MYTHOPOEIA IN POPULAR FICTION: A SELECT STUDY OF THE MYTHOPOEIC DEITIES OF J. R. R. TOLKIEN AND AMISH TRIPATHI

Ph.D. Thesis

By

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CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I hereby certify that the work which is being presented in the thesis entitled **MYTHOPOEIA IN POPULAR FICTION: A SELECT STUDY OF THE MYTHOPOEIC DEITIES OF J.R.R. TOLKIEN AND AMISH TRIPATHI** in the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY** and submitted in the **DISCIPLINE OF ENGLISH, Indian Institute of Technology Indore**, is an authentic record of my own work carried out during the time period from July 2013 to May 2018 under the supervision of Dr. Nirmala Menon, Associate Professor, Indian Institute of Technology Indore.

The matter presented in this thesis has not been submitted by me for the award of any other degree of this or any other institute.

Signature of the student with date
(ASHNA MARY JACOB)

This is to certify that the above statement made by the candidate is correct to the best of my/our knowledge.

Signature of Thesis Supervisor with date
 (Dr. Nirmala Menon)

ASHNA MARY JACOB has successfully given his/her Ph.D. Oral Examination held on ---------.

Signature of Chairperson (OEB)   Signature of External Examiner   Signature(s) of Thesis Supervisor(s)
Date: Date: Date:

Signature of PSPC Member #1   Signature of PSPC Member #2   Signature of Convener, DPGC
Date: Date: Date:

Signature of Head of Discipline
Date:

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To my God, my shepherd
To my Mother, my silver lining
To my Father, my buttress
To my Brother, my SOS

SYNOPSIS

Mythopoeia in Popular Fiction: A Select Study of the Mythopoeic Deities of J.R.R. Tolkien and Amish Tripathi

Introduction

Mythopoeia or *mythopoiía* in Greek means 'myth making', *mŷthos* meaning 'myth' and *poieîn* meaning 'make' (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*). "Human beings have always been mythmakers" (Armstrong 1). We make myths to situate ourselves in a larger cosmic order. We make myths to reassure ourselves against the fear of infinite regress. We make myths to make meaning of our lives. Both "for society at large and for the individual, this story-generating function seems irreplaceable" (Cupitt 89). Cats, as far as we know, do not ponder about the feline condition, worry about the plight of fellow cats elsewhere, or try to negotiate their position in the animal kingdom. Human beings on the other hand fall easily into despair. From the very beginning we invented stories to place our lives in a larger setting, which hinted an underlying pattern and gave us a sense that, in spite of the depressing and chaotic evidence to the contrary, life had meaning and value. It is this human tendency which forms the foundation of mythopoeia.

Although this mythopoeic tendency is inherent and indispensable, ever since the 1950's, according to *Oxford English Dictionary*, there has come to be a definite category called mythopoeia in fiction, film and ludology. This category interprets, revises and reproduces extant and extinct mythos and myth, in an attempt at redemption or restoration. But can this category serve the same function as mythos and myth? How is mythopoeia relevant amidst mythos and myth? This dissertation is an

enquiry into this contemporary category of mythopoeia in the mythical tradition.

Research Questions

How can we define mythopoeia? The *Oxford English Dictionary* tells us that mythopoeia is the "making of myth/myths". But a myth is a myth because it lives and evolves in the collective psyche. Can myths be made? If yes, then can these man-made myths function as myths? *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* tells us that mythopoeia is the "individual and collective making of myths". How can myth-making be both individual and collective? Does this imply that myths made by an individual can become myths of the "collective unconscious" (Jung 19)? M. Alan Kazlev identifies mythopoeia as anything ranging from "... [folk] creation stories to the epics of Homer or Vyasa to ... fiction writing, cinema, and more recently even computer gaming... [all of which portray]... a socio-cultural, anthropomorphic and materialistic representations of imagined cosmological realities" (14). The myths of Homer and Vyasa have indeed crossed over into the collective unconscious. Will similar endeavors in fiction, film and ludology share the same fate? Alan Dundes thinks not. He points out that "any novel cannot meet the cultural criteria of myth. A work of art, or artifice, cannot be said to be the narrative of a culture's sacred tradition… [it is] at most, artificial myth" (Adcox np). Does this artificiality imply that mythopoeia in fiction, film and ludology cannot be appropriated as myths of popular culture? Joseph Campbell would beg to differ. Campbell tells us that the "world today has outlived much of the mythology of the past… new myths must be created… [and] mythopoeia… fill[s] a niche for mythology in the modern world" (121). Does this mean that mythopoeia is the next generation of the mythical tradition?

These are a few questions that inspired this study on mythopoeia. Notwithstanding these varied attempts, none have quite defined the term conclusively. Mythopoeia in popular discourse is an amorphous term sometimes called mythopoesis, mythopoetic or mythopoeic. Mythopoeia and its inflections are used to describe any fiction, film and ludology which build fantastic worlds similar or different from our own, which invents or recycles mythical archetypes, or which creates stories of a primordial past. The family resemblance of mythos, myth and mythopoeia has also resulted in the latter being used as a zeugma for anything mythical. As a result, mythopoeia today is an often mentioned but seldom addressed term that is both elusive and vague.

This dissertation posits a definitive analysis to the polemical and artfully vague invocations of the term that have dominated both popular and critical discourse. These definitions and allusions whether in conflating or collating the term, have served less to initiate critical analysis than to cast a spell. As a scholar engaging in mythopoeia in popular fiction, I cannot help but be intrigued by the popularity and magical power of this term; but I also look for precision and concrete examples. I do not see a monolithic definition of mythopoeia as "making of myth" (*Oxford English Dictionary*) or the ambiguous definition "individual or collective making of myth" (*Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*) or the uncritiqued definition of "myth building" (Bunsen 450), "artificial mythology" (Adcox np) or "new mythology" (Anderson i) convincing, for mythopoeia is and will likely remain, unless critiqued, a convoluted term. Still, convoluted implies specific, recurrent traits or qualities that even though combined flexibly and inconsistently in practice, can individually be subjected to careful analysis that I conduct in this dissertation.

Research Methodology

As studies on mythopoeia as a category are few and far between, this dissertation is an exhaustive critical inquiry into the concept. The dissertation engages in a comprehensive study of critiques on the terms mythopoeia, mythopoesis, mythopoeic or mythopoetic remotely and specifically. After ascertaining the lack of any conclusive definitions, the dissertation engages with the few critical inroads into the concept and furthers their discussions. It situates mythopoeia in the larger tradition of mythos and myth and predicates that mythopoeia can become mythos.

In order to establish this research statement, the dissertation undertakes a case study of two popular mythopoeias— J.R.R. Tolkien's *Silmarillion* and Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*. I specifically chose two very different mythopoeias in order to a) evidence a mythopoeic resurgence across the globe and b) to establish that this mythopoeic resurgence is at large irrespective of a culture's mythical baggage. As an analysis of all aspects of Tolkien's and Tripathi's mythopoeias was beyond the purview of a chapter each, the case studies are limited to the mythopoeic deities of the respective mythopoeias. Primarily a qualitative study, the case studies are a selective textual analysis informed by narrative inquiry. The study uses close reading of the texts and juxtaposes it with theoretical grounding and thus establishes the need for similar critical enquiries into other mythopoeias.

Overview of Chapters

This dissertation has six chapters. As the dissertation endeavours to first define and deconstruct mythopoeia, **Chapter 1.** *Introduction*: begins with the necessity to define mythopoeia and explores the available critiques that do so. The few critics who engage in mythopoeia do so either in relation to mythos and myth (Karen Armstrong and Sophia Heller) or allude to

mythopoeia in the form of "myth making" and "mythic thinking" (Matthew Sterenberg) or refer it to as a modernist phenomenon (Michael Bell and Scott Freer).

Karen Armstrong traces the evolution of myth making from mythos to religion to myth to the contemporary vacuum that has produced a 21st century inflection which is without doubt mythopoeia. Although she does not use the term 'mythopoeia', she believes that "[i]t has been writers and artists, rather than religious leaders, who have stepped into the vacuum and attempted to reacquaint us with the mythological wisdom of the past" (Armstrong 52). Sophia Heller also situates mythopoeia in mythical vacuum of the contemporary times, although she too does not use the term. She perceives an absence of myth, a loss of a mythic mode of being which has lead to myth being continually unearthed, redefined, recontextualized and intentionally conflated with thought and reflection in the attempt to cultivate a "mythic consciousness" to restore meaning to life and assuage the spiritual malaise of contemporary culture (1-2). She believes the contemporary resurgence in myth making is the result of this absence of myth. Neither Armstrong nor Heller delves into dynamics of mythopoeia seeing that neither even addresses the term. The authors are preoccupied with mythos and myth (as is the case with Armstrong), or with the absence of myth (as is the case with Heller). They arrive at mythopoeia as a 21st century inflection of the mythical tradition but leave the rest to speculation.

Matthew Sterenberg's dissertation also places mythopoeia in the 21st century although he addresses it as "mythic thinking" and "myth making". Sterenberg believes "mythic thinking" to be the result of the inter-war period which turned towards myth to help redress the "psychological pressures that modernity brought to bear on the individual" (8). His study establishes that "myth-making" was a design to "show that

ancient myths had revelatory power for modern life, and that modernity []
requires creation of new mythic narratives" (3). I agree with Sterenberg's
positioning of mythopoeia in the inter war and post war period. The
Oxford English Dictionary also estimates that mythopoeia came into being
in the 1950's. The gap I perceive in Sterenberg's dissertation is the lack of
any textual engagement. His dissertation is a theoretical study of myth-
making as an ideology in contemporary Britain. He does not attempt to
explore mythopoeia as a larger phenomenon, say, in Europe or America
nor does he illustrate the phenomenon in literary or popular works.

Michael Bell and Scott Freer are in the same line of thought as
Sterenberg although they use the term mythopoeia explicitly. Bell is the
first critic who exclusively addresses mythopoeia. He believes mythopoeia
to be the "outlook that creates myth; or, more precisely again, sees the
world in mythic terms" (2) He studies the mythopoeic tendencies in W.B.
Yeats, James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, T.S. Eliot, Joseph Conrad, Thomas
Mann, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Thomas Pynchon and Angela Carter, and
places an emphasis on mythopoeia as "the underlying metaphysic of much
modernist literature" (Ibid.). Scott Freer draws inspiration from Bell and
states that "[m]ythopoeia is an important post-religious aesthetic for
literary modernists to convey an intermediate perspective between the
doctrinal language of religion and the reductive materialism of secular
dogma" (Freer 7). He follows his argument with illustrations of
mythopoeic tendency in authors such as T.S. Eliot, D.H. Lawrence, Hilda
Doolittle and Wallace Stevens. Both Bell and Freer, like Sterenberg,
isolate mythopoeia as a contemporary mythical trait. They trace the
mythopoeic tendencies in many authors of the century. But their critical
discourse is devoted to only the literary domain. They do not attempt to
view mythopoeia in the larger setting after mythos and myth like
Armstrong and Heller. Their studies also do not address or even mention
mythopoeia in popular fiction. As mythos and myth are incubated in

popular culture, the dynamics of mythopoeia may be best charted in the artefacts of popular fiction.

Scott McCraken writes: "Popular narratives play a vital role in mediating social change, informing their audience of new currents and allowing the reader to insert him or herself into new scenarios in a way that can be related to her or his own experience. Its engagement in the present, in now-time, means that the political nature of popular fiction is never in doubt" (185). The producers of mythopoeia in popular fiction, film and ludology of the last few decades have been attempted to appropriate/adapt/revise myth and mythos to arrive at mythopoeia. While some have extended or modified extant and extinct mythos and myth, many have turned from the preservative and interpretative function to a whole new creative process of myth making. The Introductory chapter showcases prominent mythopoeias in popular fiction, film and ludology. But despite such a notable presence of mythopoeia in popular culture, Bell and Freer omit any mentions. The absence of any reference to J.R.R. Tolkien is also negligent when the *Oxford English Dictionary* credits Tolkien with the resurgence of the term in the 1950s. Tolkien being a popular fiction author also necessitates an engagement with popular fiction. Critiquing mythopoeia without engaging popular fiction or Tolkien is therefore a crucial gap in the scholarship.

Chapter 2. *Mythos to Myth to Mythopoeia: A Cyclical Process,* redresses this gap by critiquing Tolkien's idea of mythopoeia. Tolkien's conception of mythopoeia is what truly gives mythopoeia an edge over myth. Myth is myth because it has lost its credibility. Mythopoeia is made out of myth in an attempt to redeem or restore credibility, no matter how fantastic that credibility may be. In other words, mythopoeia is a make belief world but a credible one. Tolkien calls this aspect a Secondary World which runs on Secondary Belief that redresses the primary world

and primary belief system. He believes that an author in constructing mythopoeia creates a 'Secondary World' into which the reader enters. When inside this Secondary World, the reader practices Secondary Belief. R.J. Reilly in his book chapter "Tolkien and the Fairy Story" hypothesizes that behind Tolkien's notion of Secondary world and Secondary Belief is Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Secondary Imagination, "an echo of the Primary Imagination that creates and perceives the world of reality" (97). This may very well be true. Mythopoeia is a product of the "esemplastic" imagination.

