Chapter 3

Myths and Archetypes

It is puzzling to note that heroism in myths and legends seems to be reserved for men, whether the writer is Homer, James Frazer or Joseph Campbell. There seems to be an absence of archetypes for a heroine, especially in Western literature. Meredith Powers, in her introduction to The Heroine in Western Literature: The Archetype and Her Reemergence in Modern Prose, is distressed by the lack of an archetypal pattern for heroines in literature, after reading Campbell's The Hero with a Thousand Faces" (2).

The concept of heroism, according to Powers, functions within the imagination of individuals: when we are threatened and the self is about to be overwhelmed, we try to defend ourselves with "mental constructs" (3). The unconscious erects defences of its own. Each individual is endowed with the ability to view himself as heroic and to evolve a powerful mythology of the self and this ability functions as a primary psychic defence. Each man or woman is heroic in his or her imaginative visions. But, in mythology, heroism appears to be an entirely masculine affair. This is so because of the "vitiation and eventual denial of the feminine divine" in Western culture (Powers 3). In
mythology, there are very few self-determined heroines. In the myth of Psyche, it is the story of a wife who learns to curb her curiosity. The Tale of Atlanta first speaks of her heroic behaviour in the Calydonian boar hunt and then discredits it as inappropriate for a woman (Powers 4). Women are peripheral characters in the hero's drama and misplaced beings in the world of a patriarchal culture. The hero is central in mythology and the heroine a mere backdrop. Even the story of Danae, if related from her point of view, would glorify the heroism of a mother, "but her story is not told; she is silent, passive, receptive, violated, victimized, finally rescued" (Powers 4).

Powers observes that the "voice of the goddess is only a whisper in the hero's ear, commanding him to great feats while she herself remains in the background. Art itself is male; inspiration, the Muse, is female" (5). Powers makes a very significant observation:

There is evidence that suggests that all tribes initially conceived of divinity as feminine: their first god was the tribal mother. Only later did the male divinity gain status in response to the ecological needs of specific tribes as the goddess's son and eventually when procreation was linked to copulation as her consort. (6)
If the patriarchal layers are stripped away, then we get skeletal stories suggesting the importance of the prehistoric goddess. Lineages in pictorial art also help in this discovery (Powers 8). Powers asserts:

The process of aggressively deprecating feminine principles by reducing the status and banalizing the powers of the goddesses began with revision of the earliest pre-Homeric myths, stories of the tribal goddesses, called Kores. (8)

Powers's explication of the Keres helps one to understand the nature of the archetypal goddess: "The spirit immanent in the thing, its Ker, whether benign or menacing, was initially thought to be separate from the thing itself"; these pre-rational essences were associated with birth, death, good harvest and drought (23). When men emerged from savagery, they humanized divinities and the earliest goddesses were the Keres, subsequently developed into spiritual beings like their later chthonic counterparts Kore and Hecate (Powers 22). The original mother goddesses were unnamed and non-specific tribal conceptions, more attribute than individual (Powers 24). Keres were eventually anthropomorphized into female divinities and magical figures (Powers 26). The original goddess was akin to the Keres. She was rising Kore in spring. Kore died or merged or was reborn

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as her own mother embodying another season of life. By dying, she became an underworld goddess, rising again as Kore (Powers 143). Demeter is the matriarch while Kore becomes Persephone, who becomes Hecate, the chthonic version of the goddess (Powers 35). In her archetypal form there was a single goddess within whom were focussed the diverse roles of tribal mother, chthonic sister and emerging Kore (Powers 78). The three faces of the goddess were mother, maiden and crone.

Robert Graves, in his introduction to *Greek Myths*, points out that ancient Europe had no gods but only the Great Goddess, who was immortal, changeless and omnipotent. The concept of fatherhood had not been introduced. The matriarch was feared and adored by men. Motherhood was a prime mystery (13).

Graves explicates the triadic aspect of the Great Goddess: the moon's three phases of new, full and old recalled the matriarch's three phases of maiden, nymph and crone. According to the solar cycle, the goddess became identified with the seasonal changes. Spring represented the maiden, summer the nymph and winter the crone. Later she was conceived as another triad: maiden of the upper air, nymph of the earth or sea and the crone of the underworld. Her devotees realized that the triad did not represent three
goddesses but three phases of the same goddess (Greek Myths 14).

Graves goes on to trace the weakening of the matrilineal tradition to the invasion of Europe by the Achaens in the thirteenth century before Christ, and states that, with the coming of the Dorians at the close of the second millennium, patrilineal succession became the rule (Greek Myths 19-20).

According to the Pelasgian creation myth, in the beginning,

Euryxiome, the Goddess of All Things, rose naked from chaos.... Next she assumed the form of a dove, brooding on the waves and in due process of time, laid the Universal Egg. At her bidding, Ophion coiled seven times about this egg, until it hatched and split in two. Out tumbled all things that exist, her children: sun, moon, planets, stars, the earth with its mountains and rivers, its trees, herbs and living creatures. (Graves, Greek Myths 27)

"In this archaic religious system there were, as yet neither gods nor priests, but only a universal goddess and her priestesses, woman being the dominant sex and man her frightened victim" (Graves, Greek Myths 28).
In his book *The White Goddess: A Historical Grammar of Poetic Myth*, Graves states that the centaurs called their Mother Goddess leucothea, which means "White Goddess", that the early name of Britain, Albion is derived from Albina ('the White Goddess'), the eldest of the Danaids, that she is the Barley-Goddess of Argos, and that Frazer regards her as either Demeter or her double Persephone (61-66).

Graves quotes Apuleius's *Golden Ass*, where an account of the White Goddess is given thus: "Thou art the source of the strength of the peoples and gods; without thee nothing can either be born or made perfect; thou art mighty, Queen of the Gods..." (*White Goddess* 72).

The White Goddess has been subsequently portrayed by several writers in literature. Some of the instances cited by Graves are: the Triple Hecate in *Macbeth*, Keats's "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" and Phaedria in Spenser's *Faerie Queene* (*White Goddess* 424-27).

The mythology currently available to us is a patriarchal revision and the several archetypal divinities and heroines who were once versions of the great goddess lie hidden beneath the overlay (Powers 9).

