favourite weapon of the sceptics as well as the religious. Early Christians used euhemerism to discredit primitive religions. The Christian fathers found euhemerism useful in discrediting pagan mythology. Augustine tells us in *The City of God* that according to the best knowledge, the pagans worshipped deceased men, calling them Jupiter, Hercules or Pluto.

The Romantic Movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries regarded myth as an explanation of the deepest creative potentialities of man. Myths were a constant source of inspiration to dramatists, poets and painters; According to J. W. Rogers, “they expressed profound truths about human existence, and therefore were not to be regarded merely as a relic of man’s childhood” (65).

Friedrich Nietzsche’s pioneering attempt in *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) in re-establishing a living relationship between myth and poetry influenced twentieth century myth criticism. Nietzsche warns of the danger faced by ‘myth-less man’:

And now the myth-less man remains eternally hungering among all the bygones, and digs and grubs for roots, though he have (sic) to dig for
them even among the remotest antiquities. The stupendous historical exigency of the unsatisfied modern culture, the gathering around one of countless other cultures, the consuming desire for knowledge – what does all these point to, if not to the loss of myth, the loss of mythical home, the mythical source? (173).

In the beginning of the twentieth century, James Frazer, and Sigmund Freud were rationalists largely responsible for discrediting mythology. Carl Gustav Jung, however saw myth as a necessity. The necessity of myth is succinctly described by him:

What we are to our inward vision, and what man appears to be *sub- Specie aeternatics* can only be expressed in terms of myth. Myth is more individual and expresses life more precisely than does science (qtd. in Righter 102).

"To see the myth beneath the surface of literature," says William Righter, "is to plunge more deeply into the human condition and to see the very way in which literature intensifies, concentrates and reveals the human depth" (51).

The myth scholar has always to be wary of tall claims for the status of myth in literature, the art or culture. The critical writings of Jacques Derrida and Barthes on mythology have been instrumental in myth study undergoing some fall from grace but still one cannot ignore it. John B. Vickery has pointed out some beliefs, which are commonly held responsible for the re-emergence of interest in myth in the twentieth century. In the foreword to the collection of essays edited by him titled *Myth and Literature: Contemporary Theory and*
Practise. Vickery elaborates: First, that the creating of myths, the mythopoeic faculty, is inherent in the thinking process and answers a basic human need. Second, both historically and psychologically, literature emerges out of the matrix of myth. Therefore, literary plots, characters, themes, and images are basically complications and displacements of similar elements in myth and folktales. How myth gets into literature is variously explained by the Jungian theory of social memory, historical diffusion and the essential similarity of the human mind everywhere. Third, myth provides stimulation not only for the creative artist but it also provides concepts and patterns, which the critic may use to interpret specific works of art. An awareness of the ‘grammar of myth gives a greater precision and form’ to the reading of literature. Modern myth criticism differs fundamentally from traditional treatment of mythology in that it recognises the mythic features that reside both beneath and on the surface of a work of art. Fourth and last, the ability of literature to move us, it has been argued, is due to its mythic quality, “to possession of mana the numinous or the mystery in the face of which we feel an awed delight or terror at the world of man” (Foreword. Myth and Literature ix).

The myth scholar has to further address the question of what myth criticism is and what it can do. Like any other criticism, myth criticism has to tackle the questions of theme, structure, and character in specific works such as the recognition of the scapegoat myth in García Márquez’s The Chronicle of a Death Foretold, and the rite of passage in D. H. Lawrence’s The Plumed Serpent. Myth criticism leads to comparative study that uses archetype as the ground for comparison and differentiation. For instance, to follow the pattern
of the Promethean myth from Aeschylus to Saul Bellow's *Herzog* or to study the use of the trickster in Thomas Mann as well as Herman Melville enriches our understanding of the artist as well the age.

While myth criticism endorses the autonomy of literature and its study, at the same time, it links the critic to other disciplines, notably anthropology and psychology. It thus aspires to reverse the practical achievement of New Criticism, which was largely to cut off the critic from the strict, explicit access of the resources of science, sociology and philosophy. Myth criticism espouses the necessity of extra-literary knowledge for the critic but reserves the right to adopt that knowledge in accord with the needs of literary study. Myth criticism has pointed out the narrowness of other approaches but is itself prone to the dangers of too narrow an outlook.

Vickery tries to probe the reasons why there was a sudden spurt of unprecedented interest in myth in the twentieth century. Of the three factors he identifies, the first is nineteenth century symbolism, which encouraged in the succeeding age a climate of opinion receptive to an interest in myth, primitive life, and unfamiliar religious modes. He traces Baudelaire's influence on W.B. Yeats, Rimbaud's on Hart Crane and Mallarme's on T. S. Eliot. The initial impetus was provided by a realisation of the vital importance of literature to the spiritual or psychological state of man. The second factor was the development of anthropology and psychology and their use in comparative religion in the early years of the last century. Crucial insights were drawn largely from Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, Jane Harrison's *Themis*, Freud's *Totem and Taboo* and Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious*. From these
seminal works were derived the controlling ideas of myth criticism, such as the
dying and reviving god, the hero's quest, ritual drama, the scapegoat, and the
cyclical nature of existence. The subsequent history of myth criticism is
marked by the continuing adaptation of these and related concepts to the
particular demands of literary study. Landmarks in this history are the studies
of Maud Bodkin, Joseph Campbell, Philip Wheelwright, Francis Ferguson and
Northrop Frye.

The third factor that led to the popularity of myth criticism was the
decline of New Criticism with its intense semantic concentration on the
problems of meaning. Readers realised that the meaning of a work extends far
beyond questions of paradox and ambiguity. This together with the difficulty
of applying its techniques to fiction and the long poem resulted in the critical
shift from rhetoric to myth.