But Tolkien's Secondary Belief moves beyond Coleridge's "willing suspension of disbelief" (239) for Secondary Belief is more than a kind of acceptance or tacit agreement. It has what Ajana Indu Priya calls self-referentiality of mythopoeia. Self-referentiality entails that mythopoeia should function on a mythopoeic reality and its own set of rules. It would be independent of any outside references. The reader who enters the system is required to accept this hyper-reality. Tolkien believes that if mythopoeia is truly successful; the reader lets go of the Primary World and Primary Belief system and immerses himself in the Secondary World practicing Secondary Belief system. This process of making a world in which a green sun will be credible requires labour, thought and special skill, "a kind of elvish craft" ("On Fairy Stories" 126). He states that few writers attempt such a difficult task, but when attempted and accomplished we then have a rare achievement of Art. It is this rare achievement of Art that he calls mythopoeia. It is this ideal mythopoeia that surpasses myth. It is this ideal mythopoeia that is as appealing as mythos.

Taking off from Tolkien, the chapter stresses on the prospects of mythopoeia as plausible mythos. It borrows Heller's concept of "personal myth" and William Indick's position on the cyclical nature of "the

individual myth" and "the collective myth" to substantiate this contention. Heller believes that a "personal myth" is an individual's "my story, my myth, to satisfy if only for myself ... the functions of explaining, confirming, guiding, and sacralizing ... in a manner analogous to the way cultural myths once served those functions to an entire society" (138–39). Mythopoeic constructions are nothing but personal myths that mimic extinct and extant myth and mythos. The discussion on Tolkien's conception of mythopoeia establishes this fact. Indick posits that an individual myth if internalized by his culture becomes a collective myth. He believes that this individual myth turned collective myth is "reborn in the dreams and imaginations of the next generation and are transmitted from generation to generation and culture to culture in a never-ending cycle" (20). Mythopoeia can be understood as one such individual myth which has the potential to become a collective myth. If a mythopoeia were to succeed in being appropriated into the "collective unconscious" (Jung 112), it would transition to mythos. Mythopoeia in popular culture, be it popular fiction, film or ludology, by default being popular provides a feasible arena for the transformation.

The fact that mythos transitions into myth and myth transitions into mythopoeia has already been established by Armstrong, Heller and Freer. The chapter argues that if mythopoeia were to transition to mythos, then, mythos to myth to mythopoeia and back again would be what Indick calls a never-ending cycle. It is this transitory nature of mythopoeia that makes it imperative that popular mythopoeia be brought under a critical lens.

The dissertation illustrates the implications of this transition of mythopoeia to mythos by showcasing two popular mythopoeias— J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Silmarillion* and Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*. Tolkien's *The Silmarillion* is the first novel (in terms of the mythopoeic chronology) about the famous Middle-earth. *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* are the

succeeding works that that have had wide popular and critical acclaim. Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* is a series of three novels that have had become the fastest selling book series in the history of Indian popular fiction. Both Tolkien and Tripathi have produced successful mythopoeias in their own right. By putting together two unconventional mythopoeias, which in its own arenas are popular, the dissertation establishes the mythopoeic resurgence across the globe. The agenda of the case studies is to illustrate that mythopoeia at the very least can affect or at most replace the extant or extinct mythos or myth. As a study of all the components of the two mythopoeias were beyond the purview of a chapter each, the case studies are limited to analyzing to the mythopoeic deity. The case study chapters are based on the premise that if the mythopoeic deity were consumed in popular demand, will it not affect the deity of the mythos/myth.

Chapter 3. *Packaging Polytheism as Monotheism: A Select Study of the Mythopoeic Deity in Tolkien's the Silmarillion*, deconstructs the godhead that Tolkien constructs in his mythopoeia. Tolkien's polychronicon, *The Silmarillion*, splits the godhead between a creator God and a pantheon of gods and goddesses. Tolkien claims that Ilúvatar is a Yahweh-like God and the primary deity; and Valar, the fourteen gods and goddesses created by this primary God, who assist in creation, shapes the world, has power over elements, and reign as 'mistaken gods' among the Elves, Dwarves and Men are not deities. Both Tolkien and Christopher Tolkien and scholars such as Joseph Pearce John G. West Jr., Stratford Caldecott, Peter J. Kreeft, Ralph C. Wood, and Nils Ivar Agøy hold that the Valar were angels in their conception. This split of godhead is ignored and the mythopoeic deity acclaimed as the biblical God and his angels, is upheld as a Christian allegory.

Tolkien's insistence that his mythopoeic deity is monotheistic is theologically misleading. The chapter negates the Christian parallels

associated with Ilúvatar and Valar and establishes that Tolkien packages polytheism as monotheism. Monotheism does not permit secondary god/gods. Polytheism on the other hand often features an abstract creator God who creates a polytheistic pantheon. Tolkien's model which features a Creator deity and a pantheon of created deities falls under the second category. The power of sub-creation conferred upon the Ainur, the hierarchy of Ilúvatar and Valar, the deity like qualities of the Valar and the subsequent absence of Ilúvatar in the plot, effectively refutes the semblance of a monotheistic Christian model. The chapter infers that Tolkien's two-tier godhead, firstly, invalidates the norm of monotheism, and secondly, conforms to creator deity and created deity structure of polytheism.

Similar arguments have also been voiced by critics such as Catherine Madsen, Ronald Hutton, Stephen Morillo and Patrick Curry who even if they do not totally deny the importance of Christian elements in the mythopoeia, assert that an essentially polytheist perspective is predominant in Tolkien's mythopoeia, and that such a perspective more or less markedly contradicts the Christian orthodox vision. But despite such inconsistencies pointed out in the mythopoeic deity, Tolkien's works are consumed as Christian. <u>The chapter argues that if Tolkien mythopoeic model is continued to be consumed as monotheistic, it may alter the perception of a monotheistic deity.</u> If monotheism is consumed as having a two-tier divinity, albeit angels as deities, the very nature of the monotheism mythos stands to change.

Chapter 4. *Polytheism to Euhemerism: A Select Study of the Mythopoeic Deity in Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy*, analyzes Tripathi's construction of his mythopoeic deity. In order to facilitate this enquiry it was imperative that the peculiarity of myth in India be first established. The chapter therefore introduces the term mithya as apt for Hindu

myth/mythology/religion because none of these can account for the "living myths" (Heller 3) of Hinduism. The chapter substantiates the adoption of the term mithya, introduces the precarious nature of Hindu mithya and highlights the ideology of popular fiction authors who reproduce and reconstruct it. It establishes that the contemporary mythopoeic renditions of mithya may have far reaching implications. The chapter discusses several writers' rendition of mithya to mythopoeia with Tripathi's as central example.

Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* constructs a euhemeristic avatar of the Lord Shiva of Hinduism. "Euhemerism presupposes a deification of humans, an ascent of men and women to the realm of gods and goddesses through the mythographic imaginaries of the community" (Bulfinch 194). Tripathi's mythopoeia is founded on the premise that Lord Shiva was once a man who was deified in the narrative of history. The story is set in 1900 BC in what the author claims to be the Indus Valley Civilization. Tripathi's Shiva is a Tibetan tribal leader whose exploits across the empires of Meluha, Swadeep and Panchwati earn him great fame. The trilogy spans his life time, his exploits, his realizations, his victories and his philosophical ponderings ending with his ascetic withdrawal into the mountains. The trilogy ends with the notion that deities were once men who over the course of time were deified. The chapter illustrates how Tripathi demythologizes and remythologizes the mithya to produce this euhemerized avatar of Lord Shiva.

Allan Dahlquist in *Megasthenes and Indian Religion: A Study in Motives and Types* notes: "We have no Dravidian evidence of a god who began as a man and was deified during his lifetime" (244). Although "[a]ncestor- worship is a theme constantly recurring in the *Rig Veda* [with] frequent mention [] made of *pitri-yajna*, sacrifice to the spirits of the ancestors" and "a number of minor deities seem to have passed through

this course of development in later ages" (Ibid.) euhemerism per se, according to Dahlquist, has had no correspondence with Dravidian or Aryan ideas. Therefore, Tripathi's use of euhemerism to demythologize and remythologize Lord Shiva is a foreign technique introduced into the Indian mithya. Such a transcription makes the mythopoeic deity unorthodox. But despite this deviancy in the mythopoeic deity, *Shiva Trilogy* is consumed in popular demand. The chapter problematizes the consumption of a polytheistic deity as euhemerism and urges the need for further enquiry.

The dissertation further compares both authors and their mythopoeic constructions. **Chapter 5.** *Mythopoeia to Mythos/Mithya: Comparing and Predicating the Effects of Tolkien's and Tripathi's Mythopoeic Deities*, understands their varied augmentation from mythos/myth/mithya and explores their potential progression into mythos (as in the case of Tolkien) or mithya (as in the case of Tripathi). It demonstrates the symmetry of opposed motives between Tolkien's mythopoeic deity and Tripathi's mythopoeic deity. Tolkien's deity is a polytheistic model sold as monotheism. Tripathi's deity is euhemeristic model sold as polytheism. Both mythopoeic deity constructions are different yet similar in various ways. Each man lived and lives in a time that perceives myth, mythos and mithya as incredible. Both seek to establish their version of mythopoeia to reawaken an interest in mythos/myth/mithya. Tolkien perfuses a lacking English mythology and Tripathi refurbishes an incredible Indian mithya. After analyzing the factors conducive to their mythopoeic deity construction, the chapter also looks at the reactions or lack thereof in their respective audience response and draws the implications of such a consumption of mythopoeic deity. Both mythopoeias invariably diverge from extant mythos/myth/mithya. But despite their deviancy they are popular popular fictions. The popular production and consumption of a mythopoeia may result in the latter

becoming an acclimatized avatar of the extant mythos/myth/mithya. The chapter predicates that Tolkien's mythopoeic deity may affect the perception of monotheism, and Tripathi's mythopoeic deity may become an avatar of polytheism. The chapter argues that it is therefore imperative that such mythopoeic renditions be brought under scrutiny.

The dissertation thus establishes that it is imperative that mythopoeia especially in popular fiction be critically studied for mythopoeia can progress into mythos. It demonstrates how two diverse popular fiction authors construct unorthodox mythopoeic deities but is still consumed in popular demand. Tolkien packages polytheism as monotheism, and the other conflates polytheism with euhemerism. It argues that these mythopoeic renditions can alter the extant mythos/myth/mithya. Such an implication necessitates that the genre of mythopoeia be scrutinized and critiqued and mythopoeic fiction be examined with a yardstick of its own. This dissertation has been one such endeavour to identify and explore the construction and implication of mythopoeia in popular fiction.

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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

A. Papers Published:

1. Jacob, Ashna and Nirmala Menon. "Mythos to Myth: An Implication of Euhemerism in Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy" *The Journal of Religion and Popular Culture,* University of Toronto Press. **Indexed in Project Muse**. (Accepted for publication)

2. Jacob, Ashna and Nirmala Menon. "Myth and Mythopoeia: The Non-uniform Cyclical Process of Mythopoesis". *Fafnir – Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research*. Finnish Society of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research. **Indexed in indexed in MLA International Bibliography** and international The Science Fiction and Fantasy Research Database (SFFRD) (Accepted for publication)

3. Jacob, Ashna and Nirmala Menon. "From Mythos to Mythopoeia: The Necessity of Myth Making". *The Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*. AesthetixMS. **Indexed in** Web of Science, Scopus, ERIHPLUS, EBSCO, **UGC**. (Accepted for publication)

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1. Jacob, Ashna and Nirmala Menon. ""Why Tolkien's The Silmarillion is not Christian: A Study of the Mythopoeic Deity as Creator Deity and Created Deities." *Religion & Literature*. University of Notre Dame Press. **Indexed in JSTOR**

C. Book Chapter:

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Presentations at National and International Conferences/Seminars

1. "The Mythopoeic Deity: A Reading of Deities constructed in J.R.R. Tolkien's and Amish Tripathi's Mythopoeias" at Oxonmoot 2015 annual conference hosted by the Tolkien Society, 10-13th September 2015, at St Antony's College, **Oxford University**, U.K.

2. "From Susanna Anna Marie Yeats to Susanna Anna Marie Johannes— A Comparative Study of Ruskin Bond's "Susanna's Seven Husbands" (both short story and novella) and the movie adaptation 7 Khoon Maaf' at RAWCON 2014, 10-12th September 2014, at **University of Hyderabad**, India.

3. "Shiva Trilogy- Representing Mythology in Indian Popular Fiction" at International Conference at **Qatar University** on 18-19th May 2014, Doha, Qatar.

4. "Chetan Bhagat's Great Indian Dream as a Nation fetish" at National Young Researcher's seminar held at **Jawaharlal Nehru University**, Delhi, India on January 17-18th 2014, Delhi, India.