The goddess is a typical archetype, though her voice in literature has been but a whisper. She has been a puzzle to patriarchal writers. She is rebellious and baffling. She is
an unpredictable power, a living contradiction and an enigma. The voice denied to mythological woman has been provided by many contemporary women writers to their heroines. Contemporary heroines are articulate and independent and, in them, the lost archetype reemerges. Powers declares: "This protean, syncretistic figure is akin to the shadowy Mother Nature, but she is much more complex, intricate, and wholly more satisfying" (10).

In course of time the earth came to be viewed as the single mother-deity in charge of procreation as well as the care of the dead, as Powers states and goes on to explain:

the goddess was not a model who was wholly good, not model at all by later moral standards.... Ever representative of the renewal of vegetative life, as an idea she necessarily included the death that attends renewal in nature.... As such, she was an awesome figure with the potential to be as suddenly capricious, suddenly volatile as is nature itself. She combined both good and bad aspects, and was remarkable for this syncretism, merging in a single deity the contradictions which are inherent in life: the ferocious and immutable with the loving and benign, the ominously chthonic with the nurturingly maternal. These are her
principal features: she is regenerative, yet she is infernal.  (24)

Powers explicates the term "chthonic" thus:

The word chthonic which comes from the Greek word chthon meaning earth, has been used as an adjective to describe the enigmatic religion that preceded the religion of the Olympians in Greece. Like the goddess religion which produced her, the chthonic heroine has been misunderstood partially because of her transformative energy and her use of irrational modes. This heroine is not primarily rational or logical and so has been labeled anticultural.... Her divinity has "been attenuated or obliterated or silenced. (10)

Powers states that, in accordance with the ritual of "Anodos of the Kore", the young goddess rises out of the earth, merges with her and gives birth to herself again. Powers adds,

this feminine divinity includes commitment to a harsh but lofty justice, to a Grundanschauungen which is daemonic and irrational.... She is not predictable according to accepted cultural paradigms; this goddess metamorphoses. Her ethics
are foreign, yet they will not be subjugated.

In contemporary fiction the articulate heroine tells her own story and "offers illumination on her enigmatic mythological predecessors" (Powers 11).

Keres or prototypes of divinities were enigmatic as they were seemingly contrary creatures. They presided over life and death, harvest and drought. "These 'dread' goddesses execute and avenge" (Powers 23).

Powers says that the goddess defines herself thus:

I am she that is the natural mother of all things, mistress and governess of all elements, the initial progeny of worlds, chief of the powers divine, queen of all that axe in hell, the principal of them that dwell in heaven, manifested alone and under one form of all the gods and goddesses. At my will the planets of the sky, the wholesome winds of the seas, and the lamentable silences of hell are disposed, my name, my divinity is adored throughout the world, in divers manners, in variable customs, and in many names.

(25)

The Indo-Europeans were frightened by these powerful goddesses and heroines. The feminine powers could not be
completely erased. Some were silenced, others deprecated or cUsxnissed. Some were portrayed out of ignorance as ogresses (powers 54).

Eve could be viewed as a version of the lost goddess. She is like Prometheus, a heroine with a desire to know. She unbalanced the powers and was punished, as was Prometheus. She wished to lead her children out of the darkness of ignorance to a more fully realized state of consciousness. The tragedy was inevitable. She represents the human qualities of rebellion, struggle and the yearning for knowledge and power (Powers 135).

Mimi Reisel Gladstein, in The Indestructible Woman in Faulkner, Hemingway, and Steinbeck, says that the rape of women can be seen as an allegory for death, as Persephone is called Queen of the Dead; lost innocence is equated allegorically to the crossing of the borders of Hades; Persephone is raped and abducted but not destroyed; after a period in the underworld, she is reborn (27-29). Decay, pain, suffering, and rebirth are all various aspects of Nature. Grain decays under the earth and then sprouts as crop, it is fruitful death. Death is imminent in birth. Mother Earth enriches herself with the bones of her children. Nature is not always benevolent. Courage, power
and continuity are the characteristic features of Nature (Gladstein 44).

The ancient goddess was syncretistic. She was a matrix of clans. She was wild and independent; she died and was merged with her mother and was reborn as daughter. She represented change and fusion. She is beyond sin, morality, evil, restrictions and all other man-made codes. She embodies passion, grief, love and freedom. She is flexible and has the inherent ability to alter and transform. She functions independently and is not tied down by the restrictions of civilisation. Hers is a primal code. "She does not implode, although there is often an externalization of justifiable rage. This heroine survives" (Powers 144).

According to Powers, it is "in the earliest of American fiction that the archetypal goddess first appears quite graphically. She is evident in the characterisation of [Nathaniel] Hawthorne's Hester Prynne" (147). Hester has not succumbed. Instead, as Powers says, she has metamorphosed out of the confrontation, descended into the chthonic region during the ellipsis of her imprisonment, and emerged, a stronger figure now, a mother now, determinedly arrogant, determinedly unwilling to throw herself
on the mercy of the punitive society which has condemned and labeled her. (147)

Hawthorne gives Hester beauty, intelligence and an aristocratic grace. Her superiority is not diminished by her sin or imprisonment. She neither begs nor grovels. She retains her dignity and, even on the scaffold, she does not break. "She survives by an act of will, by a retreat into herself.... she changes, perseveres, continues to become. Alone, apart, she accepts herself as a living critic of the society which sought to subjugate her.... She is resourceful and pragmatic; an artist, she becomes a successful entrepreneur" (Powers 148). She is admired for her resilience. She is aloof yet helps the poor people. People recognise her strength. Hester is strong with a woman's strength. Dimmesdale calls her strong and asks her to think and resolve for him. She organises and makes important decisions. Hester, according to Powers,

has passed from "purpose through passion to perception," has accepted in her own peculiar way "the hero's solemn task ... to return to us, transfigured, and teach the lessons of life renewed." Outlaw, enigma, survivor, she suggests that patterns may well exist for archetypal feminine heroism which, under certain
circumstances, axe observable and spontaneously revealed even by male authors who may remain completely baffled by the chthonic aspect of this archetype, the syncretism of this figure, but who inadvertently allow a voice to the deeply buried divinity of the goddess. (150)

Sylvia Brinton Perera, as cited by Powers, develops in *Descent to the Goddess: A Way of Initiation for Women*, a vision of the chthonic in a woman's personality development and links it to emotional crisis, depression and terrible stress. The chthonic is demanding and primordial, irrational, even destructive to the individual. The individual must submit to it just as a pregnant woman submits to the process which is dangerous and has no respect for her privacy or individuality. But in the process of giving birth, the woman learns the awesome quality of nature and the insignificance of the individual self. The female protagonist uses chthonic experiences to discover a new aspect within her. Her suffering is incidental, a means to an end. Only when she is a syncretistic archetype can she touch her chthonic self (152-54).