Some of the major myth scholars and myth critics of the twentieth
century are Sigmund Freud, Carl Gustav Jung, Richard Chase, Northrop Frye
and Roland Barthes. They have made significant contribution to myth theory
and have made considerable use of myth in criticism. Sigmund Freud's
contribution to the study of mythology is considerable. Freud was deeply
influenced by Frazer and like him Freud was a rationalist who considered myth
as a kind of rudimentary error. While Frazer considered myth's reliance on
fertility and magic as a false science, where the killing of a god effected a
removal of the corpse, for Freud religion and myth have their origin in
neurosis. Like Frazer, he is a euhemerist. If for Frazer, the god was originally a
king or magician, for Freud the god was the primal father deified. While Frazer
offered the complementary of the cycle of vegetation where in lies the hidden meaning of myth, Freud finds the hidden meaning of myth in sex. In Totem and Taboo (1918), Freud developed his own mythology in which he claims that the founding event, decisive and irrevocable, was the Oedipal crime of the killing of the father. According to him, the neurosis of the modern individual is a re-enactment of the collective guilt of "the primal horde". Freud believed that people of the Old Stone Age were patriarchal. The tribal patriarch appropriated all the women for himself. Freud's theory of the unconscious was largely responsible for reviving interest in myth and he put forward mythical thought as the key to understanding modern man. Freud, says Jo Labanyi, held "childhood as the origin of subsequent mental life but, unlike writers and artists, he did not idealise it" (120).

Freud regarded the psychotic's tendency to revert to infancy as a sign of neurotic regression and he saw myth - "this distorted vestige of the fantasies or dreams of a young humanity"-- as self-indulgent wish fulfillment or arrested mental development. According to Labanyi: "In his more pessimistic and more political later writings, Freud became increasingly convinced that the urge to return to origins was biologically in-built" (12).

Modernist writers and artists ignored Freud's warning that a regression to the primitive would have dire consequences for contemporary history. D. H. Lawrence and W.B. Yeats turned to the pre-Christian mythical archetypes in their works in order to give voice to the primal emotions and energies repressed by civilisation. Their use of myth is much closer to Nietzsche's than to Freud's. Nietzsche destroyed the romantic notion that
natural man is good and that it is society, which corrupts him, arguing that, on the contrary, civilisation has meant man's fall into a constricting goodness. Nietzsche's thesis is that the primitive, which the nineteenth century European identified as the "other" or the "savage" is to be found within. Nietzsche exalted the early Greeks for their barbaric wholeness and subverts the illusion that European culture is founded on classical civilisation.

Jung's contribution to mythography lies in his denial of the enlightenment faith in the power of reason, and trust in the power of myth. Jung demonstrated that the 'sacred' may be manifest in the 'profane,' and this manifestation may take a variety of forms. He stresses creativity and improvisation rather than stable identity. Thirdly, Jung does not identify myth with mysticism as well as with mystery. According to Coupe, Jung is much less of a mythopoeic figure than is Freud. As G.S. Kirk observes, "Jung's ultimate aim is the stasis of symbolism rather than the dynamism of narrative" (Myth: Its Meaning . . . 278). Jung held that the psyche consists of four main archetypes: 'Ego,' the conscious mind, the 'shadow,' the unconscious aspect of the psyche, the 'anima,' the unconscious feminine aspect side of a male personality or 'animus,' the unconscious male side of a woman's personality and fourthly and finally there is the self, the central archetype that of fulfilment of potential and the integration of personality. Frequently symbolised by a mandala or a magic circle, it is the psychic totality towards which all life moves. Indeed we may infer that the very journey from ego to self is circular, involving descent into darkness, of shadow and ascent towards the light of self. Coupe sees parallels between Jung's archetypes and "Frazer's cycle of dying
and reviving god, or even Eliade’s eternal return, by which cosmos emerges from the chaos; but here the ultimate model is psychological interpretation” (140).

Jung differed from Freud and held that the unconscious is governed not by anarchic sexual and aggressive urges but by a striving for spiritual self-realisation. The pessimistic Freudian concept that civilisation was founded on guilt and made a regression to barbarism inevitable, is countered by Jung with the argument that the psyche is a self-regulating mechanism that naturally strives for balance. For Jung, dreams and myths were messages from the unconscious pointing man in the direction of wholeness. Rejecting Freud’s view of myth as infantile vestige, Jung opined that its “wholeness” was a sign of maturity.

If Freud with his scientific priorities privileged Greek mythology, Jung with his religious preoccupation gave priority to the quest myth, in which the hero reaches maturity or re-generation after undergoing a series of trials. Jung advocated a mythical descent into the underworld or a voluntary self-sacrifice or death of consciousness in order to secure rebirth with the source of wholeness. The hero’s encounter with monsters in myth represents for Jung the need to acknowledge the dark side of the shadow of one’s psyche. Jung’s preoccupation with wholeness led him to the theories of “Collective Unconscious” and Archetype, which implied that humanity was one and it is socialisation, which introduces differences and discord. His theory of Universal Archetypes further implies that myth is an autonomous system whose contents may be affected by historical circumstances but whose
archetypal forms are constant.

Like Jean Jacques Rousseau, Jung romanticised the primitive, stating that:

Primitive mentality differs from the civilised chiefly in that the conscious mind is far less developed in scope and intensity. Functions such as thinking, willing etc., are not yet differentiated; they are preconscious, and in the case of thinking, for instance, this shows itself in the circumstance that the primitive does not think consciously, but that thoughts appear ("The Psychology of...247).

Jung has always defended and justified myth. He says, “the primitive mentality does not invent myths, it experiences them”. More than any other myth scholar, Jung has emphatically advocated the use of myths:

Myths have a vital meaning . . . they are the psychic life of the primitive tribe; which immediately falls to pieces and decay when it loses its mythological heritage, like a man who has lost his soul. A tribe’s mythology is its living religion, whose loss is always and everywhere, even among the civilised, a moral catastrophe (The psychology of...248).

Such comments have raised many a critical eyebrow and have led to the dismissal of his theories by scientists and anthropologists. Writers and literary critics, though, have found him to be an inexhaustible source of inspiration and ideas. Jung was influenced by Eastern religious thoughts with its emphasis on transcending of oppositions. In the introductory essay to Man and his Symbols (1960-61), Jung proposes myth as antidote to the terrible primitivity of both
Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.