5. "Globalisation and Indian Popular fiction: A select study of the works of Chetan Bhagat" at Higher Education in the 21st Century: Opportunities and Challenges', **St. Josephs' College Bangalore**, December 11-12th 2014.

6. "Are Male Poets Truly Confessional?" at National Conference on 'Confessional Poetry in English: Current Trends' in **Annamalai University**, on 21 and 22 February 2012.

Workshops

1. Attended Winter School in Digital Humanities at Institute of Advanced Studies in English, 15-20th December 2014 at **Center for Digital Humanities**, Pune, India.

2. Attended a National Workshop on Digital Humanities: Tools, Texts and Theory, **Indian Institute of Technology at Indian Institute of Technology Indore**, 19-25th March 2016.

3. Attended a National Workshop on New Developments in Global Political Theory: Comparative, Decolonial and Indian Political Theory, **Indian Institute of Technology at Indian Institute of Technology Indore**, 4-8th December 2017.

Projects

1. Aggregating Malayalam data for **Multilingual Literary Research Digital Project** under the supervision of Prof. Nirmala Menon at **Indian Institute of Technology at Indian Institute of Technology Indore.**

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

OED	Oxford English Dictionary
ODLT	Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms
BoLT	The Book of Lost Tales
Letters	The Letters of J.R.R. Tolkien
LOTR	The Lord of the Rings
T&L	The Tree and Leaf
OFS	On Fairy Stories
Meluha	The Immortals of Meluha
Vayuputras	The Oath of the Vayuputras
Nagas	The Secret of the Nagas

Chapter 1

Introduction

I made my song a coat
Covered with embroideries
Out of old mythologies
From heel to throat

(Schorer 366)

1.1 An Introduction to Mythopoeia in Popular fiction

What is mythopoeia? The *Oxford English Dictionary* (hereafter *OED*) tells us that mythopoeia is the "making of myth/myths". But a myth is a myth because it lives and evolves in the collective psyche. Can myths be made? If yes, then can these man-made myths function as myths? The *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (hereafter *ODLT*) tells us that mythopoeia is the "individual and collective making of myths". How can myth-making be both individual and collective? Does this imply that myths made by an individual can become myths of the "collective unconscious" (Jung 19)? M. Alan Kazlev identifies mythopoeia as anything ranging from "... [folk] creation stories to the epics of Homer or Vyasa to ... fiction writing, cinema, and more recently even computer gaming... [all of which portray]... a socio-cultural, anthropomorphic and materialistic representations of imagined cosmological realities" (14). The stories of Homer and Vyasa have indeed crossed over into the collective unconscious. Will similar endeavours in fiction, film and ludology[1] share the same fate? Alan Dundes thinks not. He points out that "any novel cannot meet the cultural criteria of myth. A work of art, or artifice, cannot be said to be the narrative of a culture's sacred tradition… [it is] at most, artificial myth". Does this artificiality imply that mythopoeia in fiction,

film and ludology cannot be appropriated as myths of popular culture? Joseph Campbell would beg to differ. Campbell tells us that the "world today has outlived much of the mythology of the past… new myths must be created… [and] mythopoeia… fill[s] a niche for mythology in the modern world". Does this mean that mythopoeia is the next generation of the mythical tradition?

These are a few questions that inspired this study on mythopoeia. Notwithstanding these varied attempts, none have quite defined the term conclusively. Mythopoeia in popular discourse is an amorphous term sometimes called mythopoesis, mythopoetic or mythopoeic. Mythopoeia and its inflections are used to describe any fiction, film or ludology which builds fantastic worlds similar or different from our own, which invents or recycles mythical archetypes, or which creates stories of a primordial past. The family resemblance of mythos, myth and mythopoeia has also resulted in the latter being used as a zeugma for anything mythical.

What I offer in this dissertation is a definitive analysis against the polemical and artfully vague invocations of mythopoeia that have dominated works of popular culture. These invocations, whether in conflating or collating the term, has served less to initiate critical analysis than to cast a spell. As a scholar engaging in mythopoeia, I cannot help but be intrigued by the popularity and magical power of this term; but I also look for precision and concrete examples. I do not see a monolithic definition of mythopoeia as "making of myth" (*OED*) or the ambiguous definition "individual or collective making of myth" (*ODLT*) or the uncritiqued definition of "myth building" (Bunsen 450), "artificial mythology" (Adcox n.pag.) or "new mythology" (Anderson i) convincing, for mythopoeia is and will likely remain, unless critiqued, a convoluted term. Still, convoluted implies specific, recurrent traits or qualities that even though combined flexibly and inconsistently in practice, can

individually be subjected to careful analysis that I conduct in this dissertation.

This dissertation has six chapters. As the dissertation endeavours to first define and deconstruct mythopoeia, it begins with the critiques that situate mythopoeia in the mythical tradition. As studies on mythopoeia as a category are few and far between, this dissertation is an exhaustive critical inquiry into the concept. The dissertation engages in a comprehensive study of critiques on the terms mythopoeia, mythopoesis, mythopoeic or mythopoetic remotely and specifically. After ascertaining the lack of any conclusive definitions, the dissertation engages with the few critical inroads into the concept and furthers their discussions. The few critics who explore mythopoeia do so either in relation to mythos and myth (Don Cupitt, Karen Armstrong, Sophia Heller) or discuss its conception as a modernist phenomenon (Michael Bell, Matthew Sterenberg and Scott Freer). What is of paramount interest in these contemporary discussions on mythopoeia is their point of convergence. Be it Armstrong, Heller, Sterenberg, Bell or Freer, all of them agree that mythopoeia is the contemporary inflection in the mythical tradition. But what is missing in these discourses is the answer to the question— what will mythopoeia amount to? Can mythopoeia be entitled the successor to mythos and myth? Will mythopoeia, like mythos and myth also function as myths of the collective unconscious? The critics do not quite address these questions. Unless these questions are answered, one cannot indisputably place mythopoeia in the mythical tradition. The dissertation therefore first tackles this matter.

Don Cupitt's *Myth* includes an addendum on mythopoeia:

We can add that myth-making is eventually a primal universal function of the human mind as it seeks a more-or-less unified vision of the cosmic order, the social order, the meaning of the

individual's life. Both for society at large and for the individual, this story generating function seems irreplaceable. The individual finds meaning in his life by making of his life a story set within a larger social and cosmic story (Cupitt 29).

Cupitt's statement here is a generalizing sanction for the existence of everything mythical. Mythopoeia like mythos and myth, according to him, are attempts to answer or to understand larger philosophical truths. Cupitt does not elaborate his position seeing that his primary concern is myth. His position rather than provide any insight into mythopoeia reinstates the question whether mythopoeia can serve the same purpose as mythos and myth.

Other critics who specifically engage with mythopoeia although again in conjunction with mythos and myth are Armstrong and Heller. They situate mythopoeia in the impasse after the period of myth, an impasse which is characterised by an absence of the mythical. They establish the prevalence of mythopoeia in the contemporary juncture of the mythical tradition but do not delve into its dynamics.

Karen Armstrong's book *A Short History of Myth* traces the evolution of myth making from mythos to religion to myth to the contemporary vacuum that has produced a 21st century inflection which is without doubt mythopoeia. Although she does not use the term 'mythopoeia', she believes that "[i]t has been writers and artists, rather than religious leaders, who have stepped into the vacuum and attempted to reacquaint us with the mythological wisdom of the past" (Armstrong 52). Sophia Heller in *The Absence of Myth* also situates mythopoeia in the mythical vacuum of the contemporary times. She, like Armstrong, also does not resort to the term. Heller perceives an absence of myth, a loss of a mythic mode of being which has lead to myth being continually unearthed, redefined, recontextualized and intentionally conflated with

thought and reflection in the attempt to cultivate a "mythic consciousness" to restore meaning to life and assuage the spiritual malaise of contemporary culture (1-2). She believes the contemporary resurgence in myth making especially in popular culture is the result of this attempt to fill an absence of myth. According to her:

> What we have inherited are concepts and imaginings of myth, as opposed to the concrete, living experience of myth. Myth has become a reflection on life without need for the literal re-enactment of the reflection or narrative (such as through ceremony and worship). Any so-called living myth today is arbitrary, subject to human rather than divine modification, and lasts for about as long as our interest can hold. One can see how myth's applicability has been whittled down to its romantic appeal and entertainment value; some of the clearest expressions of myth are "found" in fantasy fiction and film, such as the recent *The Lord of the Rings*, *Harry Potter*, *The Matrix*, and the comic book heroes of *X-Men*. (Heller 1)

Heller's observation although placing mythopoeia as arising from the contemporary impasse in the mythical tradition, does not delve into dynamics of this modern day myth-making. Seeing that neither Armstrong nor Heller even address the term, both preoccupied with mythos and myth (as is the case with Armstrong), or with the absence of myth (as is the case with Heller), mythopoeia as a 21st century inflection of the mythical tradition is referred to briefly and left to speculation.

Matthew Sterenberg, Michael Bell, and Scott Freer begin where Armstrong and Heller ends. Their ventures into mythopoeia begin at mythopoeia and stimulate further questions regarding this domain. Matthew Sterenberg's dissertation "Myth and the Modern Problem: Myth Making in Twentieth-Century Britain" is a work that looks at mythopoeia

although he addresses it as "mythic thinking" and "myth making". Sterenberg believes "mythic thinking" to be the result of the inter-war period which turned towards myth to help redress the "psychological pressures that modernity brought to bear on the individual" (8). His study establishes that "myth-making" was a design to "show that ancient myths had revelatory power for modern life, and that modernity [] requires creation of new mythic narratives" (3). I agree with Sterenberg's positioning of mythopoeia in the inter war and post war period. The *OED* also estimates that the mythopoeia came into being in the 1950's. The gap I perceive in Sterenberg's dissertation is the lack of any textual illustrations. His dissertation is a theoretical study of myth-making as an ideology in 20th century Britain. He does not attempt to explore mythopoeia as a larger phenomenon, say, in Europe or America. He also does not situate mythopoeia in the mythical tradition but rather studies it as an isolated phenomenon.

Michael Bell and Scott Freer use similar approaches as Sterenberg. Bell's *Literature, Modernism and Myth* is the first work that exclusively address mythopoeia. Bell believes mythopoeia to be the "outlook that creates myth; or, more precisely again, sees the world in mythic terms" (2) He studies the mythopoeic tendencies in W.B. Yeats, James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, T.S. Eliot, Joseph Conrad, Thomas Mann, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Thomas Pynchon and Angela Carter, and places an emphasis on mythopoeia as "the underlying metaphysic of much modernist literature" (Ibid.). Scott Freer draws inspiration from Bell in *Modernist Mythopoeia: Twilight of the Gods*. He states that "[m]ythopoeia is an important post-religious aesthetic for literary modernists to convey an intermediate perspective between the doctrinal language of religion and the reductive materialism of secular dogma" (Freer 7). He follows his argument with illustrations of mythopoeic tendency in authors such as T.S. Eliot, D.H. Lawrence, Hilda Doolittle and Wallace Stevens.

Both Bell and Freer, like Sterenberg, isolate mythopoeia as a contemporary mythical trait. They trace the mythopoeic tendencies in many authors of the century. But their critical discourse is not comprehensive. Their perspectives are devoted to only the literary domain. They do not attempt to view mythopoeia in the larger setting after mythos and myth like Armstrong and Heller. Their studies also do not address mythopoeia in popular culture, when Heller showcases popular culture as markedly exhibiting mythopoeic tendencies. Also, as Scott McCraken writes:

> Popular narratives play a vital role in mediating social change, informing their audience of new currents and allowing the reader to insert him or herself into new scenarios in a way that can be related to her or his own experience. Its engagement in the present, in now-time, means that the political nature of popular fiction is never in doubt (185).

As mythos and myth are incubated in popular culture, the dynamics of mythopoeia may be best charted in the artefacts of popular culture. The producers of mythopoeia in popular fiction, film and ludology of the last few decades have have engaged in mythopoeia with some spectacular results. While some have extended or modified extant and extinct mythos and myth, many have turned from the preservative and interpretative function to a whole new creative process of myth making. Mythos and myth being the domains of popular culture, it is short sighted to not first address mythopoeia in the artefacts of popular culture. The following are some noted mythopoeias in popular culture.

It may be prudent to start with the popular author C.S. Lewis, who popularised the term 'mythopoeia' along with his contemporary J.R.R. Tolkien. His *Space Trilogy* depicts an alternate Garden of Eden

constructed on the planet Venus, an alternate Adam and Eve, and an alternate serpent figure which tempts them. The plot can be perceived as an account of what could have happened if the biblical Eve had resisted the temptation of serpent and the Fall of Man was avoided. It constructs an alternate biblical mythology. The works of American authors—Edgar Rice Burroughs, E. E. Smith, Frank Herbert and Robert E. Howard— also contain imagined mythology vast enough to be a whole new world in themselves. The Cthulhu Mythos is an example of created mythology by the American horror writer H. P. Lovecraft which consists of a shared fictional universe employed by not only the author and but also his literary successors. British novelist Tom Holt uses Norse legends, characters like Arthur, Beowulf and Faust, as well as those from the Arabian Nights and fairy tales of Brothers Grimm and cult films parodying aspects of mythology or using them as a theme in humorous but innovative ways. Some such as *Habibi* by Craig Thompson even reach out to Middle Eastern fables. Much of Stephen King's works also draw on an intricately developed mythopoeia, but the *Dark Tower* series in particular is a central piece in it. George R. R. Martin's, *A Song of Ice and Fire* series also has a mythopoeic backstory that reaches back thousands of years.