According to Powers,

Change and pain are inevitable and linlced. The heroine who accepts her chthonic retreats does not
avoid suffering but, in being wounded, is also transformed. Accepting this as a season of life, as Hester does, as Demeter and Inanna do, allows the continuation of the goddess cycle towards wholeness.... (154)

Perera, as cited by Powers, is of the opinion that some women must "descend" for a time from their set pattern of behaviour "into a period of introversion" to realise "their potential wholeness" (154). In the case of Hester, patriarchal demands made her lose conviction, but, during the prison ellipsis, something renews her ego. "No longer supported by the social system which had given early meaning to her life, she still emerges unbroken, resilient," as Powers observes (154). She has repudiated her social norma and is reborn with pride. Hester, unlike Antigone, understands that the system hampers her personal growth. She submits to change. She accepts her "otherness". She becomes a model of heroism and is not a pathetic, stoical martyr who has won moral victory. Hawthorne has not deeply analysed Hester's chthonic retreat; but he shows her "willingness to submit to further change" as also her pride; he depicts her rebirths; and, he presents "a syncretistic figure who survives the dark passages of the soul and emerges with the strength to resist victimization" (Powers 154-55). Jean
Shinoda Bolen, in *Goddesses in Every Woman: A New Psychology of Woman*, speculating on feminine heroism, as quoted by Powers, points out that "in every crisis, a woman is tempted to become the victim instead of the heroine," adding that, "suicide is antithetical to the archetypal heroism of the goddess" (155).

Powers further quotes Bolen to suggest what a heroine is expected to do in a crisis:

Whether in myth or life, when a heroine is in a dilemma, all she can do is be herself, true to her principles and loyalties, until something unexpectedly comes to her aid. To stay with the situation, with the expectation that the answer will come, sets the inner stage for what Jung called "the transcendent function." By this he means something which arises from the unconscious to solve the problem of [sic] show the way to an ego [or heroine] who needs help from something beyond itself [or in herself]. (155)

Heroines axe transformed and thereby they avoid total breaking up or victimisation. When they opt for "otherness" they emerge unbroken and it is a rebirth (Powers 155).

In Ellen Glasgow's *Barren Ground*, as cited by Powers, the heroine's descent into the chthonic is clear: Dorinda
Oakley is an ax-chetypal heroine whose spirit of fortitude has triumphed over the sense of futility. Her confrontation with patriarchy is pronounced. However, ultimately, Dorinda yields to the primal direction of instinct (Powers 155). She has been jilted by Jason and, in her traumatic moment, goes to kill Jason, but as Glasgow describes, she discovers her inner strength, as quoted by Powers:

> Her will, with all its throbbing violence, urged her to shoot him and end the pain in her mind. But something stronger than her conscious will, stronger than her agony, stronger than her hate, held her motionless. Every nerve in her body, every drop of her blood, hated him; yet because of this nameless force within the chaos of her being, she could not compel her muscles to stoop and pick up the gun at her feet. (156)

Dorinda, like Hester, has found her own inner strength in her moment of crisis. She realises her superiority over the man in front of her. She regrets her weakness in having succumbed to his charms. But she does not despise herself. As Powers quotes Glasgow, "Thoughts wheeled like a flight of bats in her mind, swift, vague, dark, revolving in circles" (156). But undoubtedly she will emerge stronger out of the chaos.
Dorinda passes through several emotions. She sees life as wasted, finished. She thinks she has lost all and wants to escape. She is eaten up by grief. But through it all, as Powers quotes Glasgow:

her essential self was still superior to her folly and ignorance, was superior even to the conspiracy of circumstance that hemmed her in. And she felt that in a little while this essential self would reassert its power and triumph over disaster . . . she was not broken. She could never be broken while the vein of iron held in her soul. (157)

She is driven to action by this faith in her inner self.

Dorinda leaves familiar areas and the descent into the chthonic self metamorphoses her. Her emotions change and disappear during this separation, and,

she faces the world with a survivor's arrogance and ironic laughter. Recognising that her psychological task is "to face . . . the wreck of her happiness . . . the loss of a vital interest in life", she nurtures her own autonomy and rejects marriage. In this she is like Demeter....

(Powers 157)

Dorinda accepts the seasons of life: she has indomitable pride and she accepts "otherness". She is
pragmatic and has ambitions and dreams like Demeter in her crisis. She is practical and intelligent. In her moment of crisis, she does not look for support from outside. It is the inner strength gained during the crisis that comes to her aid, as Powers quotes Glasgow:

it was nothing outside her own being that had delivered her from evil. The vein of iron which had supported her through adversity was merely the instinct older than herself, stronger than circumstances, deeper than the shifting surface of emotion; the instinct that had said, 'I will not be broken.' Though the words of the covenant had altered, the ancient mettle still infused its spirit. (158)

The novels of Faulkner and Hemingway convey a message—man's endurance. The message in Hemingway's Old Man and the Sea is that man may be destroyed but not defeated. Man has firmly stood against the destructive forces of Nature. In Faulkner's novels some woman character represents hope for survival. This character is called the "indestructible woman" (Gladstein, introduction 6-7).

Physicists have affirmed that, scientifically, matter can change form but cannot be destroyed. It is easy to imagine the correlation of woman with matter. In the words
of Nietzsche, inorganic matter is the maternal bosom. Terms like "mater", "materies" and "matrix" mean matter. In most creation myths, Mother Earth and Mother Nature personify the Eternal Woman. Woman is matter and man is spirit in the archetypal symbolism. Usually fear and awe are the immediate reactions to the phenomenon of the mystery of matter. Male writers cannot deal effectively with the "otherness" of women. Women, like Mother Nature, are cruel, kind, intelligent, foolish and bundles of contradictions. But they are always enduring. Nature is deadly and enduring. Nature cannot be fully understood or conquered (Gladstein, introduction 7-8).