Within the course of half a century, myth has traversed a full circle from the Nietzschean concept of releasing Dionysian energies from the clutches of a corrupt civilisation to the Jungian concept of wholeness. While Freud is mainly interested in myths as the expression of sexual anxiety and conflict, Jung looks for signs of the impulse towards sacred meaning. While Freud sees neurosis as the compulsion to remember, return and repeat, Jung sees neurosis as a sign that the soul yearns for something beyond the physical or material satisfactions. While Freud sees dream as a distorted fulfilment of a sexual wish, Jung sees dream as a natural expression of the psyche, by which it tries to heal itself. Thus, though it is Jung who speaks of archetypes, it is Freud who is the archaeologist of the mind. Jung’s interest is less in how the psyche evolved, and more in its spiritual goal and purpose. According to Laurence Coupe:

Religion for Jung is the expression not of acquired guilt but of the urge, which is natural to humans to be at one with oneself and the cosmos. This urge is evident for him in all narratives, whether sacred or secular. It is just that one has to look harder for them in the latter (140).

Another major post-war myth scholar was Mircea Eliade, who, like Jung was a student of comparative religion. But unlike Jung, Eliade was a fascist whose anti-historicism is quite explicit, indeed militant. Just as Jung privileged “the quest myth,” Eliade privileged the myth of “the eternal return”. In his book The Eternal Return (1949), he scrutinises the new year rituals of
different civilisations and concludes that man divides time into calendar years to impose a cyclic pattern on the irreversibility of history. Eliade held that myth opposed history because it regarded history as the 'Fall' because of the intolerable and arbitrary suffering it imposes. Eliade starts from the existentialist position that "man is condemned to the absurdity and alienation of history" but he differs from the existentialists in his insistence that man needs to believe that his condemnation to history has a meaning. Myth is meaningful because it explains suffering as the necessary expiation of collective guilt, a sacrificial death that must be voluntarily undergone to secure regeneration. Eliade argued that Judaic-Christian thought subverted the cyclic vision of myth and privileged a linear concept of history from the Fall to the coming of the messiah or the second coming of Christ. Eliade's argument is that both Marxism and Fascism incorporate this future, final abolition of history. Existentialism, which refuses to clutch at the illusion of the hope of a future end of history, is symptomatic of a profound spiritual crisis. Eliade suggests that the preoccupation of many modern artists, who spurned western Judaic-Christian linear conception of history and reverted to a Nietzschean and Spenglerian cyclic vision of history based on the presumption that destruction is the prelude to rebirth, is a healthy attempt to reinvest history with a sense of purpose. Labanyi holds that, "Eliade's insistence on the myth of eternal return, like fascism, requires the perpetuation of the equation of history with evil"(18).

Richard Chase made his appearance on the critical scene with two critical books Quest For Myth and Hermann Melville both published in 1949. Chase made it clear, in no unambiguous terms, that myth and literature are not
only related but are one. Like a sculptor hacking away pieces of stone to arrive at his sculpture, Chase tries to arrive at the essence of myth by removing unwanted and unnecessary meanings. In *Quest for Myth*, Chase gives us a comprehensive overview of myth studies over the centuries. His greatest contribution, however, will be in defining and limiting the scope of myth: "But I do feel that one ought to object to the assumption that all explicitly or implicitly make: namely that myth is philosophy" (*Quest for Myth* 68).

Myth is "not the indispensable substructure of poetry" he says, "but poetry is the indispensable substructure of myth". He categorically states that, "myth is not religion, nor is it magic or folktale" (*Quest* 70). Elaborating on how literature becomes mythical, Chase comments: "Literature becomes mythical by suffusing the natural with preternatural force toward certain ends, by capturing the impersonal forces of the world and directing them toward the fulfilment of certain emotional needs" ("Notes on the Study of Myth" 70-71).

Chase classifies three functions of myth: The primary function of myth is to preserve the meaningfulness and purposefulness of social customs and institutions. Quoting Malinowski, Chase asserts that "the serious myth is a narrative resurrection of a primeval reality that come into play when rite ceremony or a social or moral rule demands justification, warrant or antiquity, reality and sanctity" ("Notes on the Study of Myth" 71).

In the second function of myth, Chase holds that primitive literature is shot through with magic and we may regard it as mythical when it fortifies the magical view of things, when it reaffirms the vibrant dynamism of the world, when it fortifies the ego with the impression that that there is a magically
potent brilliancy in the world. Myth is not vaporous, abstract, or unreal; it is a blaze of reality. Indeed, Chase tries to realise the mythicity of myth by categorically finding out what it is not.

The third function of myth, Chase identifies as “the cathartic function of dramatising the clashes and harmonies of life in a social and natural environment”. He further adds “art is constructive whereas life is destructive. Myth keeps the dilemma operative and resolves the contesting forces into useful experience” (“Notes on . . .”72). Chase suggests that when literature brings the opposing forces of magic and religion together so that they interact coercively toward a common end, literature has to become mythical.

For Chase, magic and literature meet in myth. He says that an unusual stone, a strange animal, a witch doctor have *mana* for the savage just as do Oedipus for Sophocles and Freud. Those concepts, allegories, symbols and theologies which are loosely called mythical are only so long as they are still faithful to the emotional complexity of literature; for only literature can perform the mythical function of preserving and giving significance to the sensation of *mana*.

Chase’s *Quest for Myth* gives an overall historical survey of the most prominent European myth scholars from ancient times till his age. Commenting on the judicious use of myth in literature, he says: “If a poet is to use myth, the myth must be organic with the poem; if it is too consciously sought for, or used merely as a decoration instead of springing out of the necessity of the poem, it must be a defect” (*Quest* . . 33).

Though Northrop Frye published his paper on Blake, *Fearful symmetry*
as early as 1949, it was with *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) that he established a reputation as a major myth critic. *Anatomy of Criticism* not only dealt a deathblow to the dying New Criticism but marked the beginning of a new critical awareness. For the last half a century he has been a major contributor to myth criticism. Frye has summed up his views on the mythical approach to literature, developed over half a century, in the article "The Archetypes of Literature". He holds that literature must be a systematic and organised study and at least partly a science. He says:

The main drawback of New Criticism was that it never outgrew the area of commentary. Commentators wandering over quaking bogs of generalities, judicious pronouncements of value, reflective comments . . . the critical field is so full of pseudo propositions, serious nonsense that contains no truths and no falsehoods (88).