The genre of mythopoeia can also be found in popular films. Frank McConnell, author of *Storytelling and Mythmaking* stated that film is a perfect vehicle for mythmaking (14). The filmmaker George Lucas speaks of the cinematic plot of the movie *Star Wars* as an example of modern mythopoeia. Campbell called *Star Wars* a world by which 'our' (meaning American) civilization will one day describe itself (n.pag.). Steven D. Greydanus of *The Decent Film Guide* agrees, calling *Star Wars* a work of epic mythology.

> The Jedi knights, Darth Vader, Obi-Wan, Princess Leia, lightsabers, and the Death Star hold a place in the collective imagination of countless Americans that can only be described as

mythic… the quintessential American mythology, an American take on King Arthur, Tolkien, and the samurai/wuxia epics of the East ... (19)

James Cameron's *Avatar* set in the mid-22nd century is yet another example of mythopoeia. Featuring a lush and habitable moon in the Alpha Centauri star system called Pandora, and the blue-skinned humanoid indigenous species called Na'vi who worship a mother goddess called Eywa, the movie has to its credit a new planet, its societies and their myths. Cameron has said on record that the movie aspires to "mythic movie making and myths" (Taylor iv). Brian Godawa points out the Cameron's mythopoeia combines elements from Animism[2] and Gaia[3] hypothesis to make a postmodern pagan myth (n.pag.).

The TV series *Battlestar Galactica* has an invented mythology which is an important foundation of the plot. It features humans, or Colonials, who are polytheists and believe in the gods of Kobol. The pantheon of Kobol, their names and attributes are very similar to those of the Classical gods of Greece and Rome. 'The Book of Pythia', one of the religious books in the Colonial canon tells the story of the fall of the planet Kobol. According to their legend it is where humanity had first arisen. It details the exodus of the Twelve Tribes to their new planets also called the Colonies, and the journey of a Thirteenth Tribe to a planet called Earth. The backdrop falls back on Christian mythos.

Ludology also has its fair share of mythopoeia. Greg Stafford in the games *Runequest* and *Heroquest* created the world and attendant mythology of Glorantha, whose literary scope far exceeds its genre. Role-playing games also feature invented mythologies which players interact with and immerse themselves in. Some notable examples are the 'Forgotten Realms' backdrop of *Dungeons & Dragons*, the world of *Exalted*, and the *Elder Scrolls* which boasts of a mythology as detailed as

mythological epics. Some of the intricate fictional universes are continued to be explored over many sequels, such as the bestselling *Final Fantasy X* and its sequel *Final Fantasy X-2* which sold 10 million copies and claims to have a legion of enthusiasts in its fictional universe.

The producers of mythopoeia in popular fiction, film and ludology of the last few decades have been attempted to appropriate, adapt or revise myth and mythos to arrive at mythopoeia. Some have endeavoured to make whole new mythologies while other have extended or modified extant and extinct ones. These popular authors, filmmakers and game developers have turned from the preservative and interpretative side of myth to a whole new creative process of myth making. But despite such a notable presence of mythopoeia in popular culture, critics such as Bell and Freer focus only on literary fiction. Their study is also jilted towards canonical works. Though critics have long been aware that numerous twentieth century thinkers were interested in myth-making, as of yet academic discourse has failed to appreciate the proliferance and significance of such interest. The studies that investigate the twentieth century inclination towards myth-making are limited to two approaches. The first is comprised of studies on how the use of myth was a central feature of modernist aesthetics, for example in the works of literary fiction like that of T.S. Eliot. Although such literature makes invaluable contributions to our understanding of the modernists and post modernists, it cannot help us comprehend the specific dimensions of mythopoeia. There are also attempts to trace the influence of J.G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, a method that encompasses the modernists and post modernists. However, this second approach is also limited as the researches are largely confined to mapping the influence of a single, albeit iconic, text.

It is true that literary authors such as John Cowper Powys, Mary Butts, Charles Williams, and David Jones saw myth-making as a source of

religious truth, a notion they explored by producing literature that drew heavily on the mythology of the Holy Grail[4]. These writers attributed a deep spiritual significance to myth-making, but they were not as inventive as their popular counterparts. Popular authors such as J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis worked in concert to develop a form of cultural criticism in which myth-making played a key role. They stand out as two of the most influential advocates of mythopoeia of the century not only because of the popularity of the mythopoeia they produced but also because they set an example for subsequent writers who conceived of their fiction as a contemporary form of myth. Sterenberg holds that Lewis and Tolkien's myth-making exceeded that of the modernist writers for they turned to myth in an effort to redress what they saw as the spiritual emptiness of a secular age rather than "as an alternative to religion and science" (121).

> They refused to see the anthropological scholarship on myth produced by Frazer and others as necessarily corrosive of religious belief. Instead of drawing the common conclusion that myth-making was little more than a primitive attempt at scientific thinking, they argued that the very ubiquity of myth-making demonstrated myth's perennial relevance as a language for conjuring the transcendent. (Sterenberg 123)

Lewis and Tolkien proposed that both scientific rationality and mythic consciousness were necessary components of a healthy culture. This is perhaps why even the *OED* credits Tolkien with the resurgence of the term in the 1950s. Therefore the absence of any reference to J.R.R. Tolkien in these few critiques on mythopoeia is an oversight. Critiquing mythopoeia without engaging popular fiction is also a serious lapse.

Chapter 2. *Mythos to Myth to Mythopoeia: A Cyclical Process,* redresses this gap by critiquing Tolkien's idea of mythopoeia. Tolkien's conception of mythopoeia is what truly gives mythopoeia an edge over

myth. Myth is myth because it has lost its credibility. Mythopoeia is made out of myth in an attempt to redeem or restore credibility, no matter how fantastic that credibility may be. In other words, mythopoeia is a make belief world but a credible one. Tolkien's idea of mythopoeia is gathered from his poem "Mythopoeia" and his essay "On Fairy Stories". According to Tolkien, mythopoeia is a Secondary World[5] with Secondary Belief[6] system that redresses the Primary World and Primary Belief system. He believes that an author in constructing mythopoeia creates a 'Secondary World' into which the reader enters. When inside this Secondary World, the reader practices Secondary Belief. R.J. Reilly in his book chapter "Tolkien and the Fairy Story" hypothesizes that behind Tolkien's notion of Secondary world and Secondary Belief is Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Secondary Imagination, "an echo of the Primary Imagination that creates and perceives the world of reality" (97). This may very well be true. Mythopoeia is a product of the "esemplastic" imagination. But Tolkien's Secondary Belief moves beyond Coleridge's "willing suspension of disbelief" (239) for Secondary Belief is more than a kind of acceptance or tacit agreement. It has what Ajana Indu Priya calls self-referentiality of mythopoeia (n.pag.). Self-referentiality entails that mythopoeia should function on a mythopoeic reality and its own set of rules. It would be independent of any outside references. The reader who enters the system is required to accept this hyper-reality. Tolkien believes that if mythopoeia is truly successful; the reader lets go of the Primary World and Primary Belief system and immerses himself in the Secondary World practicing Secondary Belief system. This process of making a world in which a green sun will be credible requires labour, thought and special skill, "a kind of elvish craft" (Tolkien 126). He states that few writers attempt such a difficult task, but when attempted and accomplished we then have a rare achievement of Art (Ibid.). It is this rare achievement of Art that he calls mythopoeia. This ideal mythopoeia delivers Recovery, Escape, Consolation and Eucatastrophe, and thereby betters myth. By recovery,

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Tolkien means to remember what we had known but forgotten. Escape is a diversion from the fear of infinite regress. Consolation is the self evident age-old reward for good and comeuppance for evil. Eucatastrophe is Tolkien's opposite of the tragic catastrophe. Mythopoeia by fulfilling these parameters becomes better than myth. Mythopoeia by fulfilling these parameters becomes as appealing as mythos.

Taking off from Tolkien, the chapter stresses on the prospects of mythopoeia as plausible mythos. It borrows Heller's concept of "personal myth" and William Indick's position on the cyclical nature of "the individual myth" and "the collective myth" to substantiate this contention. Heller believes that a "personal myth" is an individual's "my story, my myth, to satisfy if only for myself ... the functions of explaining, confirming, guiding, and sacralizing ... in a manner analogous to the way cultural myths once served those functions to an entire society" (138–39). Mythopoeic constructions are nothing but personal myths that mimic extinct and extant myth and mythos. The discussion on Tolkien's conception of mythopoeia establishes this fact. Indick posits that an individual myth if internalized by his culture becomes a collective myth. He believes that this individual myth turned collective myth is "reborn in the dreams and imaginations of the next generation, and are transmitted from generation to generation and culture to culture in a never-ending cycle" (20). Mythopoeia can be understood as one such individual myth which has the potential to become a collective myth. If a mythopoeia were to succeed in being appropriated into the "collective unconscious" (Jung 112), it would transition to mythos. Mythopoeia in popular culture, be it popular fiction, film or ludology, by default being popular provides a feasible arena for the transformation.

Studying mythopoeia in popular fiction is therefore integral to establishing the prospects of mythopoeia. The fact that mythos transitions

into myth and myth transitions into mythopoeia has already been established by Armstrong, Heller, Bell and Freer. The chapter argues that if mythopoeia were to transition to mythos, then, mythos to myth to mythopoeia and back again would be what Indick calls a never ending cycle. It is this transitory nature of mythopoeia that makes it imperative that popular mythopoeia be brought under a critical lens.

Situating mythopoeia in the larger tradition of mythos and myth and predicating that mythopoeia can become mythos, the dissertation undertakes a case study of two popular mythopoeias— J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Silmarillion* and Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*, in order to establish this research statement. The purpose of the case studies is to illustrate the implications of this transition of mythopoeia to mythos. I specifically chose two very different mythopoeias in order to a) evidence a mythopoeic resurgence across the globe and b) to establish that this mythopoeic resurgence is at large irrespective of a culture's mythical baggage. Tolkien's *The Silmarillion* is the first novel (in terms of the mythopoeic chronology) about the famous Middle-earth. *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings* are the succeeding works that that have had wide popular and critical acclaim. Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* is a series of three novels that have had become the fastest selling book series in the history of Indian popular fiction. Both Tolkien and Tripathi have produced successful mythopoeias in their own right. By putting together two unconventional mythopoeias, which in its own arenas are popular, the dissertation establishes the mythopoeic resurgence across the globe. Primarily a qualitative study, the case studies are a selective textual analysis informed by narrative inquiry. The study uses close reading of the texts, and juxtaposes it with theoretical grounding and thus establishes the need for similar critical enquiries into other mythopoeias.

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The agenda of the case studies is to show that mythopoeia at the very least can affect or at most replace the extant or extinct mythos or myth. As a study of all the components of the two mythopoeias were beyond the purview of a chapter each, the case studies are limited to analyzing to the mythopoeic deity. By mythopoeic deity what I am referring to is the "idea of 'God' that still manages to serve as a placeholder for the telos of human consciousness, even in a demythologized world" (Heller 170). Tolkien's mythopoeic deity falls back on the pantheon of gods in neighboring mythologies and the Yahweh of the Christian mythos. Tripathi's mythopoeic deity is a altered avatar of an extant Hindu triumvirate. The case studies investigate the mythopoeic idea of deity constructed by both authors in their mythopoeia. The case study chapters are based on the premise that if the mythopoeic deity were consumed in popular demand, will it not affect the deity of the mythos or myth?

As the case studies engage with two very different mythopoeias a substantial portion of this introductory chapter is devoted to introducing their respective areas of popular fiction. The following section introduces Tolkien and summarises the existing critiques on Tolkien. It lays the groundwork for Chapter 3 which studies Tolkien's *The Silmarillion*. The next section, 1.3, introduces Indian popular fiction, specifically Indian English popular fiction, in which mythopoeia has had a proliferating existence. It looks at how mythopoeia in Indian popular fiction especially that of Amish Tripathi is at the heart of a mythopoeic transition. The section serves as an introduction to Chapter 4 which studies Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*.