Jessica Amanda Salmonson's "When the Woman Chief was Young" from The Giant Book of Myths and Legends is an interesting American myth and portrays a female hero. It is the story of Chao, the brave, intelligent daughter of a Klamath Chief. She is to succeed her father and rule her people. She will not marry Llao the ruler of the underworld or Skell, the king of the sky world. Chao uses her intelligence and courage and gets rid of Llao who was creating havoc for her people. She is helped by Skell, But, in the end, she does not opt for normal marriage and happiness. Her wish is to rule her people wisely. She has
total control over her life and is ruled by the head rather than by the heart. She is totally independent (313-20).

Carol A. Senf, in "Donna Trenton, Stephen King's Modern American Heroine," points out that Stephen King gives us heroines of courage, who are assertive and strong. They are not weak beings to be rescued. They can save others (91).

King's characters are not caricatures. According to him, women become ineffective when they are confronted by emotional struggles. King's heroines are credible human beings confronting ordinary problems (Senf 94-95). One's true self can be discovered only when the veneer of civilisation has been ripped away. When the women no longer depend on others, they become active and powerful. They realize that no knight would come galloping on a shining steed to their rescue. They are forced to act on their own. King's heroine Donna loses all things important for a traditional heroine—marriage, security, child etc. When she confronts problems, the readers feel purged because of their imaginative participation in the heroine's struggles. Donna at first is an ordinary woman. In the next stage, she learns to live with dignity and courage. In the final stage, she confronts the terrible adversary. Women should, like Donna, learn to take control over their lives (Senf 97-98).
Pat Browne, in her introduction to Heroines of Popular Culture, avers that heroism cannot be determined by gender and that Campbell's definition of a hero as one who journeys forth into unknown regions, wins against unfamiliar forces and returns with new power, the journey being a metaphor for the quest for self-awareness, is equally applicable to men and women (1).

The ancient goddess was buried under patriarchal interpretations. Women were kept away as explosives whose power man was afraid to unleash as they could overpower even the possessor. But democracy and education have ushered in an awareness of heroic capabilities in woman. Woman as hero, or rather, the female hero has emerged (Pat Browne, introduction 1-2). A woman who survives, achieves and flourishes in a world of man is a heroine. Heroines are entering not only literature but also all fields of popular arts (Pat Browne, introduction 3).

Mara E. Donaldson, in "Woman as Hero in Margaret Atwood's Surfacing and Maxine Hong Kingston's The Woman Warrior," explains that, according to Campbell, the three-fold stages of the monomyth are universal according to Campbell, stage one is "separation" or "departure", in response to the call to adventure; there is self-annihilation at this point; the hero moves from familiar
to unfamiliar areas—a realm that is unconscious; in mythical language, this is the descent into the "belly of the whale"; in stage two, called "initiation", there is purification; the hero fights against dragons and conquers giants; he gains mastery and learns the mystery of life: he returns in stage three and tries to share his wisdom in restoring the world; in this final stage, he appears transformed, and, in the monomyth the hero is changed from egoism to humility or arrogance to acceptance (102-03).

According to Donaldson, the heroines of Margaret Atwood's Surfacing and Kingston's The Woman Warrior exemplify patterns of personal transformation which are strikingly similar and significantly different from the pattern of the heroic quest in Campbell's The Hero with a Thousand Faces (101). These novels provide an alternative pattern of heroic transformation. Here the heroines transform from self-negation to self-affirmation, from la.dk. of pride to self-pride (Donaldson 101-02).

The narrator in Surfacing undertakes a quest for selfhood and returns transformed. Once a passive and powerless victim, she gradually gains self-awareness and a new ego is born in her. She becomes independent and transformed into a female hero (Donaldson 106-7).
A similar transformation is seen in Kingston's heroine. Self-affirmation comes by acceptance in Surfacing and by breaking through cultural expectation in The Woman Warrior. This is an alternative pattern of transformation, from self-denial and humiliation to pride and self-affirmation (Donaldson 109).

In these two novels the heroic quest takes the form of a search for selfhood. It comprises journey, descent and return. The final effect is one of transformation, for there is awakening (Donaldson 105-6). Sheldon's heroines also undertake this journey in search of their selfhood. They leave the familiar and venture into unknown realms. They struggle against and overcome adversities. In the process, they move from passive acceptance to courageous action, self-awareness and pride. Varying from the religious symbolism of the quest, self-pride is born in the heroines of Sheldon. The transformed Sheldonian heroine is independent, indomitable and invincible.

When a woman is down or depressed, totally isolated and let down by the social system, she relies on herself alone. She turns inward and touches her hidden chthonic self. During this chthonic retreat she is recharged and becomes ready to take on the challenges of life with courage, strength and conviction. Women are more powerful and
successful when they depend on their intelligence and ingenuity than when they depend on their emotions. Emotional struggles are a woman's worst enemy as they weaken her. Control of emotions is the key to success.

The present study focusses on the innate potentialities of women. It is no moral analysis. The strength and the power of woman are highlighted. It is not a treatise on good and bad. In a struggle for survival human beings become primal and all layers of sophistication and civilisation are stripped away. The raw, primitive being emerges. In that stage, there are no social or moral codes. It is a code of nature. Today's world is a jungle and survival is the paramount need of the hour. Man-made restrictions cannot restrain women in their struggle for survival.

As Fiedler says, in every cliche and in every stereotype there lies dormant an archetype waiting to be awakened by a researcher (literature 140). In Sheldon's novels too lie several such archetypal sleeping beauties waiting for the awakening kiss of the prince.

Bestsellers become popular, because the readers unconsciously identify themselves with the characters and their problems. Popular fiction is unconsciously archetypal and hence its popularity. The reading public is able to relate to the characters in popular fiction. The reader may
not be awaxe of the dormant myths in the folds of the bestseller, but he has been attracted and he knows not why.

When a medicine is most effective with a person for an ailment, without delving deep into the Hrty' of it and being unaware of the composition of the medicine he goes back to it again and again for relief. Later, a scientist or a doctor may analyse the symptoms of the patient and the composition of the medicine and discover why the particular medicine was most effective with the patient. In the same way, people love bestsellers, find them irresistible and "unputdownable". They do not know why. It is up to the researcher to find out why.