Frye avers that since there is no intrinsic quality in criticism by which meaningful and meaningless criticism can be discriminated, he took upon himself the task of formulating a new critical culture that talks about literature in a way that can help to built up "a systematic structure of knowledge" ("Archetypes of . . ." 88).

After pointing out the drawbacks of New Criticism, Frye points out the defects of structuralism:

But a purely structural approach has the same limitation in criticism that it has in biology. The drawback of structuralism was that it was simply a discrete series of analyses based on the mere existence of the literary structure, without developing any explanation of how
the structure came to be of what it was and what its nearest relative are ("Archetypes of . . ." 89).

Structural analysis brings rhetoric back to criticism, says Frye, but in the abuse of a new poetics it degenerates to mere jargon. He advocates:

I suggest that what is at present missing from literary criticism is a co-ordinating principle, a central hypothesis which, like the theory of evolution in biology, will see the phenomena it deals with as parts of a whole. Such a principle, though it would retain the centripetal perspective of structural analysis, would try to give the same perspective to other kinds of criticism too ("The Archetype of . . ." 89).

"Criticism cannot be systematic," Frye asserts, "unless there is a quality in literature which enables it to be so, an order of words corresponding to the order of nature in natural sciences "("The Archetypes of . . ." 91).

In Anatomy of Criticism, Frye uses the analogy of painting to explain myth criticism. The close examination of the painting from a close angle is comparable to New Criticism.

The further back we go, the more conscious we are of the organising design. At a great distance from, say, a Madonna, we can see nothing but the archetype of the Madonna . . . In the criticism of literature, too, we often have to 'stand back' from the poem to see its archetypal organisation . . . If we stand back from the beginning of the fifth act of Hamlet, we see a grave opening on the stage, the hero, his enemy, and the heroine descending into it
followed by a fatal struggle in the upper world. If we stand back from a realistic novel such as Leo Tolstoy’s *Resurrection* or Zola’s *Germinal*, we can see the mythopoeic designs indicated by those titles (*Anatomy* 140).

Frye drew on Frazer for his repertoire of archetypal patterns - the dying and the reviving god or ‘scapegoat,’ the cyclical passage from decay to rebirth. He reduces these patterns to fit the all-embracing structure of the Jungian Quest myth, in which the hero descends into the underworld in search of regeneration. In *Fables of Identity*, Frye asserted: “It is part of the critics’ business to show how all literary genres are derived from the quest myth”. Labanyi comments that, “Frye’s topology of genres set out to fit the historical development of western literature into a cyclic seasonal pattern, with contemporary literature standing at the point of transition from winter to new spring”(19).

Frye uses a biological metaphor for the title *Anatomy of Criticism* to show that the whole of world literature forms a single body governed by immutable natural laws. His appeal to biological analogies serves to fit his evolutionary theory of genres into a cyclic view of historical development. In *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye argues that art being an expression of the collective unconscious, follows a set of universal structuring principles, of which the clearest manifestations are archetypes of myth. He implies that those elements of the work of art that deviate from the norm are ‘inauthentic’. The task of myth criticism is to strip off such accretions to reveal the “authentic mythic kernel”. It has been pointed out that Northrop Frye does not use myth
to elucidate the work of art, but rather uses the work of art to illustrate the underlying mythical scheme.

Like Frye, Joseph Campbell has popularised Jung's privileging of the quest myth as a universal structure of the human mind in his justly famous book *The Hero With a Thousand Faces* (1949). Using Jungian concepts, Campbell interprets the hero's descent into the underworld as a return to the womb of the unconscious in search of wholeness. Campbell reduces all myth to what he blatantly calls the "monomyth". Campbell insists on the therapeutic value of myth and myth criticism stating that it put the contemporary alienated individual back in touch with "the total image of man" of which the "individual is necessarily only a fraction and a distortion".

Campbell puts forward a number of tall claims for myth but fails to substantiate any of them. Campbell provides at least six different explanations of the function of myth. Myth he says serves: ① To justify society. ② To integrate man with society. ③ to integrate man with the world ④ To explain the world. ⑤ To convey socially produced signals, which enables man to adjust to life's crisis and finally it provides an antidote to the turmoil, which is modern society.

The attempt by myth criticism to fit all literature into a universal scheme goes hand in hand with the assault on individualism that was to become the most controversial aspect of French structuralism in the late 1950's and 1960's. The structural proclamation of the "death of the author" is a new version of myth criticism's insistence on the literary text as an unconscious elaboration of archetypal structures. Labanyi opines: "In a sense, structuralism
is an attempt to reduce literature to the status of myth whose lack of an author gives it an impression of objectivity” (20).

Having discussed the major contributors to the theory and practise of mythology, two questions suggest themselves: why mythology makes its appearance in modern fiction and why the modern novel should have recourse to mythology for much of its symbolism. Why mythology? and why the novel? Should the writer remain faithful to his sources or should he like James Joyce and T. S. Eliot change myth radically in accordance with the relations of our age? Gilbert Highet opines that, “every writer who attempts to create anything on a basis of myth must add, or subtract, or alter . . . . Most artists have used myths to ennoble contemporary life.” On the other hand Margaret Dalziel makes a dissenting note on the use of myth in literature. She bemoans the fact that the free use of myth has become a literary fashion: “The age and associations, the suggestive, and evocative power of myths have lured many people into using them as images for no very good reason; and the fashion has given rise to much pretensions and bad writing” (49).

Much may be said on both sides but it would be difficult not to agree with John J. White who holds that “the argument that it is detrimental to a modern work to include mythological material, or that pre-figurative motifs are by their very nature certain to improve any novel in which they appear, rests upon false a priori assumptions” (90).