1.2 An Introduction to J.R.R. Tolkien

The subject of mythopoeia will never be complete without a detailed analysis of J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth. Borrowing the words of Peter Kristof Makai in "Faërian Cyberdrama: When Fantasy becomes Virtual Reality", it could be said that "without so much as a shadow of doubt, J. R. R. Tolkien single-handedly revolutionised (if not created) [a] genre of fantasy with his extensive oeuvre" (35). Tolkien's mythopoeia was born out of a need to escape from the "literalness" and "externality" (Schorer 373) of the exhausted myths. Tolkien in a deliberation of a lifetime developed a mythology of a whole new world with a purpose that went beyond fiction. His idea of an enchantingly coherent fictional world has since then according to Matt Barton, especially in ludology "paved the way for a new type of game, one that would allow fans to go beyond reading and actually enter worlds of fantasy to play a role in their own adventures" (19). Makai calls this "ars mythopoetica" and believes that Tolkien "albeit unwittingly, [is] a key propagator of that revolution" (36). What I am interested in is first unravelling the essence of mythopoeia. If the impact of Tolkien's mythopoeia on computer games is indeed as strong as Barton would have us believe then it is all the more imperative that the process be studied in fiction where it was originally born before entering virtual reality which bequeaths human imagination even more immersive manners.

Tolkien has a total of nineteen works to his name, some published during his time and others posthumously. Tolkien's novels, namely *The Silmarillion*, *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* (hereafter *LOTR*) can be read as a single plot which occurs in his world of Middle Earth, 60,000 years before our time. *The Hobbit* was published in the year 1937 as a novel for both children and adult alike, but the following publication of *LOTR* with its index of etymological information on invented languages it attracted serious readers. *The History of Middle Earth* published by his son, Christopher Tolkien, is a compilation of his numerous notes and

unfinished tales and an extension or further insight to his imaginary world. *The Silmarillion*, a posthumous publication was published in the light of increasing demand from readers who revelled in "a new mythology in an invented world which has proved timeless in its appeal" (Anderson i). Douglas A. Anderson's opinion of it as 'new mythology' is intriguing. The term mythology implies practices and belief systems, extinct or extant, and requires some kind of rootedness in a particular time and space. Calling Tolkien's works new mythology can therefore seem not thought through. It is curious how 'mythopoeia' a term invented by Tolkien himself, especially I think for avoiding such conflicts with mythology, is seldom used by critics to describe his works. Even the forward to *The Hobbit* and *LOTR*, written by Tolkien himself describes it as "the mythology and legends of the Elder Days" (xv), although one could assume that the author here required himself to believe it as mythology rather than mythopoeia. In the prologue to *Lost Tales*, he insists to have discovered the tales rather than invented them to establish his mythopoeia as mythology. But it is complicating how Tolkien critics thereafter also took up this presumption, calling his work mythology rather than mythopoeia. This neglect regarding the very nature of mythology and mythopoeia, amongst critics and to a certain although justifiable extent of the author himself, has lead to my second chapter which studies mythopoeia amidst this tradition of myth and mythos.

The last few years have seen incisive books such as John Garth's *Tolkien and the Great War*; first rate monographs such as Tom Shippey's *J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century*; a peer-reviewed journal *Tolkien Studies* published by the University of Kentucky Press, and a handful of scholarly anthologies including *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth* edited by Jane Chance. The impressive bibliography that concludes each shows a small but robust tradition of Tolkien criticism extending back to at least thirty years.

But the topic of mythopoeia in these critiques is an often mentioned but seldom addressed area. Scholarly articles on myth in mythic fiction are few and far between let alone a differentiation of mythopoeia in mythic fiction. This could be first due to the undersized number of scholars who engage with the larger field of popular fiction. Second, mythic fiction which previously fell under fantasy in popular fiction has a long way to go in academic circles. Third, Tolkien's works at the outset belonged to Children's Literature for *The Hobbit*, his first work was published under this category. Therefore classifying his works with other works of mythic fiction is a recent trend. Lastly the few scholars who critically engage with Tolkien undertake their study due to an initial liking or awe of the author's magnanimous production, or with a preconceived notion of it belonging to fantasy. The term mythopoeia along with his works is collated with "myth appropriation, adaptation or revision" (McSporran 245), without perceiving its augmentation from myth or its effects on myth and mythos.

According to Anthony B. Buccitelli, most scholars tend to deny their initial attraction to writers such as Tolkien stigmatizing him as populariser (343). The question is often posed whether Tolkien's work even deserves to be studied. Many, plagued by this question for years, seek to affirm the merits of his work with attempts of categorising him as a writer of children's literature or a "producer of anomalously bestselling dime novels" (344). Such attempts, tinged with embarrassment at the overwhelming popular success of Tolkien's fiction are often accompanied by dismissive remarks made apparently in the hope that wishing will make it so. As recently as 2000, Harold Bloom pronounced *LOTR* "fated to become only an intricate Period Piece...while *The Hobbit* may well survive as Children's Literature" (Bloom 1-2). When Bloom dispatched

this "thunderbolt" in the words of Buccitelli, when *LOTR* had been robustly in print for forty-five years, and *The Hobbit* for sixty-two (344).

Despite such disapprovals over the past decade and a half, scholars such as Tom. A. Shippey, Verlyn Flieger and Jane Chance have produced and inspired a growing body of scholarly Tolkien criticism. Ken Gelder devotes a chapter to J.R.R. Tolkien's *LOTR* in his book *Popular Fiction: The Logics and Practices of a Literary Field*. *Tolkien and the Invention of Myth*, a compilation of eighteen essays by Jane Chance, offers analysis of relations between Tolkien's writing and folklore, religion, and historical literature. Another essay of note is that of Tom Shippey, who discusses Tolkien's "rootedness" in myth, specifically his northern European folklore sources— the *Edda*[7] and the *Kalevala*[8]. David Elton Gay demonstrates the characteristics of Väinämöinen, the mighty singer from the Kalevala, that appear in both Treebeard[9] and Tom Bombadil[10]. Catherine Madsen tackles the question of natural religion in *LOTR*, arguing that while Tolkien's own Christianity does influence his writing, he strips religious ideas and images of their uniquely Christian characteristics when building them into his fiction. Sandra Ballif Straubhaar investigates Tolkien's multicultural attitudes by comparing mixed-race marriages in Middle-earth to those described in late Roman sources. Jen Stevens shows how the ancient story of Pyramus and Thisbe relates to Tolkien's tale of Beren and Luthien, and Kathleen Dubs demonstrates that Tolkien's sense of providence, fate, and chance is essentially that of Boethius. Andy Dimond explains how Tolkien's tales appropriate the apocalyptic battle of Ragnarök from the Old Norse myths. He addresses Anglo-Saxon influences in Tolkien's work, and it is understandably dominated by Beowulf. Michael D. C. Drout draws connections between Tolkien's ancient Gondorians and the Goths and the Geats, suggesting provocative ways in which Tolkien's fiction and his historical and philological research may have intersected. John R. Holmes

explains Anglo-Saxon views on oath-breaking and considers several examples of broken oaths in *LOTR*. Alexandra Bolintineanu analyzes the ways in which Middle-earth legends and lore operate within the main story of *LOTR*, comparing these effects with those achieved by inset stories in Beowulf. Verlyn Flieger describes how the *Kalevala* was collected and composed in the nineteenth century, defining Finland in a way that Tolkien later hoped to define England.

These contributors mostly approach Tolkien's work from the perspective of literary criticism though most of the sources referred to, such as *Beowulf, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* or the *Kalevala*, are literary renderings of what was oral literature. They continuously refer to terms such as folklore and legends with the word myth used repeatedly. Some have even made imprecise and interchangeable use of myth and legend. The term mythopoeia, of course, is strewn here and there. Especially interesting is the work of Gergely Nagy, who explores similarities between Tolkien's and Plato's attitudes toward "myth". Nagy points out that both Tolkien and Plato seem to rail against "myth" in their writings, yet both draw on mythic sources as they develop and support their views. While essays such as Nagy's approach the concept of mythopoeia, none quite tackle the subject in its entirety.

The world of Tolkien scholarship is becoming ever more diverse as its fanzine and academic wings continue to develop productive strands of inquiry. The academic world, many of whose members once tried to pretend that Tolkien's work just did not exist, is slowly beginning to realize the potential that scholarly research on Tolkien offers. The works just discussed are some of the fruits of that inquiry, and they signal that more of the same high-quality intellectual endeavour can be expected as critics continue to assess and to respond to the issues that these and other recent contributions to Tolkien scholarship have raised.

Chapter 2 by including Tolkien's ideas of mythopoeia amongst Armstrong, Heller, Sterenberg, Bell and Freer, makes an inroad into Tolkien's mythopoeia that is yet to be conclusively done. By using Tolkien's idea of mythopoeia as pivotal in positing mythopoeia to mythos transition, the dissertation establishes Tolkien's contribution in the larger tradition of mythos to myth to mythopoeia and back again. In addition to engaging with Tolkien in order to discuss the prospects of mythopoeia, the dissertation takes up his mythopoeia as a case study to ascertain the implications of his popular mythopoeia in mythopoeia to mythos transition.

Chapter 3. *Packaging Polytheism as Monotheism: a Select Study of the Mythopoeic Deity in Tolkien's the Silmarillion*, which showcases the mythopoeia to mythos transition in Tolkien's *The Silmarillion,* is also new leaf in the area of Tolkien studies. The chapter deconstructs the godhead that Tolkien constructs in his mythopoeia. Tolkien's polychronicon, *The Silmarillion*, splits the godhead between a creator God and a pantheon of gods and goddesses. Tolkien claims that Iluvatar is a Yahweh-like God and the primary deity; and Valar, the fourteen gods and goddesses created by this primary God, who assist in creation, shapes the world, has power over elements, and reign as 'mistaken gods' among the Elves, Dwarves and Men are not deities. Both Tolkien and Christopher Tolkien and scholars such as Joseph Pearce John G. West Jr., Stratford Caldecott, Peter J. Kreeft, Ralph C. Wood, and Nils Ivar Agøy hold that the Valar were angels in their conception. The deliberate split of godhead is negated and the mythopoeic deity acclaimed as the biblical God and his angels, is upheld as a Christian allegory.

Tolkien's insistence that his mythopoeic deity is monotheistic is misleading. The case study chapter negates the Christian parallels

associated with Iluvatar and Valar, and establishes that Tolkien packages polytheism as monotheism. Monotheism does not permit secondary gods. Polytheism on the other hand often features an abstract creator God who creates a polytheistic pantheon. Tolkien's model which features a Creator deity and a pantheon of created deities falls under the second category. The chapter illustrates how Iluvatar is a creator deity like that of Egyptian, Aztec and Yoruba deities. It draws parallels between Valar and the created deities who (like the Egyptian holy foursome, Set, Isis, Osiris and Nephthys) were sent to govern the earth on behalf of this supreme transcendent deity. It establishes that Iluvatar is Deus otiosus (the idle god who has grown weary from involvement in this world and has been replaced by younger and more active gods) rather than Deus absconditus (a god who has consciously left this world to hide elsewhere) like Yahweh who appears intermittently as Providence. It argues that Tolkien's mythopoeic deity is not Christian but polytheistic.

Similar arguments have also been voiced by critics such as Catherine Madsen, Ronald Hutton, Stephen Morillo and Patrick Curry who even if they do not totally deny the importance of Christian elements in the conception of the legendarium, assert that an essentially polytheist perspective is predominant in Tolkien's mythopoeia, and that such a perspective more or less markedly contradicts the Christian orthodox vision. But despite such inconsistencies pointed out in the mythopoeic deity, Tolkien's works are consumed as Christian. The chapter argues that if Tolkien mythopoeic model is consumed as monotheistic, it may alter the perception of a monotheistic deity. It emphasises that if monotheism is consumed as having a two-tier divinity, albeit angels as deities, the very nature of the monotheism mythos as mono stands to change.

This case study illustrates the fault in Tolkien's mythopoeic godhead. By evidencing how Tolkien, despite his polytheistic tendency is

consumed as Christian, it posits that the popular consumption of Iluvatar and Valar as Yahweh and evolved version of biblical angels, may affect the perception of monotheism. With such a stance the case study emphasises the mythopoeia to mythos transition predicated by Chapter 2. It serves to draw light on the importance of critiquing popular mythopoeic renditions.

In order to further establish this position, the dissertation includes a case study of another mythopoeia. It investigates an Indian mythopoeia, which is equally popular, which also constructs a mythopoeic deity. I now move on to introducing this second case study of my dissertation— Amish Tripathi's mythopoeia.

1.3 An Introduction to Amish Tripathi

In order to understand Amish Tripathi's mythopoeia, one has to have a sufficient knowledge of the dynamics of Indian popular fiction and the recent resurgence of mythopoeia as genre in India. This section therefore introduces (1) Indian popular fiction, followed by (2) mythopoeia in Indian popular culture where in the popular mythopoeic fiction of Tripathi is situated.

1.3.1 An Introduction to Indian popular fiction

By Indian popular fiction I specifically mean Indian English popular fiction. This is not because Bhasha[11] languages have not produced their fair share of popular fiction. In fact in "Indian Pulp Fiction in English: A Preliminary Overview from Dutt to Dé", Tabish Khair argues that pulp fiction is more feasible in languages other than English for its market markers of commerciality and sustainable readership dissuades publication in a language "spoken by less than four percent of the Indian population" (60). But then again, he acknowledges that if this tiny percentage is

translated into numbers one comes up with forty million people. This is therefore "a putative market larger than most European languages" (60). To this he adds Braj Kachru's facts that "India … is the third largest English book-producing country" (after the USA and UK), [and] that it ranks eighth in the world in book publishing" and "the average number of English titles per million population published each year is 360, which is higher than the world average" (Khair 528). Therefore it is not surprising that Indian English popular fiction has surpassed its regional competition and may even surpass its global competition in the turn of a century.