Sheldon's women are archetypal and chthonic. Hence they are strong and they survive unbroken. They inspire millions by their determined struggles and strength. They are powerful.

Sheldon's women, caught in a patriarchal society, are dispossessed, briefly lost and nearly crushed. They lose the support of the social system. But something transpires to renew their ego, and they emerge unbroken, resilient, and as more complete beings. Sheldon's heroines are wounded, suffer, and then are transformed. Pain leads to change. They retreat and touch their chthonic self, deep within, and move towards wholeness. They are reborn as syncretistic figures.
They survive and re-emerge stronger and prouder and resist victimization. Weakness is shed like the slough of a snake, and after the crisis, they emerge from the chrysalis as more complete beings.

In Sheldon's novels, the heroines are given a voice denied to their mythological predecessors. They are not passive women. They touch their chthonic self in the moment of crisis. In ancient mythology, a goddess had to arise seasonally—"Anodos of the Kore"—the ritual of the goddess arising out of the earth, dying or merging or being reborn as her own mother. Sheldon's women too, after being virtually buried alive due to some injustice or twist of fate, rise again, stronger and more complete. Like the fabled Phoenix, his women arise anew—fully recharged renewed, reborn. They are now conscious of their innate potentialities. After the struggle, they are transformed.

The heroines of Sheldon make a symbolic journey from one stage to another stage of awareness. Some have suffered symbolic death, due to loss of innocence and have, for a while, been buried in the underworld of Hades. But, like Persephone, they come back, or rather, the chthonic matter in them resurrects them. The heroines who refuse to be broken and who are determined to survive and achieve are incontrovertibly powerful and more memorable than those who merely
enhance their inherent qualities, because the transformation or metamorphosis is more dramatic in the case of the former. Most of the heroines of Sheldon's novels seem to follow the quest pattern unconsciously. They have a moment of departure and separation. They move away from the familiar. They battle against gender bias, parental prejudice, social odds, injustice and hitherto unknown adversities and win. Finally, they are transformed into more complete beings. They not only survive the crisis but also emerge from it stronger.

The myth of death and rebirth is clear in *The Other Side of Midnight*. Betrayed by her father, it seems to Noelle that "in the next few hours she died and was born again. She had died a Princess, and she was reborn a slut" (Midnight 40). Total transformation in accordance with Campbell's monomyth can be traced in Noelle's character. It is a fruitful death like the one in the Demeter-Persephone myth. She loses her innocence and goes to the underworld, dies and springs back to life as seen in the fertility myth, the decayed grain sprouting afresh. When she crudely aborts Larry's baby in her womb, the doctors feel it is a miracle she is still alive. But she can survive as she has a purpose for living—revenge on Larry. "She was an avenging Phoenix rising from the ashes of the emotions that Larry Douglas had
murdered in her” (Midnight 60). Her chthonic self gives her the strength to live and become powerful, ki I was simply not. her time to die (Midnight 67). But Noelle \s Killed by the./ shooting squad because she lets her heart rule'-hery- sfra-'has lost touch with her strong, pragmatic chthonic self and has immersed herself in emotion. People find some irresistible force in her. Armand Gautier, the famous director, says: "There was some force in her that was irresistible, that would obtain anything she wanted. There was something in her that was untouched" (Midnight 100). Later he thinks that she is a mystery and an enigma, and, "the deeper Gautier probed, the more the riddle grew, like the Chinese boxes that opened and revealed further boxes inside" (Midnight 133). This enigma is the chthonic self. Demeris too sees her as an enigma: "she was a constant surprise.... she was an enigma, defying solution" (Midnight 229). He found it "a challenge to try to reach the deep core inside Noelle.... she was a phenomenon..." (Midnight 230). On the dangerous flight to Amsterdam she is unperturbed by the prospect of death, for she is so confident of living. Hence her serenity in that situation (Midnight 311). Larry is frightened of her. The innocent girl he jilted has transformed now with the help of her chthonic self. "He [Larry] sensed the cold, deadly, untouchable center that was in Noelle Page, and he was
chilled and a little frightened by it" (Midnight 323). She can be ominous and deadly or enchanting and delightful: "Noelle was quicksilver, a nymph, a genie" (Midnight 327).

As Sheldon describes,

Her father's betrayal had molded and shaped her, annealed and hardened her, filled her with a hunger for vengeance that could be satisfied with nothing less than a kingdom of her own in which she was all-powerful.... she had finally achieved that. (Midnight 329)

Mien she is tried for murder, she has become a power to reckon with. "The woman being tried for murder by the state was a superwoman, a goddess on a golden pedestal" (Midnight 393). In short, Noelle has become a chthonic goddess. Had she curbed her emotion, death would not have neared her.

Born Josephine Csinski, the poor daughter of a widowed Polack seamstress, Josephine "was filled with a restlessness, a yearning for something she had never known. It was nameless, but it was there" (Stranger 155). She leaves her familiar home and sets out for unknown regions, determined to fight and win. She is transformed even as she journeys away, as Sheldon narrates:

somewhere during the fifteen-hundred-mile, two-day journey, Josephine Czinski had become Jill Castle.
Outwardly, she looked like the same person. It was inside that she had changed. (Stranger 168)

Jill has been a survivor from birth. She defied medical science. She should either have died or become a vegetable. But she sprang to life just when the doctor was going to switch off the life-sustaining apparatus. She has not only survived, but has become a heroine in real life. It is said of her in later years, when she is married to the famous comedian Toby Temple:

The United States of America had always had its heroines. Now, Jill Temple had become one. Her courage and the fantastic battle she had won and then so ironically lost had captured the imagination of the world.... it contained all the elements of classic Greek drama and tragedy. (Stranger 12)

She not only survives in Hollywood but plays several roles in real life too. She reaches the pinnacle of power. This poor Polack girl has Hollywood eating out of her hand. She achieves everything single-handedly. She brandishes power like a club (Stranger 288).

Woman has often been compared to nature because of the qualities she is endowed with. The tree motif is used with reference to virgins. It represents life, fertility,
fruitful illness and continuity. Jill Castle is symbolically described thus by Sheldon: "But she had changed. Each succeeding year had left its mark upon her, a patina of hardness, like the annual rings on a tree" (Stranger 219).