For a successful portrayal of a mythological novel, White recommends, “the effective assimilation of mythical analogy to a realistic theme” (90-91). When the reader feels that the contemporary subject-matter and the
mythological motifs are ill-suited; when the pre-figuration appears to be intruding into the narrative, and appears to be gratuitously pretentious or unnecessarily obscure, than mythology is clearly not serving any aesthetically useful purpose. Viewed thus, White argues Joyce’s *Ulysses* and Michel Butor’s *L’Emploi du Tempos* successfully employ mythical motifs while Anthony Burgess’s *A Vision of Battlements* and Geno Hartlamb’s *Nacht Jedeirst Odysseus* are less successful in their attempts (91).

Anthropologists, especially critics like Haskell M. Block suggest that myths are created by primitive cultures and cannot be created by modern writers:

We hear a great deal about the myth of the artist: Blake’s myth, Joyce’s myth, Kafka’s myth, as though myth somehow existed apart from any social belief or collective function. Worse yet is the gratuitous use of primitive-ritual as a source of mythical identification . . . Examine some of the critical studies on Melville and you will discover a full catalogue of initiation rites, fertility cults, myths and ceremonies of every description, all too often finding support only in the mind of the critic. (135).

Block criticises William Troy’s study of Stendhal; Charles Olson’s, Richard Chase’s, and Newton Arview’s studies of Melville. He scoffs at Stanley Edgar Hyman’s study of Conrad: “It is especially disquieting to find Stanley Edgar Hyman . . . declare with aplomb that problems of action and motivation in Conrad’s plots can be solved by the application ‘of such ancient tribal rituals as initiation, fertility, the totemic feast, purification, and expiation.
ceremonies, the killing of the god-king etc’” (135). Block points out that the primary drawback of myth criticism is that it cannot distinguish between good and bad art. A good deal of critical anthropology, he points out, takes no account of the uniqueness of individual works of art, or of the fact that the value of a work of art transcends its documentary function. The mere presence of anthropological material in a work of art does not differentiate between “masterpieces and drivel”. He admits that, “anthropological concepts can enlarge the artist’s canvas but if not supplemented by aesthetic qualities, the work of art suffers” (Block 136).

Bronislav Malinowski points out that “the limitation of the study of myths to the mere examination of texts has been fatal to a proper understanding of its nature” (“The Role of Myth in Life” 198). It is perhaps such adverse criticism, which made Frye highly critical of value judgements. He insisted that the principles by which one can distinguish a significant from a meaningless statement in criticism are not clearly defined. According to Frye: “Casual value judgements belong not to criticism but to the history of taste, and reflect, at best, only the social and psychological compulsions which prompted their utterance” (“The Archetype of Literature” 88).

William Righter points out the pitfalls inherent in myth criticism. One fallacy is the supposition that somewhere, beyond the normal range of human experience and feeling lies a special world of a deeper level of the mythic, and literary works may enter into this world even when it is impossible to describe what the level is or to say what its existence implies. “Mythic has become a value term”, Righter avers, “drawing loosely on the other sense of the term but
implying 'significance'. A strong degree of approval, a recognition of importance, an attribution of high seriousness but hardly explained” (55).

Righter also asks this very pertinent question. Assuming that “all the mythic beneath the surface of literature tell us? . . . Does a mythic tale underlying a particular fiction have a meaning that the fiction itself does not?” (79).

In a review of Claire Rosenfield’s *Paradise of Snakes: An Archetypal Analysis of Conrad’s Political Novels*, Tonny Tanner points to one of the main weaknesses of the method:

> Uniqueness of novelistic detail is lost by reference back to certain rudimentary shapes or outlines which in their generality can subsume the most heterogeneous material, if the critic so wishes.

A man can scarcely get into a boat but he will find himself engaged in a repetition of a “night sea journey into an ambiguous region either in the dark interior of the earth or below the waters of the sea” (qtd. in White 34).

Chase has cautioned against the practice of some scholars and critics who have customarily assumed that a poem becomes mythological by referring to a mythology of the past. “To suppose that a poem becomes mythological by mentioning Zeus or Daphne is certainly misleading.” René Wellek is highly critical of the way in which “Whole groups of critics have tried to discover the original myths of mankind behind all literature” (“Concepts of Criticism” 360).
Frederick J. Hoffman has pointed out the difference between "a tradition of the ritual observance of a mythical pattern and the direct, knowledgeable, ingenious, overt use of myth in modern literature". He categorically states: "Explaining present literary practice by reference to archetypal patterns is not advisable" (329).

The myth scholar must be eternally vigilant to the pitfalls and traps in the path. S/he must not assume that every archetypal similarity with a myth as an intentionally concealed allusion to it. Frank Kermode has vehemently argued that myth in modern literature is a sign of regressive tendency. In a review of C. G. Jung's *Man and his Symbols*, Kermode explicitly states his view: "A yearning for ritualistic satisfactions can have a bad effect in literature" ("This Time that Time" 40). The search for mythical order in novels, reduces their complexity, he warns. He says: "Mythology ... raises the whole question of belief. This would scarcely be so if it was thought of only as a breeding ground of images; in fact it is too often the anti-intellectual substitute for science" (*Puzzles and Epiphanies* 38).

Kermode has elaborated on the drawbacks of myth criticism in his article "Myth Kitty" and in his book *The Sense of an Ending*. He distinguishes between myth and fiction ascribing a higher status to fiction stating that, "fictions can degenerate into myths whenever they are not consciously held to be fictive." According to him "Fictions are for finding things out, and they change as the need of sense making change. Myths are agents of stability, fictions the agents of change. Myths call for absolute, fiction for conditional assent (*The Sense of an Ending* 39)."
Though not as ambiguous as "myth," the term "mythography" is not without its modicum of ambiguity. The *OED* defines "mythography" as:

of or pertaining to the representation of mythical subjects in art, literature etc. So, mythographical. "Mythography" is presentation or expression of myths in plastic arts and a mythographist is one who practises mythography. Mythographer is defined as a writer or narrator of myths.