But what today is Indian popular fiction was not in existence five decades earlier; or rather it had not yet been conceived of on a national scale. While regional popular fiction existed in the form of "stocked novels with covers full of semi-clad women, speeding cars and haunted mansions, either translated... or written originally"(Khair 529), the seeds of Indian popular fiction were interspersed among its larger literary counterpart. As Khair himself notes, early popular fiction in India is infused with "strong literary and socio-political underpinning" (62). If popular fiction is primarily demarcated in terms of simpler language and mass production as in the west, the scale would fall short for Indian English popular fiction, for even R.K. Narayan's *The Guide* was immensely pulp-like in appearance and pricing, and ironically its protagonist Raju may be the first Indian English protagonist who sells pulp fiction for a living. Therefore Khair's attempt to define it as "fiction that uses largely fixed generic features to satisfy the largely fixed reading expectations of as large a market as possible" (61), appears competent in the present day market but does not help in demarcating earlier Indian popular fiction. Early Indian popular fiction are notable but are largely subsumed by its literary counterpart. Following are some prominent examples of early Indian popular fiction.

Toru Dutt's *Bianca*, K. K. Lahiri's *Roshinara* and K. Chakravarti's *Sarata and Hingana* narrate a glorious past, implicitly or explicitly, in contrast to the then inglorious (colonial) present. Novels of Bharati Mukherjee narrate the oppression of Indian womanhood. The short story, "Sultana's Dream" by Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain is an utopian tale of gender role inversion that could be brought about by modern education to transform the position of women in contemporary Muslim society. Here we find not only a feminist pulp fiction but also a futuristic utopian or dystopian setting. K. C. Dutt's *A Journal of Forty Eight Hours of the Year 1945* in the 1835 edition of *Calcutta Literary Gazette* presents the socio-historical condition of a future and predicts the year of Independence as 1945, two years short of the actual event. Such an inventive foresight is commendable. Early detective or mystery novels in English include S. Mukherji's *The Mysterious Traders*, S. K. Chettur's *Bombay Murder* and Kamala R. Sathianadhan's *Detective Janaki* whose protagonist may probably be the first female detective in both popular and literary fiction. Khair therefore rightly holds that early Indian popular fiction's "literary and socio-political concerns are interspersed... [among its] generic and/or pulp elements" (61).

Identifying early Indian popular fiction is therefore a daunting task. But what is today called Indian popular fiction is both distinct and established. It is a young but sprawling field whose identity has changed significantly and also relatively quickly over the course of the two decades. It is unrecognisable in many ways from the practices of twenty years ago. As the prodigal child of the early progenitors, it is known for its "non-literariness" (according to R.K. Gupta). There has also come to be a clear demarcation of popular from literary in terms of production, reception and consumption. Westland's CEO Gautam Padmanabhan explains this transition from early to current Indian popular fiction.

Initially all Indian publishers were targeting only the English educated elite that grew up on a staple of imported literature. Our first wave of writers in English mostly came from this demographic. The last 10-15 years have seen the emergence of a larger group of people who did not grow up with English as a first language and are therefore more comfortable with writers who write English using a more Indian idiom. The themes that these writers tackle also appeal to the aspirations and interests of this emerging demographic. These authors sell far in excess to the earlier wave of Indian writers. (n.pag.)

E. Dawson Varughese credits the liberalisation of the economy in the 1990's for the birth of Indian popular fiction. Tabish Khair identifies Shobha De as its harbinger in the 1980's for he believes De ushered in the Indian version of the middle-class American Dream. Deborah Philips associates Chetan Bhagat with the call centre as emblematic of a 'new India' fiction, in which educated young people seize the possibilities of a global labour market. Be it Varughese, Khair or Philips, all three agree that the contemporary Indian popular fiction caters to a generation for whom colonialism is ancient history, a generation who have grown up in the aftermath of economic liberalization in India, a generation who belong to the middle-class sector and who converse in a Indianised English. With the rise of this class of middle-class Indians who speak English as a matter of convenience rather than that of cultural choice, Indian English popular fiction found its sustenance. With the demand for a shift from the serious types of Indian Literature in English to something more light-hearted (*Literophile* 11) Indian popular fiction fanned its growth. Robert McCrum benchmarks this demographical quality of Indian popular fiction readership, stating:

This new middle-class audience—small entrepreneurs, managers, travel agents, salespeople , secretaries, clerks— has an appetite for

literary entertainment that falls between the elite idiom of the cultivated literati, who might be familiar with the novels of Amitav Gosh and Salman Rushdie, and the Indian English of the street and the supermarket. Theirs is the Indian English of the outsourcing generation. (n.pag.)

The fact that the English spoken by this middle-class audience has also been appropriated by the authors like Chetan Bhagat enhanced its appeal. While Indian authors like Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy have won international acclaim, their style of literary fiction is largely inaccessible or uncomprehendable to this majority of Indian readers. Book sales today demonstrate that urban Indians no longer read Agatha Christie and PG Wodehouse but "amateur reader-turned-writers" (Daftuar n.pag.) like Bhagat, Amish Tripathi, Ashok Banker and Ashwin Sanghi. Inspired by such newbie authors many more like Swati Kaushal, Advaita Kala, Amitabha Bagchi and Karan Bajaj have recently churned out bestsellers.

A range of novels in the last decade that have established Indian popular fiction are: *One Night @ the Call Center* by Chetan Bhagat, *Chanakya's Chant* by Ashwin Sanghi, *Socialite Evenings and Starry Nights* by Shobhaa De, *Almost Single* by Advaita Kala, *Serious Men* by Manu Joseph, *Alchemy of Desire* and *The Valley of Masks* by Tarun Tejpal, *The Bioscope Man* by Indrajit Hazra etc. Another emerging trend of authors and readers are those of Young Adult literature which consists of works like Anirudh Vasudev's *Of Ghosts, Wizards and Other Fantasies* and Trisha Ray's *The Girls Behind the Gun Fire* (Rose 33).

These authors write in simpler language, devising fast-paced narratives with plenty of humour and mirroring modern urban Indian life (*Literophile* 9). In this fertile, novel and therefore relatively uncompetitive field, their books become quick bestsellers, much to the delight of small

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publishers like Srishti which entered the fiction market in 2006 and accepted unsolicited manuscripts (Jain 8). It was reported that, responding to this phenomenon, international publishers are flocking to set up offices in India to reap profits from backing emerging home-grown talent (Vakalanka n.pag.). The Indian market for popular fiction is booming according to BBC News Magazine's 2013 survey. David Davidhar of Penguin India purports that the industry is evolving at blinding speed, as a result of a growing population of young people who are increasingly educated and literate, as well as the rising income of an affluent urban market (Thirani 20). Jason Burke writes how this 'new wave of home-grown writers are climbing the country's bestseller lists, challenging the dominance of international heavyweights such as Dan Brown, John Grisham and Tom Clancy (n.pag.). But apart from its booming impact on the publishing and entertainment sector, the volume of works that is steadily exploding to constitute an emerging field remains unexamined or uncritiqued. Varughese rightly states that India's popular fiction remains somewhat unknown to the Western academy and, moreover, to a large section of a Western audience.

> "Indeed, a Western audience may not have heard of Amish Tripathi, Anuja Chauhan or Ashwin Sanghi, despite these authors' impressive sales figures within India. On the other hand, living in India and being 'English reading', it is hard not to have come across them, if not read them." (6).

As Indian popular fiction continues to grow, it seems a critical interest in its production and proliferation is both manifest and outmoded. We are left wondering why there is this chasm of (no) knowledge of this particular body of writing. Although news articles range from impressive reviews and slashing appraisals, academicians and scholars generally turn a blind eye to this field. The literary indifference meted out to Western popular

fiction in the 1940's can be cited as the case of its Indian counterpart in the 21st century.

But this apathy does not change the fact that a parallel fiction plane has been established with hitherto unknown celebrities with no or little literary background, no big publishing houses, and quick-paced, low-priced reads rather than elaborate plots and literary flair. Indian English popular fiction may only constitute 35 per cent of all fiction publications in India. It may also be uneven in its quality, but it is growing so rapidly that it is impossible to predict the future of this field. Given the huge population coupled with a healthy growth rate in literacy, it is logical that this arena will grow beyond its present state.

1.3.2 Mythopoeia in Indian Popular Fiction

I now move on to introducing the second case study of the dissertation— mythopoeia in Indian popular fiction. In order to facilitate this enquiry, it is imperative that the peculiarity of myth in India be first established. The case study chapter, Chapter 4 introduces the term mithya as apt for Hindu myth/mythology/religion because none of these can account for the "living myths" (Heller 3) of Hinduism. The chapter substantiates the adoption of the term mithya, introduces the precarious nature of Hindu mithya and highlights the ideology of popular fiction authors who reproduce and reconstruct it. It posits that the contemporary mythopoeic renditions of mithya may have far reaching implications. This introductory section initiates this discussion.

In order to understand mythopoeia in Indian popular fiction, one should understand myth in Indian popular culture. This is because mythopoeia does not apply to the Indian scenario in the same sense as in the west, for myth in India is not 'myth'. Myth in the western discourse is essentially the deteriorated version of mythos. William D. Reyburn holds

that religion that has lost its foothold is mythology (24). But myth in India has not yet deteriorated, neither has it lost its foothold. It is still intricately bound with religion. It is tangible in popular culture and everything festive. Mythic gods and their tales of valour are ubiquitous in children's literature, literary allegories, newspaper articles, movies and television series. The tales are as widely known as the Gospel stories in the Christian world. They are passed on orally from parents to children or, during festivals, through an entire community. They are very much alive in every act every thought of every individual. In other words myth in India is not a thing of the past but a beating pulse of the present. Roy Amore and Larry Shinn, in *Lustful Maidens and Ascetic Kings* describe this predominance of Indian myths.

> To grow up in India is to mature in a world alive with demons and water nymphs, goblins and irate goddesses… Mothers and fathers teach their children religious and family responsibilities through stories. Householders scold their servants with reference to the fate of a character in a particular tale (Amore and Shinn 3).

This is why Indian myths are not myths. They are what Sophia Heller calls "living myth". But rather than using the term "living myth", the case study uses the Sanskrit term 'mithya' to denote Indian myth. Chapter 4 details the intricacies of the term. The reason why the dissertation opted to use the Sanskrit term instead of "living myth" or mythos is because, had this not been the case, this would be yet another attempt to impose western paradigms onto an Indian concept. It would be yet another work which falls under one of the charges made by Rajiv Malhotra against Wendy Doniger.

Mythopoeia in Indian popular fiction is a reproduction of its mithya. As mythopoeia in India does not follow the trajectory of mythos

to myth to mythopoeia but instead is a transition from mithya to mythopoeia, I will introduce the nuances of this process.

Indian myths have been retold and re-written and the process of remythologizing is an inherent practice to all its myths. Therefore mythopoeic rendition of its mithya in Indian popular fiction may seem yet another reproduction. But the popularity of these mythopoeic renditions is what sparked the case study. Indian mithya has many facets of interpretations, adaptations and revisions. But not all of these reproductions are popular. The ones that reign as popular are those that abide with prevalent ideologies. The ones that tend to be radical are shunned by the common public. Even the academic circles have evidenced this fact. A.K. Ramanujan's essay, "Three Hundred Ramayanas" is an account of three hundred of ways in which the *Ramayana* has been retold. But the fact remains that even an academic essay that evidenced this was purged from Delhi University's syllabus due to the surrounding controversies. Although *Ramayana* does have multiple versions, the prevalent ones are iconic each regional language (*Kambaramayanam* in Tamil, *Ranganatha Ramayanam* in Telugu, *Tulsidas' Ramayana* in Awdhi, *Premanand's Ramayana* in Gujrati, *Krittivasi Ramayan* in Bengali, *Dandi Ramayana* in Odia, *Adhyathmaramayanam* in a Malayalam and *Sri Ramayana Darshanam* in Kannada). These are translations of Valmiki's *Ramayana*, interpreted by each translator. But no matter how they were interpreted "Ram's name and Ram's story has been a window to the divine… [he] is worthy of veneration adoration and worship" (Pattanaik i). Other versions, (Kamban's *Iramavataram* where Indra is "covered with a hundred vaginas", or the Jaina version, *Pampa Ramayana*, where Sita is Ravana's unwanted daughter) as documented by Dr Ramanujan's, did not make it to the cannon because their alternative narratives go against popular ideologies. Thus Dr Ramanujan's essay which evidenced this diversity was seen as a threat to the dominant

narrative of *Ramayana*. Sugata Srinivasaraju suggests that most love the "soap telling" of the epic poem which iconises Ram and "want the narrative to retain the structure and simplicity of a bedtime story so that you fall asleep in consent and total belief as you listen to it". In other words, remythologizing of Indian mithya requires remythologizing in a manner congruent to popular sentiments and via supposedly authentic sources to be popular.