At the end of the novel, Jill's performance in life is over, as Sheldon records:

> It was as though the fiery ordeal she had gone through had burned away the hard core of bitterness within her, had cauterized all the hurts and the disappointments and the hatreds. Jill Castle had died in the holocaust and Josephine Czinski had been reborn in the ashes. <Stranger 335>

There is clear evidence in the novel that Josephine is first transformed into Jill and later Jill dies and, from the ashes, Josephine is reborn again. Here Jill is the chthonic self who achieves the impossible. The mythical symbolism of destruction and rebirth is evident here and it makes the heroine archetypal. Josephine and Jill are two phases of the same archetypal woman like Persephone and Demeter. At the end, Jill loses everything. She is again the deprived Josephine. Jill grieves, not for herself but "for a little girl named Josephine Czinski," because she wanted to do so much "for that little girl" (Stranger 346).
Jennifer Parker in *Rage of Angels* starts on the quest. She departs into unfamiliar areas. She fights against discrimination and injustice. She refuses to be broken. She is resilient and "the world had not gotten rid of her... Jennifer Parker had bounced back and was still in there, fighting" (126-27). She is determined to fight and survive. She finds that the fears of her poor clients feed her self-confidence and she knows that there is one big difference between her and her clients: she will never give up (*Rage* 75).

She works by instinct. Her chthonic self leads her in the right direction. A mythical description is given of her legal victories. She struggles with disgrace and threat of disbarment to become a heroine: "She was the legal David who had slain Goliath" (*Rage* 114). In her drunken state while celebrating the victory, she fumbles with the Ahab-white whale myth. When the whale of male domination and injustice is about to conquer her, she becomes the whale herself. This is total transformation. It is a metaphorical change. She not only conquers the whale but also becomes the whale. At the end of the novel, we see her surviving and achieving. Love, death, joy and pain—nothing can destroy her. She is a survivor (*Rage* 504). She loses the men she loved, the only son who made her life meaningful, friends and support, but
she will not and cannot be broken. She will go on searching for the elusive thing called justice. She is not only a survivor and achiever. She has become a heroine and a crusader for justice for others.

Kate Blackwell in *Master of the Game* has survived and achieved. She is a dominating heroine who manipulates other people's lives. There is in her, as Sheldon describes,

a hunter, a compulsion to conquer, to be the biggest and the best... Kate was not sure exactly when it had happened, but at some point in her life, the company had become the master, and she the slave. It owned her more than she owned it.

(*Master* 225)

The company is the outward projection of her inner urge for power and strength and the company is Kate Blackwell (304). In other words, her company is the external manifestation of her inner chthonic self. Kate is in its grip, as Sheldon narrates:

She was caught up in something beyond imagination. It had nothing to do with money or achievement; it had to do with power.... It was a weapon that was awesome beyond belief.... *Power*. The company was alive, a growing giant that had to be fed, and
some tireuses sacrifices were necessary, for the giant could not be shackled. ... It had a rhythm, a pulse, and it had become her own. (Master 225-26)

To Kate her company is like a mystic lover who will always be with her.

Kate gives in to this chthonic hunger for power. It directs all her moves and shapes all her actions. Kate, as Sheldon describes, is an intriguing enigma—one of the richest, most powerful women in the world, with a thousand questions about her, but few answers (Master 235). She has faced several tragedies in life and is filled with such a deep agony that she wants to die. But she will not let herself die. She has done what is right. They are wrong. They are all weaklings. "But I am not weak, Kate thought. I can face this. I can face anything. I'm going to live. I'll survive. The company will survive" (Master 309). Suicide is antithetical to the archetypal heroine. She lives, survives and battles. She achieves, drawing inner strength from her chthonic self.

Tracy in If Tomorrow Comes is another typical archetypal heroine. She has been let down by society and the people she trusted. The Mafia has killed her mother, has tricked and framed her and sent her to prison for fifteen years. In the prison Tracy goes through hell. She literally
emerges from this hell like Persephone. In the prison she loses her identity and becomes a number without a name or a face. She feels, "I was Tracy Whitney" (Tomorrow 67). She is sexually assaulted by her cell-mates and she loses her baby. Her fiance has let her down. While in solitary confinement, she is totally dazed: "It was a form of oblivion, a return to the womb" (76). However, as Sheldon narrates,

there was a wellspring of strength deep within her. I will survive. Tracy thought. I face mine enemies naked, and my courage is my shield. She would survive as her ancestors had survived... she had inherited the best of their qualities, the intelligence and the courage and the will. My ancestors survived famine and plagues and floods, and I'm going to survive this. They were with her now in her stygian cell.... The ghosts of the past, and everyone was a part of her. I won't let you down, Tracy whispered in the darkness. (Tomorrow 79)

This is Tracy's chthonic retreat. In her deepest crisis, when she is isolated, she withdraws within and touches her chthonic self. She realizes that the past is with her and this is her archetypal past—her archetypal
ancestors who inspire her. She is going to take revenge against her enemies: "She was going to make them pay. Everyone of them. She had no idea how. But she knew she was going to get revenge" (Tomorrow 11-18). Again, it is her chthonic self which helps her escape from prison with dignity and honour. She has planned to escape in the laundry van. But her enemy Big Bertha finds out Tracy's plan and warns the matron. Had Tracy put her plan into action she would have been discovered and she would have either been brought back and killed or killed straightaway. When the jailer's child Amy falls into the lake, Tracy's first thought is to leave her to be rescued by someone else and run for the waiting truck. "I can't help her. Not now. Someone will save her. I have to save myself. I've got to get out of this place or I'll die" (Tomorrow 136).

It is already late, for the truck will be leaving. But then Tracy turns back to save the child in spite of the fact that she cannot swim. It is some inexplicable inner instinct that makes Tracy change her mind and direction. Surely, this is the chthonic self. It has saved her from being caught in the act of escape. It has made her a heroine. It has spurred her on to heroic action and Tracy unconsciously obeys the chthonic dictates as if in a trance. Here the chthonic comes to her rescue, directly and unbidden. The warden praises her
for having "acted instinctively" (Tomorrow 149). After her release Tracy works and acts instinctively. This instinct is chthonic. Her chthonic strength helps her avenge her mother's Icillers. But she becomes an outcast due to her prison term. She is determined to find a way out: "I'm a survivor. Somehow I'm going to make it" (Tomorrow 201).