There is not much ambiguity here. However, Laurence Coupe, has used "mythography" in a quite different sense. He uses it in the sense of interpretation of myth and differentiates it from "mythopoeia" which he calls "making of myths." He states, "Reading myth (mythography) and making myth (mythopoeia) are complementary activities. Indeed, they both involve mythic reading" (94).

According to Eliseo Vivas "Mythmaking is a permanent activity of all men. All men can do is to abandon one myth for the sake another" (92). Repeated use of traditional myths has rendered them stale. This has been the fate of Biblical, Greek and Roman myths. Though Aryan myths were exotic to the westerners, the repeated use of myths from the *Puranas* and from the *Mahabharata* and the *Rāmāyana* have made these myths stale and without novelty. So, we find the modern European writer turning to Nordic myths; African writers finding their source in their own mythology; Latin American writers disillusioned with European myths resorting to Red-Indian mythology; Australian writers looking for inspiration from their aborigines; and regional writers from India abandoning Aryan myths and turning to regional myths.
In Helen Tiffin’s view the main thrust of post-colonial writings is to “establish or rehabilitate self against either European appropriation or rejection” (“Post-Colonialism . . . ”172). This is realised though a number of strategies, which follow from a writer’s conscious awareness of the use and abuse of history. Her contention is that because the history of the erstwhile colonies was constructed, even fabricated, by the colonisers mainly for justifying their presence and repressive policies, the post-colonial writers challenge their “master narrative” of history by featuring them in two different ways, depending on the nature of the cultural system to which they belong. Tiffin states: “In countries like Africa, Australia, and India, which have well-developed metaphysical systems the writers use their indigenous resources to challenge European perspectives; invariably it is reflected in their conscious deployment of myth” (“Post-Colonialism . . . ”172). Tiffin cites Raja Rao’s Kantahapura as an example in which the novelist “tells the story of the incursion of western history into India from a perspective which constantly decentres the exploiters and foregrounds India and Indian systems (“Post-Colonialism . . . ” 175).

Writers do not repeat the old myths, which they inherit from the ancients. In fact, they change existing myths to suit their artistic needs. This has been the existing tradition, both in the east and the west. “And if none of the available mythologies proves satisfactory” Ruthven says, “You can always invent your own” (69). Critics are divided on whether it is possible for the creative artists to create their own myths breaking completely away from traditional myths.
According to C. S. Lewis “certain stories, which are not myths in the anthropological sense, having been invented by individuals in fully civilised periods have what [one can] call the mythical quality. Such are the plots of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde, Well’s The Door in the Wall or Kafka’s The Castle” (qtd. in White 5). K.K. Ruthven, on the other hand, argues that clean breaks with alleged extinct mythologies are hard to achieve. Quoting Herd, Ruthven says, “the mythopoeic imagination as powerful as that of James Joyce or Thomas Mann, may be impeded by a reluctance to let go of traditional mythologies” (Ruthven 69-70).

Critics are further divided on how mythical themes affect the creative impulse of the artist. While some critics have a positive view on the influence of mythical themes on the creative impulse of the artist, others hold a contrary view. According to Ruthven: “Mythopoesis is the growth point of a mythology, but hazardous to those who cultivate it” (70). Freud has said that mythopoeic impulses manifest themselves nowadays in the form of neurosis (Complete Psychological ... XII: 82). A mythology invented by a creative artist does not have the resonance of an inherited one. Another critic to discredit thematic influence of myth in inculcating artistic impulse is Hyman whose contention is that “no one, not even Melville can invent myths” (57).

The contrary view is held by critics who argue that myth is initially as much the work of an individual as a ballad or an epic poem: somebody has to supply the raw materials which others may add to or alter. Modern literary figures such as Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde (R. L. Stevenson), Frankenstein (Mary Shelley), Dracula (Bram Stoker) and Rip Van Winkle (Washington Irving) are
striking examples of modern mythical characters.

Myth scholars have identified a few themes, which are universal. Anthropologists aver that no theme, not even the ubiquitous incest myth is distributed all over the world. But depending upon the frequency of their distribution, myth scholars have identified several universal myths. Clyde Kluckhohn enumerates some of them. They are: creation myths, incest myths, flood myths, myths of slaying of monsters, myths of sibling rivalry, Oedipus type myths and hero type myths ("Recurrent Themes . . ." 270-75).

Clyde Kluckhohn has also identified some constant tendencies in myth making. They are: Duplication, triplication, and quadriplication of elements. Lévi-Strauss suggests that the function of the repetition is to make the structure of the myth apparent. Reinterpretation of borrowed myths to fit pre-existing cultural emphasis. Endless variations upon central themes. Involution – elaboration ("Recurrent Themes" 268-78).

Myth critics have used various criteria and have followed different methods to classify mythical literature. Théodore Ziolkowski hints at a bipartite division of such novels, describing one approach as "the retelling of classical and medieval myths from a contemporary point of view" (qtd. in White 51). He points out that the other face of the same coin, of course, is the modern story that is cast in the mould of traditional myths.

In "Myth Criticism: Limitations and Possibilities," E. W. Herd divides mythological fiction into five groups. The novel which assuredly sets out to retell an acknowledged myth. Works in which the author uses myth as a means of literary allusion, intended to attract the attention of the reader and to
add significance to a theme or situation by means of illustration or parallel. 3) Constant use [of myth] as a structural element. 4) A mythical structure within the novel without conscious development by the author; and finally. 5) The situation of an author who claims himself, or who is claimed by critics, to be creating a new myth (qtd. in White 51-52).

White rejects these typology on the ground that “types two and three need not be mutually exclusive” and the difficulty in distinguishing between three and five. Another disadvantage of this system “is that it works largely with impressionistic factors such as whether or not the mythical structure has been consciously used by the author, whether or not he has achieved the nebulus new myth” (52).