But despite such intolerance regarding Indian mithya, mythopoeias of Indian popular fiction have largely gone un-reckoned. In fact mythopoeia in Indian popular fiction has flourished with such successes that it is the most popular genre in the field. *Mrityunjaya* by Shivaji Sawant is possibly among the first in this genre. It was authored in Marathi and published in 1989. Its translations are now available in English and a few other languages. It weaves a veritably rich psychological tapestry and delicately handles the matter of Karna[12]'s identity crisis. It is a retelling of the *Mahabharata*, narrated from Karna's point of view. The man credited with inaugurating the mythological revival in Indian popular fiction is Ashok Banker who with his eight-volume Ramayana series that began with *Prince of Ayodhya* established the genre. His *Vengeance of Ravana* reinvents the epic in a fantastical vein, employing a narrative that is modern and psychological. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Palace of Illusions* retells the *Mahabharata* through the eyes of Draupadi[13], in an attempt to break away from the traditional, male-centric perception of the epic. *Arjuna: Saga of a Pandava Warrior-prince* by Anuja Chandamouli is a take on the Mahabharata, written from the perspective of its protagonist Arjun. *Lanka's Princess* by former journalist turned writer, Kavita Kane is a re-telling of the stories of women who have been relegated to a marginal role in the epics. The novel makes a compelling case for Surpanakha[14] to be looked at differently than what the traditional version would want us to. *The Pregnant King* by

Devdutt Pattanaik tells stories of many LGBTQ mythological characters especially king Yuvanashva, highlighting the resulting dissonance and the need for acceptance. *Ajaya: Roll of the Dice* by Anand Neelakantan is an attempt to retell the Mahabharata from the Kauravas[15]' standpoint. *Asura: Tale of the Vanquished* by the same author is a take on Ramayana in which the tale of the vanquished Asura people is told from the perspective of Bhadra and Ravana. Other notable mythopoeic works are *Adi Parva: Churning of the Ocean* by Amruta Patil, *Yagnaseni* by Pratibha Ray, *The Mahabharata Secret* by Christopher C. Doyle and *The Aryavarta Chronicles* by Krishna Udayshankar.

Ian Jack notes that publishing houses welcome the genre of mythopoeic fiction as a sure success. He lists how almost every prominent publisher has a few mythopoeic fictions to their names. Penguin launched *The Legend of Parashuraam* by Dr Vineet Aggarwal and *Pradyumna* by Usha Narayanan. Hachette India offers *Three* by Krishna Udayasankar and Westland has *Bhima: The Man in the Shadows* by Vikas Singh. HarperCollins' publications include Karthika Nair's *Until the Lions*, a poetic rendering of the *Mahabharata* from the point of view of the marginal voices in the epic, and Amruta Patil's graphic interpretation *Sauptik*. Rupa offers *Menaka* by Kavita Kane, *Shakuntala: The Woman Wronged* by Utkarsh Patel and *The Curse of Brahma* by Jagmohan Bhanver

These popular mythopoeic renditions of Indian mithya have largely gone unreckoned. Kevin Missal remarks that mythological fiction remains an underexplored genre in India despite the market being awash with books based on mythology. Vani Kaushal describes these mythopoeias as having used the METOO model i.e. Mythological Epics Told Over and Over. But how conforming these popular renditions are to the mythological epics is yet another matter. These books are immensely

popular but their faithfulness to mythical sources is not probed into. When asked to share his views on the contemporary mythopoeic writing in India and whether the reader is being shown "the wood" or "the tree," Pattanaik said that he doesn't "evaluate other people's writings. "To each his own. Readers choose books and so they choose the woods, and the trees. Let us not infantilize the readership. Ultimately, we have to decide what works for us," he maintained. Some such as Hartosh Singh Bal in *New York Times* believes that mythopoeia in Indian popular fiction is doing the society a favour. He writes:

> Ram Lila, an annual 10-day stage performance of the *Ramayana*, was acted out by the locals, mostly amateurs. On Dussehra, the festival's last day, we would all gather around for the burning of the ten-headed, hundred-armed effigy of Ravana. With increasing urbanization, this tradition began to break down; people lost ties to their ancestral villages, and oral transmission wasn't suited to city life. Given the country's religious diversity, the government-prescribed school curriculum steered clear of any teaching that could be associated with a particular religious community. This left a gap, which the current surge of mythological fiction is trying to fill. (n.pag.)

Ashwin Sanghi states that mythopoeia in popular fiction is not a novelty. "Frankly, what is happening now is not something new. It is simply a continuation of an age-old tradition...What makes it new is the language of choice—English." But it is mythopoeia in English that have the larger exposure. Khair showed how Indian English Popular fiction is consumed by roughly forty million people. Kachru estimated that India is the third largest English book-producing country after the USA and UK (528). Mythopoeia in Indian English popular fiction may in fact be the face of Indian mithya across the world.

Mythopoeia in Indian popular fiction asserts anew the identity of the Indian popular fiction in English. It does so by re-anchoring Indian popular fiction to and in India, its culture, people and histories. McCraken suggests that popular fiction can offer a space for remaking to take place, stating that the reader of popular fiction is actively engaged in the making of him or herself and this act of remaking has a utopian potential. It allows a "more complex exploration of self-identity, while still giving the reader familiar boundaries within which to project his or her fantasies" (13). For our interests here, this particular quote highlights how mythopoeia in Indian popular fiction given that they are anchored in ideas of Indian identify, culture and belief, and furthers these aspects, may have far reaching implications. The case study illustrates the implications of consuming a mythopoeic version of a mithya.

Amish Tripathi is a popular Indian author known for his mythopoeic renditions of mithya. He has authored *The Immortals of Meluha* (hereafter *Meluha*), *The Secret of the Nagas* (hereafter Nagas)*, The Oath of the Vayuputras* (hereafter *Vayuputras*), *Scion of Ikshvaku* and *Sita: Warrior of Mithila*. The first three books collectively comprise the *Shiva Trilogy*. The *Shiva Trilogy* was the fastest selling book series in Indian publishing history and the *Scion of Ikshvaku* was the fastest selling book of 2015. The books have sold over 4 million copies in the Indian subcontinent since 2010, with gross retail sales of Rs. 120 crores (Lopez n.pag.). On the phenomenal success of Tripathi's *The Oath of Vayuputras*, Sunaina Kumar writes:

> His [Tripathi's] publisher Westland offers up sales figures for the new book, 3,50,000 copies presold compared with 2,40,000 for the last Harry Potter novel in India. You don't have to join too many dots to see that Amish is being marketed as our answer to JK Rowling. (n.pag.)

Tripathi has since then launched a new series, the Ram Chandra series (which is still underway). Where his *Shiva Trilogy* celebrated the life of Lord Shiva, the *Ram Chandra Series* focus on Lord Ram. Given the sales figures and the following that Tripathi has amassed as popular fiction author (his books have been translated into several other Indian languages), the second series is set to a successful one. The popularity of *Shiva Trilogy* has been so remarkable that Tripathi's the second novel of the second series— *Sita: Warrior of Mithila* was inaugurated by Smriti Irani a Union Minister of India (Chakraborty n.pag.).

What sparked this case study of Tripathi is such resplendent consumption of mythopoeia in spite of its extant mithya. **Chapter 4. *Polytheism to Euhemerism: A Select Study of the Mythopoeic Deity in Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy,*** analyzes Tripathi's construction of his mythopoeic deity. Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* is a mythopoeia based on the Shiva mithya. His mythopoeic deity is Lord Shiva of Hinduism although in a mythopoeic avatar. The chapter deconstructs Tripathi's Shiva showcasing how the author demythologizes and remythologizes to produce a euhemerized version of the deity. "Euhemerism presupposes a deification of humans, an ascent of men and women to the realm of gods and goddesses through the mythographic imaginaries of the community" (Bulfinch 137). Tripathi applies euhemerism to a triumvirate (Brahma the creator, Vishnu the preserver, and Shiva the destroyer) who existed since the time immemorial. Tripathi's mythopoeic deity is founded on the premise that Lord Shiva was once a man who in the course of history was deified. The story is set in 1900 BC in what the author claims to be the Indus Valley Civilization. Tripathi's Shiva is a Tibetan tribal leader whose exploits across the empires of Meluha, Swadeep and Panchwati earn him great fame. The trilogy spans his life time, his exploits, his realizations, his victories and his philosophical ponderings ending with his ascetic

withdrawal into the mountains. The trilogy ends with the notion that deities were once men who over the course of time were deified.

Allan Dahlquist in *Megasthenes and Indian Religion: A Study in Motives and Types* notes: "We have no Dravidian evidence of a god who began as a man and was deified during his lifetime" (244). Although "[a]ncestor- worship is a theme constantly recurring in the *RigVeda* [with] frequent mention [] made of *pitri-yajna*, sacrifice to the spirits of the ancestors" and "a number of minor deities seem to have passed through this course of development in later ages" (Ibid.) euhemerism per se, according to Dahlquist, has had no correspondence with Dravidian or Aryan ideas. Therefore Tripathi's use of euhemerism to demythologize and remythologize Lord Shiva is a foreign technique introduced into the Indian mithya. Such a transcription makes the mythopoeic deity theologically erroneous. But despite such deviancy from the deity in the mithya, the mythopoeic rendition is consumed in popular demand.

The popular consumption of a mythopoeic deity may alter the deity of the extant mithya. The target audience who consumes such mythopoeic renditions is primarily the young English speaking 21st century audience, who may not have first-hand knowledge of the Sanskrit versions, who is susceptible to secular version of myths, and who chooses to believe in their own truths. They may identify better with the mythopoeic versions rather than the mithya. For them the mythopoeia may amount to be the mithya. It is therefore imperative that productions and consumptions of mythopoeic versions of mithya be studied.

The case study chapters show that Tolkien's and Tripathi's mythopoeic deities are unorthodox in nature, and despite their deviancies from the extant mythos or mithya, they are consumed in popular demand. Such a popular consumption, according to Chapter 2 entails that

mythopoeia can transition into mythos, or the mythopoeic deity could affect or replace the extant deities. The case studies problematize the consumption of these unorthodox mythopoeic deity models and predicate the effects they may have on the mythos deity (as in the case of Tolkien) and the mithya deity (as in the case of Tripathi). The dissertation in this manner establishes the primary research statement by illustrations through case studies.

The dissertation further compares both authors and their mythopoeic constructions. **Chapter 5** *Mythopoeia to Mythos/Mithya: Comparing and Predicating the Effects of Tolkien's and Tripathi's Mythopoeic Deities,* understands their varied augmentation from mythos/myth/mithya and explores their potential progression into mythos (as in the case of Tolkien) or mithya (as in the case of Tripathi). It demonstrates the symmetry of opposed motives between Tolkien's mythopoeic deity and Tripathi's mythopoeic deity. Tolkien's deity is a polytheistic model sold as monotheism. Tripathi's deity is euhemeristic model sold as polytheism. Both mythopoeic deity constructions are different yet similar in various ways. Each man lived and lives in a time that perceives myth, mythos and mithya as incredible. Both seek to establish their version of mythopoeia to reawaken an interest in mythos/myth/mithya. Tolkien perfuses a lacking English mythology and Tripathi refurbishes an incredible Indian mithya. Tolkien deity is the result of his desire for a pantheon of gods and the conflicting Christian pejorative. His deity is therefore a Christianized version of the 'pagan' gods. By maintaining that Iluvatar is Yahweh like and the Valar are evolved angels, Tolkien absolves himself of guilt associated with entertaining polytheistic tendencies. The position allows an indulgence in polytheism without the need to accept it for what it is.

Tripathi, on the other hand, spearheads the shift of transferring the gods from the boundaries of religion to entertainment. In such a shift, as Swati Daftuar notes that "the stories we grew up with can be dissected and analysed, and are not, indeed, sacrosanct" (n.pag.) and the gods are homogenized and removed from any specific religious identity. Devdutt Pattanaik states that in such a shift, one consumes Western heroic structures rooted in Greek and Abrahamic myths (n.pag.). Ashish Nandy believes that due to such a shift which results in deliberate erasure and reconfigurations of memory the deities of South Asia are dying (153). Analyzing such factors and aspects of mythopoeic deity construction, the chapter problematizes the reactions or lack thereof in their respective audience response and draws the implications of such a consumption of mythopoeic deity. Both mythopoeias invariably diverge from extant mythos/myth/mithya. But both authors decry, even while trying to exploit, the unorthodox position of their mythopoeic deities. Despite their deviancy from the extant mythos/myth/mithya they are popular popular fictions. The popular production and consumption of a mythopoeia may result in the latter becoming an acclimatized avatar of the extant mythos/myth/mithya. The chapter argues that it is therefore imperative that such mythopoeic renditions be brought under scrutiny.