Typical of the monomyth, she has departed from her innocent self, battled against unfamiliar forces, survived and won. She is now changed: "It was as though she had been reborn" (Tomorrow 219). She begins her *new life*': she says that she has gone from an innocent, naive victim to a thief, an avenger and an adventuress (Tomorrow 264). She has successfully resisted victimization. She uses several disguises and keeps on transforming. Every journey and adventure thrills her. She is filled with a sudden excitement and she feels that she is sailing into a completely unknown future (Tomorrow 266). This is in keeping with the quest pattern. She has given up normal womanly desires of marriage, child etc. "She had played so many parts, she was no longer sure who she really was, but she did know that she could never return to the life she had once had" (Tomorrow 335).

Mary Ashley in Windmills of the Gods too follows the quest myth pattern—departs from the familiar, fights
against unfamiliar forces, wins by instinct and intelligence, is unemotional as required of a chthonic heroine and is transformed. She becomes independent. She tells herself: "I'm ashamed of myself. I have to find my own way through the maze of time. In the end, each of us is alone" (Windmills 103). As Ben Cohn the reporter describes Mary, "there's this Cinderella who comes out of nowhere, is touched by the magic wand of our President, and suddenly becomes Grace Kelly, Princess Di and Jacqueline Kennedy rolled into one" (Windmills 166). It is in fact the wand of the chthonic which transforms Mary. She is determined. "'I'm going to be the best damned ambassador they've ever seen,' she thought" (Windmills 181). Once Mary is alone it becomes her chthonic retreat. She blossoms forth with strength and power, hitherto unimagined. Even she is unaware of her inner power, her chthonic power. The President calls her a miracle worker. It is by her chthonic instinct that she has been transformed: "'I'm not the same person I was when I cam© here, Mary thought. I was an innocent. I've grown up the hard way.... I've managed to accomplish something here" (Windmills 316).

Lara, in Sheldon's The Stars Shine Down, achieves unbelievable success because she has built "an emotional wall around herself" (101). The chthonic heroines do not
become masculine. They are fascinatingly feminine and yet independent and ambitious. Paul Martin describes Lara thus:
"She was ambitious and angrily independent, and yet she was very feminine" (Stars 141). It is often said of Lara, "No one really knows that lady" (Stars 167). The chthonic self cannot be understood by others. It lies deep within the woman and she herself is ignorant of it most of the time. It is this chthonic power that makes poor Lara, rejected by her drunkard father, "-America's Princess" (Stars 179). As Sheldon declares, "She was a symbol to the women of the world, an icon" (Stars 178).

It is said of her: "Lara Cameron stands for 'CAN DO'" (Stars 183). As long as no one can reach her, no one can hurt her. She has transformed and there is iron in her soul. The press names her "Iron Butterfly" (Stars 283). Even when her world collapses around her, she will not be broken. "She would hold her head high. She was Lara Cameron..." (Stars 366). She has emerged from the chrysalis of bitter experiences, struggled to emerge as a more complete being. The larva has become a butterfly—but an iron one. Beautiful but strong. Nothing can break her. She is a survivor.

The alters in Ashley Patterson, the heroine of Tell Me Your Dreams, are the dominant, aggressive aspects of her own self, they are within her and she is totally unaware of
their presence. They are born out of her pain and trauma. Dr. Gilbert tells Ashley, "you must remember that Toni was born out of your pain, to protect you. The same is true of Alette" (Dreams 328). When Ashley loses her innocence at a tender age, she dies symbolically, for rape is equated to crossing the border into Hades or entering the underworld, from the time of Persephone. Ashley dies and is reborn as Toni and Alette after two psychological traumas. The doctor tells her, "Ashley, you needed Toni and Alette because you couldn't stand the pain" (Dreams 338). She gives birth to herself once as Toni and again as Alette. Death and pain lead to these rebirths. Seen in this light, Toni and Alette are the chthonic self, resurrected by pain, in Ashley. They are beyond man-made codes: They are feral, fearsome and ruthless. These dreadful goddesses execute and avenge. They protect Ashley. Toni tells her, "I had to protect you.... I suppose every time I killed one of those men, I was killing Father for what he had done to you" (Dreams 329). Alette says that she too was only protecting Ashley.

Ashley is caught 'and arrested for the., murders. But the sex maniacs are severely punished by the dominant, avenging alters.

Ashley has finally moved towards wholeness. The doctor tells her, "you're going to become one whole, healthy
person.... It's time for all of you to unify and become one again" (Dreams 329). She has recognized the otherness in herself. This has been called alters in medical parlance. It is interesting to associate these alters with a chthonic power, which is born in a moment of crisis to protect the suffering woman and takes control of her. Ashley gains inner strength and can now face reality boldly, however painful it may be. The doctor tells her, "You don't need anyone to protect you anymore. You're able to handle your life without help, without shutting out any bad experiences. You're able to face whatever happens" (Dreams 339). Ashley is an archetypal heroine protected by the chthonic powers which avenge on her behalf.

It is interesting to note that Sheldon believes that nothing is ever lost in nature. In Memories of Midnight he writes: "There is a theory that nothing in nature is ever lost—that every sound ever made, every word ever spoken, still exists somewhere in space and time and may one day be recalled" (23). Catherine, the wife of Larry, believed to have been murdered in The Other Side of Midnight (1973) rises alive in its sequel Memories of Midnight (1990). This is an archetypal echo.

There is an almost Jungian echo in the Prologue to The Doomsday Conspiracy: "The scene that lay before them was
grotesque, a primeval nightmare dredged up from some deep, dark depths of primitive man's collective unconscious" ([13]).

With reference to the archetypal significance of the cycles, Northrop Frye, in "The Archetypes of Literature," mentions the solar cycle of the day, the seasonal cycle of the year and the organic cycle of human life: the central process of all movements is cyclical, like death and rebirth, disappearance and return, sunset and sunrise, vegetation dying in autumn and being revived in spring, and, god's incarnation and withdrawal--dying to be resurrected (429).

The quest myth symbolizing death and rebirth is the central myth of literature. Its central form, as Frye says in Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays, is the dragon-killing theme. The leviathan, the Messiah's enemy, is to be killed (189). The leviathan represents social sterility and the fallen order of nature. In folk tales the victims of the dragon come out of it alive after it is killed.