Frye has divided mythical literature into four categories based on the analogy of the four seasons. His attempt at classifying the whole of world literature is indeed a bold one. According to him, mythical literature can be divided into:

1) The dawn, spring and birth phase. Myths of the birth of the hero, of revival and resurrection, of creation and (because the four phases are a cycle) of the defeat of the powers of darkness, winter and death. Subordinate characters: the father and the mother. The archetype of romance and of most dithyrambic and rhapsodic poetry. 2) The zenith, summer and marriage or triumph phase. Myths of apotheosis, of the sacred marriage, and of entering into Paradise. Subordinate characters: the companion and the bride. The archetype of comedy, pastoral, and idyll. 3) The sunset, autumn
and death phase. Myths of fall, of the dying god, of violent death and sacrifice and of isolation of the hero. Subordinate characters: the traitor and the siren. The archetype of tragedy and elegy. 2 The darkness, winter and dissolution phase. Myths of the triumph of these powers; myths of floods and the return of chaos, of the defeat of the hero, and Götterdämmerung myths. Subordinate characters: the ogre and the witch. The archetype of satire ("The Archetypes of Literature" 94).

White in his book, Mythology in the Modern Novel: A Study of Prefigurative Techniques classifies novels dealing with mythical themes into four divisions. They are: 1 The complete re-narration of a classical myth, where the author inevitably names his chosen mythological characters and settings so that there is no ambiguity about the choice of myths, e.g. Elisabeth Langgùsser's Markische Argoniutenfahrt Thomas Mann's Joseph and His Brothers, Jean Giono's Naissance de L'odyssée, Michael Ayrton's The Testament of Daedalus and The Maze-Maker. 2 A juxtaposition of sections narrating a myth and others concerned with the contemporary world, e.g. John Bowen's A World Elsewhere and David Stracton's Kalivuga. 3 A novel set in the modern world, which contains a pattern of references to mythology running through the work, e.g. Joyce's Ulysses, Mann's Doktor Faustus and Updike's The Centaur, Alain Robbe-Grillet's Les Gommes and Bernard Malamud's The Natural. 4 A novel in which a mythological motif prefigures a part of the narrative (a single event, a character or a limited group of people) but without running consistently through the whole narrative, as in type three. K. K.
Ruthven has complimented White’s classification commenting that:

**Anatomy of Criticism** is itself a triumph of the mythopoeic imagination, a beautifully modulated address to an Academy of Fine Arts, but not much use to the practising critic, who will find in John J. White’s excellent book on *Mythology and the Modern Novel* (1972) a far more helpful advice on how to talk about myths as, they appear in works of fiction. (81).

At the same time, Palencia-Roth is highly critical of White’s approach.

“In taking the archetype out of myth,” he says, “White has taken out all universality, all transcendence, all profundity, all power to explain and even transform life” (“Endnotes” 23). He thinks that all myths either can be archetypes or can have archetypal motifs, which make them more universal than White would allow. According to Palencia-Roth:

Having inherited the mythical world view of his culture, whether consciously acknowledged or not, a writer approaches myth largely in one of three ways: he can try to create it, destroy it or to re-create it... The approaches are tendencies only, not hard and fast rules, and in every mythical novel there will be mingled elements of creation, destruction and re-creation. (17).

Palencia-Roth holds that García Márquez emphasises mythification; primarily, he creates myths, but even in that creation there are elements of destruction and re-creation. Thomas Mann emphasises demythification. Joyce, who emphasises remythification, must in order to re-create the Homeric myth in a twentieth century context, demythify the myth, destroy what was in the
The term “mythoclast,” happily, seems to be less ambiguous and more clearly defined than “myth” and “mythography.” It is, however, rarely used. The OED defines it as “one who destroys or casts discredit upon myths.” The term is related to demythification. The mythoclasts destroy existing myths to create new ones. As Palencia-Roth has stated, “even in creation there are elements of destruction and re-creation” (19). Coupe, however, would argue that, “allegory presupposes an act of re-mythologisation. The sacred may be realised in the profane. The apocalypse may inform every moment of history” (115).

Both creative artists and myth critics may be classified as mythoclasts. Among myth critics, Euhemerus, Plato, Frazer, Freud, Barthes, Kermode, and Derrida may be included. Cervantes, Kafka, García Márquez and O.V. Vijayan are artists who may be termed mythoclasts.

Frazer and Freud were rationalists who saw myth as a kind of rudimentary error. Freud, like Frazer, was a euhemerist who saw myth and religion as a neurosis. In the first phase of his life, Freud was a rationalist, the heir of the Enlightenment, who equates religion with illusion. By contrast, in the second phase of his life, Freud became the heir of the counter Enlightenment, who realised that his “science” is a “kind of mythology.” “After dismissing mythology as neurosis, we find Freud developing his own mythology in Totem and Taboo,” says Coupe (126-27). Freud serves as a paradigm for the mythoclasts who by destroying existing myths create their own myth.
The mythoclast is forever alive to the dynamic quality of myth and revolts against its static categorisation. This stasis has been the fundamental failure of Lévi-Strauss' structuralism. As Cassirer puts it, "we cannot reduce myth to certain fixed static elements. We must try to grasp it its mobility and versatility, in its dynamic principle." (76).

Derrida, for instance, critiques myth studies because of its static nature. He deconstructs Lévi-Strauss' structural analysis of Bororo myth by pointing out that "the discourse on the acentric structure, the myth, that is, cannot itself have an absolute subject or an absolute centre" ("Structure, Sign and Play" 305). Frank Kermode, too, is critical of myth because of its stasis and he contrasts it with fiction. According to him: "Fictions are for finding things out, and they change as the need of sense-making change. Myths are the agents of stability, fictions the agents of change. Myths call for absolute, fictions for conditional assent" (The Sense of an Ending 39).

Among creative artists, Miguel Cervantes can be considered as a paradigm of the mythoclast. Cervantes demythifies novels of chivalry, but in the process he has created the myth of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. Palencia-Roth states: "By confronting the myth of chivalry, they [Don Quixote and Sancho Panza] are becoming characters in their own right" (18).

While attempting a comparative study of two authors who live in opposite sides of the world, who come from entirely different cultures, who speak and write different languages, are reared in entirely different mythical
milieus, who have not influenced each other, I am not blind to the enormity of
the task which lies ahead. However, as Réne Etimble, the famous French
scholar of comparative literature assures us, comparative literature is an
undertaking that promotes mutual understanding between peoples and fosters
the unity and progress of mankind. He maintains: “the comparative study of
literatures, even of those which have not reacted one upon the other, would
contribute to comparative literature” (qtd. in Daiyun 40).

René Wellek stressed that comparative literature was a genre of literary
research without boundaries of language, ethics, and politics, which aimed at
studying all genres of literature from an international angle because all creative
literary writings as an experience had an aspect of unity. Comparative
literature works from the exalted ideal of anticipating from an international
angle the establishment of a global history of literature and global studies of
literature. As regards the method of comparative literature, Wellek has stated,
“the method used by comparative literature could not be confined to
‘comparison’ alone. Instead various methods including description, the
portrayal of characteristics, interpretation, narration, explanation and
evaluation should be used as frequently as ‘comparison’” (qtd. in Daiyun 42).
Wellek also believed that just as art and humanity are one, literature is one and
the future of historical literary studies lies in this conception. Therefore, it is
important to think of literature without linguistic distinctions.

Campbell reminds us that “the comparative study of the mythologies of
the world compels us to view the cultural history of mankind as a unit; for we
find such themes as the Fire-theft, Deluge, Land of the Dead, Virgin Birth, and Resurrected Hero have a world-wide distribution appearing everywhere in combinations” (“The Historical Development of Mythology” 232).

The differences are there, of course, between cultures and culture areas. Anyone attempting a comparative study of myths must be cautious of the pitfalls inherent in his attempt, as pointed out by Cassirer: “All the attempts of various schools of comparative mythology to amplify the mythological ideas, to reduce them to a certain uniform type were bound to end in complete failure” (73).

In attempting a comparison between García Márquez and O. V. Vijayan, it must be admitted, that each author differs from the other in his conception of myth, and to the extent to which he articulates that conception. Though the question how the mythographer creates his own myth, and how the mythoclast destroys existing myths, will be explored in some detail in the four chapters, which follow, a brief description is given here, to set up a sort of “prefiguration”. While García Márquez writes in Spanish, Vijayan writes in Malayalam. Vijayan himself has translated some of his novels and short stories into English. These novels are referred by their English titles, whereas the Malayalam works are referred by their original Malayalam titles. In this study, all quotes from Vijayan’s translated works have been made from Vijayan’s Selected Fiction published by Penguin. How the two writers, belonging to the third world, make use of mythology in their fiction is analysed in this study.

The significance of this study lies in the demonstration of the endurance,
presence, and necessity of myth, in the importance of showing that literature is one way of travelling towards religious, spiritual and/or mythic truths, and to the contribution to a new emphasis of comparative literature in its broadest, trans-national and comparative (east-west) sense.

In *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud observes that the central clue to the structure of myth is its antithetical nature. Myth, therefore, is antinomic at its centre and mythical novels will tend to reflect the antinomic structure of myth. So the mythographic and mythoclastic aspects of the two novelists reflect only the antimonies of the subject they deal with: myth.

In Chapter 2 titled “García Márquez as mythographer,” a detailed study of García Márquez’s use of mythology in fiction is attempted. In it, the author’s evolution as an artist from his early short stories to his masterpiece *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, when his artistic powers flowered, is traced. García Márquez’s mythopoeic talents also matured in *One Hundred Years*. He does not overtly make use of mythology in his fiction. However, he makes use of mythological patterns in the structure of the plot. In this chapter, a detailed account of the mythical patterns of aetiology, journey, incest, Sisyphean repetition, Apollinian-Dionysian dichotomy, mythic grief and echoes of mythical characters is given.

The third chapter titled “Vijayan as mythographer” examines how O.V. Vijayan makes use of mythology in his fiction. It traces the evolution of Vijayan as an artist from *Khasaakkinte Ithihaasam* to his final work *Thalamurakal*. Vijayan’s approach to mythology has changed with his evolution as an artist. In *The Legends*, Vijayan makes use of mythology
critically. While in *The Saga*, he makes use of mythology for satire and parody. But at the same time, with the publication of *The Saga*, Vijayan shifted allegiance from a Marxist sympathiser to a spiritual mythographer. Thus in *Gurusaagaram, Pravaachakante Vazhi* and in *Thalamurakal*, we find Vijayan probing the spiritual dimension of myths. Like García Márquez, Vijayan, too, does not merely use existing myths but invents myths to suit his purpose. He too, makes use of mythical patterns of aetiology, journey, incest, and Sisyphean repetition. But one fundamental difference between García Márquez and Vijayan is that the latter explores the spiritual possibilities of myth.

In the fourth chapter titled “García Márquez as mythoclast” a detailed study of García Márquez’s apocalyptic imagery and mythology in *One Hundred Years* and in *The Autumn of the Patriarch* is attempted. García Márquez exploits the mythoclastic possibilities thrown open by the myth of Apocalypse to depict the end of the world of Macondo in *One Hundred Years* and the end of the diabolic world created by the dictator in *The Autumn*. In the latter novel García Márquez raises fundamental questions about the nature of power and also about the nature of fiction and history.

In the fifth chapter titled “Vijayan as Mythoclast,” a study of O. V. Vijayan’s rational use of myth is attempted. Vijayan makes use of myth to parody famous historical personalities in his untranslated work, *Ente Charithranweshana Pareekshakal* in *The Saga*. Vijayan makes use of the myth of apocalypse to depict the diabolic world of the president. Satire and parody are used by Vijayan to highlight the cruelty of the President and his henchmen. But differing from García Márquez, Vijayan lends a spiritual dimension to his
novel. Vijayan also questions and subverts conventional theories of history using mythoclastic techniques in *Ente Charithranweshana* and *The Saga*.

In the conclusion, the findings of the previous chapters are evaluated and a comparison between the two authors is attempted highlighting their similarities. Though the two writers come from entirely different cultural backgrounds and write in completely different milieus, there are striking resemblances between the two. As mythographers, both of them use similar patterns of aetiology, journey, incest, and Sisyphean repetition to structure their plots. As mythoclasts, both writers use Christian apocalyptic imagery and mythology to present the diabolic world of the dictators.