The leviathan symbolizes death and the hero enters it and redeems others. He disappears temporarily. He dies and rises victorious and this is symbolic of god's death and rising to life. This myth of conflict, death, redemption and rebirth is the backbone of literary myths. The quest myth,
which may be traced back to the mythical Holy Grail, symbolises the victory of light over darkness, life over death and fertility over aridity.

Seen in this light, the heroines of Sheldon fight against the leviathan of injustice—the male whale—and almost succumb to it. However, actually, their former self dies and a new self is reborn firmly, with conviction in their selves. They appear to be overpowered. They are even swallowed by the monster. The fight continues within—symbolically within themselves—and they tear the beast apart and emerge on top of it as victors, inspiring others to do likewise.

The heroines pass through different seasons in their life—spring, summer, autumn, and winter—now flourishing, now crushed and dying. But they always spring back to life with renewed vigour. Like Persephone they go under, only to come up again. The heroines reach nadirs and zeniths, pitfalls and peaks. In several of them, life seems to come a full circle—another cyclic movement.

Myths are the keys to unlock the mysteries stored in the unconscious levels; they are the casements through which we can have a glimpse at the magic of the past and the wonders of the world. Myths and legends are part of our unconscious treasures, hidden in the layers of our brains.
The influence of myths can be seen in Sheldon's narrative. Several myths lie scattered in his novels. In the following examples biblical references can be traced: "they were the chosen. Hollywood was their Jericho and Joshua would blow his golden trumpet..." (Stranger 187); Jennifer Parker is compared to a legal David who has slain Goliath (Rage 114); there is a reference to Ahab and the white whale too (Rage 115); Jennifer is said to have been "crucified" by the newspapers (126); in Bloodline, Max has a patience that would have made Job weep with envy (283); Catherine has found a lover at last: "She had finally found the mysterious Holy Grail that she had been searching for. The guest was over" (Midnight 130); and, in Windmills of the Gods, Mary compares herself to the "Judas goat" (303).

References to legends can also be found in Sheldon's novels: Jamie in Master of the Game, had been as rich as "Croesus" (53); a bankers' greed is said to be his Achilles's heel (Midnight 227); the flying carpet and the Siren's song are mentioned in Bloodline (164; 408); and, in Windmills of the Gods, the communists fear the plan of the U.S. President and regard it is a "Trojan Horse" (299). Jill Castle of A Stranger in the Mirror is compared to a queen bee, for, those who had had their pleasure with her are
fated to be destroyed (271). This is based on the popular belief about the rite of mating with the queen bee.

Several fairy tales are also strewed in Sheldon's novels: references to Cinderella and Prince Charming and the story of the Prince and the Frog are found in The Other Side of Midnight (26; 89); in Nothing Lasts Forever, the lawyer remembers the fairy tale wherein a child's nose grows longer every time it tells a lie, when he thinks that Dr. Paige is telling a lie at the trial (18). The story of Snow White is used in Windmills of the Gods when Mary asks "Mirror, mirror, on the wall—am I going to live or die tonight?" (306) A singer in Hollywood is described as "Queen Midas" (Stranger 129).

Legends and myths do not necessarily have to be old. They are replenished all the time. Events of fairly recent vintage pass into the myths of a nation. Anything that captures the imagination of the public becomes a myth. A story or an incident, which strikes a chord in the public mind and becomes familiar, whether based on fact or fantasy, is myth in the making.

God has turned out to be "Groucho Marx" in The Other Side of Midnight (345). Noelle's enjoyment of a meal while planning the death of another woman is reminiscent of Shakespeare's Richard III who wants strawberries in a
similar situation. In the same way the dramatic effect of Noelle's preparations for her death sentence bring to mind Richard II handing over his crown to his rival and asking for a looking glass to see his own face. "Only this time when the curtain went down, it would never rise again. ... This was her farewell appearance. ... Well, she thought defiantly, at least I have a good house" (429-30) . The theatrical effect of both situations appears to be similar.

When Tracy meets with disapproval from her fiance's parents, she tells herself: "Now I know what I should have worn.... A scarlet letter" (Tomorrow 18) . This is a typical example of myth in the making, following the popularity of Hawthorne's novel A Scarlet Letter. Jeff refers to the story of Holland being saved from drowning floods by the little boy who plugged a hole in the dyke with his finger. This little boy is Holland's mythic hero, even if the story may have a fantastic foundation (Tomorrow 459) .

Kate in Master of the Game wants more power. When her husband asks her how much "more" she wants, she replies, "All there is" (225) . Similarly, Lara, at the height of her career, is asked, "What is it you want?" and she replies, "More" (Stars 111) . Wanting "more" originates from Oliver Twist. Lara dreams of Lochinvar coming to her rescue (35; 191) . This character in Walter Scott's poem has become a
modern mythological hero symbolising rescue. When Philip, Lara's pianist husband, is wallowing in self-pity after his accident, Lara consoles him saying that, after all, he is not a cripple, and he can still do so many things. In frustration he retorts, "Stop being a goddamn Pollyanna!" (320). Pollyanna is the modern American mythic heroine, popular for her "Glad Game".

Jennifer in *Rage of Angels* is a criminal lawyer in a macho field. In order to quell doubts of her immoral links with her clients she is expected to dress like "Jane Eyre" (164). Michael calls his father a "Coca-Cola bottle", as he is one among millions of poor men, without any distinction (Rage 337). This is also a modern myth. References to Sherlock Holmes can be found in *Bloodline* (284) and *The Doomsday Conspiracy* (49). Myths of recent vintage are found in *Windmills of the Gods*, where Mary is compared to a Cinderella who suddenly becomes "Grace Kelly", "Princess Di" and "Jacqueline Kennedy" rolled into one (166). Mary meets with disapproval from her Romanian staff and feels like the second wife in *Rebecca* (216), a character immortalised by Daphne Du Maurier. In *Morning, Noon, and Night*, the original Oedipus story is altered to suit modern times, for, while Oedipus killed his father to get his mother, Harry Stanford
is said to have Jellied his father to get his mother’s vote in the company (SO).

Myths are part of a nation’s cultural treasure. They keep growing along with the times. At the time when they are a-making, they may not be recognised as myths, but, in course of time, they do mingle with the mainstream of myths and legends.