Conclusion

This study of mythopoeia in popular fiction is important because of the following factors. For societies changing at pace, McCraken suggests that popular fiction "can supply us with the narrative we need to resituate ourselves in relation to the world" (17). Mythopoeia in popular fiction are narratives that help resituate ourselves in the mythical impasse of the world pointed out by Armstrong, Heller, Sterenberg, Bell and Freer. As section 1.2 illustrated, the genre of mythopoeia is mushrooming in popular fiction, film and ludology across the globe. With recent inroads into popular fiction, the research gap of mythopoeia in popular fiction provides

a much intriguing arena of study into the revisions, interpretation and making of myths and their appropriations into popular culture.

This study is one such inroad into this area. It situates mythopoeia in the larger tradition after mythos and myth, and predicates that mythopoeia can progress into mythos if assimilated and internalised by a culture. It is this progression of mythopoeia into mythos that this dissertation deems crucial to the study of mythopoeia. Popular fiction, by being popular by default provides a feasible area for this transformation. The dissertation showcases the importance of studying mythopoeia in popular fiction with a select study of the implications of consuming unorthodox mythopoeic deities. The case studies are based on the premise that the popular consumption of these mythopoeic deities can at least affect or at most replace the extant or extinct ones. The case studies reinstate the relevance of critiquing mythopoeias in popular fiction.

The dissertation establishes that it is imperative that mythopoeia especially in popular fiction be critically studied for mythopoeia can progress into mythos. It demonstrates how two diverse popular fiction authors construct deviant mythopoeic deities but is still consumed in popular demand. Tolkien packages polytheism as monotheism, and Tripathi conflates polytheism with euhemerism. It argues that these mythopoeic renditions can alter the extant mythos/myth/mithya. Such an implication necessitates that the genre of mythopoeia be scrutinized and critiqued and mythopoeic fiction be examined with a yardstick of its own. This dissertation has been one such endeavour to identify and explore the construction and implication of mythopoeia in popular fiction.

Notes

[1] Ludology/ Game Studies is a field devoted to the study of both analogue and digital games.

[2] Animism is the worldview that non-human entities—such as animals, plants, and inanimate objects—possess a spiritual essence (Stringer 541-556)

[3] The Gaia hypothesis, also known as Gaia theory or Gaia principle, proposes that all organisms and their inorganic surroundings on Earth are closely integrated to form a single and self-regulating complex system, maintaining the conditions for life on the planet.

[4] The Holy Grail was the vessel from which Jesus Christ drank at the Last Supper. Many works of European literature describe the quest for the lost Grail. They include Arthurian legends, Old French verse romances, 19th century Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and 20th century the novels of Charles Williams, C.S. Lewis and John Cowper Powys (British Library).

[5] Secondary World is a term used by Tolkien to refer to a consistent, fictional world or setting, created by a man, also called sub-creation, in contrast to the Reality, called Primary world. His views regarding the Secondary World can be found in more than one essay in The Monsters and the Critics.

[6] Secondary Belief is the term coined by Tolkien in consequence of his theories on sub-creation and Secondary Worlds. It is also in direct challenge to Coleridge's "willing suspension of disbelief". For a successful Secondary Belief the reader must be willingly let go of the expectations of consistency, logic and accountability of the Primary World. In simply stifling disbelief, Tolkien argues that suspension of any kind is not desirable in reading because "the moment disbelief arises, the spell is broken.... the "magic" or rather, the art has failed. You are then outside in the Primary World again, looking at the little abortive world." The distinction here is between the conscious state of simply indulging the story, as it were, and the unconscious effect of being genuinely transported by art (Abrahamsen n.pag.)

[7] *Poetic Edda* is the modern attribution for an unnamed collection of Old Norse poems. Several versions exist, all consisting primarily of text from the Icelandic mediaeval manuscript known as *The Codex Regius*. *The Codex Regius* is arguably the most important extant source on Norse mythology and Germanic heroic legends which has had a powerful influence on 19th century Scandinavian literatures.

[8] The *Kalevala* is a 19th-century work of epic poetry compiled by Elias Lönnrot from Karelian and Finnish oral folklore and mythology. It is regarded as the national epic of Karelia and Finland and is one of the most significant works of Finnish literature.

[9] Treebeard is a character in Middle-earth, eldest of the species of Ents (animated trees).

[10] Tom Bombadil is a supporting character who features in *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*, and appears in *The Fellowship of the Ring*

[11] Bhasha a word derived from Sanskrit, literally means language. It has come to signify regional languages.

[12] Karna is one of the central characters in the Hindu epic Mahabharata. He is the son of Surya (the Sun God) and Kunti, born to Kunti before her marriage. He is abandoned due to the stigma of being born out of wedlock. He is the half brother to the five Pandavas.

[13] Draupadi, who was also referred to as 'Panchali' is the wife of all five Pandavas

[14] Surpanakha is the sister of the main antagonist Ravana in *Ramayana*. It is the cutting of Surpanakha's nose that instigated the abduction of Sita by Ravana.

[15] The Kauravas are the hundred sons of the King of Hastinapur, Dhritarashtra, and his wife Gandhari who play a significant role in the Mahabharata. They were the cousins of the Pandavas. The Kurukshetra War, also called the Mahabharata War arose from a dynastic succession struggle between the two groups of cousins.

Chapter 2

Mythos to Myth to Mythopoeia: A Cyclical Process

> *"...our aim is not merely to create aesthetically admirable fiction.*
> *We must achieve neither mere history, nor mere fiction, but myth.*
> *A true myth is one which, within the universe of a certain*
> *culture...expresses richly, and often perhaps tragically, the highest*
> *aspirations possible within a culture." (Stapledon 9)*

"Human beings have always been mythmakers" (Armstrong 1). We make myths to situate ourselves in a larger cosmic order. We make myths to reassure ourselves against the fear of infinite regress. We make myths to make meaning of our lives. Both "for society at large and for the individual, this story-generating function seems irreplaceable" (Cupitt 89). Cats, as far as we know, do not ponder about the feline condition, worry about the plight of fellow cats elsewhere, or try to negotiate their position in the animal kingdom. Human beings on the other hand fall easily into despair. From the very beginning we invented stories to place our lives in a larger setting, which hinted an underlying pattern and gave us a sense that, in spite of the depressing and chaotic evidence to the contrary, life had meaning and value. It is this human tendency of myth-making which forms the foundation of mythopoeia.

Although this myth-making tendency is inherent and indispensable, ever since the 1950's, according to *OED,* there has come to

be a definite category called mythopoeia in fiction, film and ludology. This category interprets, revises and reproduces extant and extinct mythos and myth, in an attempt at redemption or restoration. The producers of mythopoeia in recent popular fiction, film and ludology as detailed in Section 1.1 have constructed some spectacular mythopoeias. While some have extended or modified extant and extinct mythos and myth, many have turned from a preservative and interpretative function to a whole new creative process of myth-making. But what purpose does mythopoeia serve that mythos and myth does not? How is mythopoeia relevant amidst mythos and myth?

There is s society called Mythopoeic Society that is devoted principally to the study of mythopoeic authors (C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Charles Williams etc.) This should be a reasonable starting place for any enquiry, but Jared C. Lobdell informs us that "its members (like other critics) cannot always agree on what is meant by the word" (161), let alone its relevance amidst mythos and myth. If we were to turn to a dictionary the result is equally confounding. The *OED*'s definition of mythopoeia as the "making of myth/myths" raises the question—Can myths be made? If yes, then can these man-made myths function as myths? *ODLT*'s definition of mythopoeia as the "individual and collective making of myths" hovers between the markers—individual and collective. Does this imply that myths made by an individual can become myths of the "collective unconscious" (Jung 19)?

If we were to turn to critical discourse, mythopoeia is defined in various ways. Baron Bunsen calls mythopoeia "myth building" (450), but whether this building of myth is dependent, independent or extenuates extant myth or mythos is not addressed. Alan Dundes calls mythopoeia "artificial mythology" (Adcox n.pag.). Does this artificiality imply that mythopoeia cannot be appropriated as myths of popular culture, and are

merely copies? Douglas A. Anderson's opinion of it as "new mythology" is equally conflicting. The term mythology refers to texts that are bound to practices and belief systems, extinct or extant, and requires some kind of rootedness in a particular time and space. Calling mythopoeia new mythology when it is yet to be conclusively proved as internalised by a community, can seem not thought through. J. A. Cuddon in *Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* defines mythopoeia as "the conscious creation of myth". The description of mythopoeia as creation can be pinned as contradictory. How can Cuddon claim mythopoeic literature to be a creation which inherently implies a preceding state of nothingness. If mythopoeia is built from the larger tradition of mythos and myth, such a description may prove inaccurate. M. Alan Kazlev identifies mythopoeia as anything ranging from "... [folk] creation stories to the epics of Homer or Vyasa to ... fiction writing, cinema, and more recently even computer gaming... [all of which portray]... a socio-cultural, anthropomorphic and materialistic representations of imagined cosmological realities" (14). The myths of Homer and Vyasa have indeed crossed over into the collective unconscious. Will similar endeavours in fiction, film and ludology share the same fate? Joseph Campbell similarly tells us that the "world today has outlived much of the mythology of the past... new myths must be created... [and] mythopoeia... fill[s] a niche for mythology in the modern world". Does this mean that mythopoeia is the next generation of the mythical tradition?

This chapter is an enquiry into this contemporary category of mythopoeia in the mythical tradition. In exploring the above questions, the chapter asks**: a) Where in the mythical tradition do we place mythopoeia? b) Is mythopoeia a mere redemption of myth? c) Can mythopoeia transcend from the threshold of art to being a part of the collective unconscious?** The sections that follow engage with these questions in this order. 2.1 A Short History of Mythos to Myth to

Mythopoeia, situates mythopoeia in the mythical tradition after mythos, religion, myth, and the absence of myth. 2.2 Tolkien's Mythopoeia posits that mythopoeia is the restoration and redemption of the incredible myth, thereby surpassing not only myth but becoming as appealing as mythos. 2.3 Mythopoeia to Mythos takes off from the preceding section and establishes the prospects of mythopoeia as plausible mythos.

2.1 A Short History of Mythos to Myth to Mythopoeia

Where in the mythical tradition do we place mythopoeia? Karen Armstrong sums up the history of mythos to myth and inserts mythopoeia at the end as the contemporary inflection in the mythical tradition. In her book *A Short History of Myth*, Armstrong posits that myth-making originated with mythos in the primordial times, mythos regressed into myth during enlightenment, and myth evolved into mythopoeia in the modern era. This chapter is an enquiry into the final category of mythopoeia. But one cannot simply begin at the end. We cannot discuss mythopoeia without venturing into myth. We cannot broach myth without understanding mythos. This section therefore begins with a short history of this mythical tradition that culminates in mythopoeia.

Armstrong establishes that mythos, the inchoate form of mythopoeia, originated in the Palaeolithic[1] Age amongst indigenous aborigines. For these primal hunting communities mythos was as essential to their survival as their weapons. It sustained the weaker man in the dangerous wild. It explained the mysteries of nature.

> "When these early people looked at a stone, they did not see an inert, unpromising rock. It embodied strength, permanence, solidity and an absolute mode of being that was quite different from the vulnerable human state. Its very otherness made it holy" (12).

When the Palaeolithic man became Neolithic[2], he transformed from the hunter to the farmer. The agrarian man saw farming as just another sacrament like hunting. The earth and seasons were venerated. Discovery of fertility lead to creations stories and vegetation gods. Aridity and famine were associated with deities departing to the underworld. Mythos became equipped with structured pantheons of gods, their tales and rituals. The phase that followed next was the rise of the early civilizations, first in Mesopotamia and Egypt, and later in China, India and Crete. Man moved from the lap of nature to the polis. He became self-sufficient and self-confident. Mythos was no longer indispensable or awe-inspiring. It began to accommodate men alongside the gods. The erstwhile vulnerable man began what started and till date exists as a love hate relationship with the gods. By eight hundred BCE, the focus of mythos completely shifted from god to man. Man became conscious of suffering that seemed an inescapable part of the human condition. He deliberated upon himself, his life, society, and the world. Sages preached an ethic of morality, comport, justice and the quest for truth (Armstrong 1-18). Mythos was gradually replaced or appropriated into systems such as: "Confucianism and Taoism in China; Buddhism and Hinduism in India; monotheism in the Middle East and Greek rationalism in Europe" (32). German philosopher Karl Jaspers called this period the 'Axial Age' or the birth of the evolved and institutionalised version of mythos—Religion (Jaspers 51).

When religion contemplated mythos, each adopted different positions. Some were hostile to certain mythical aspects and others adopted a laissez-faire stance. But almost all of them extenuated mythos, giving myths their own ethical interpretation. The dual parameters of story and ritual continued to structure religions also. Armstrong states that since the Axial age there has been no comparable change in the tradition of mythos/religion for over a millennium (19). We continued to rely on the

insights of the aforementioned sages and philosophers, and the status of these religions remained the same until the sixteenth century CE.

The sixteenth century saw the conflict of logos and mythos. Where mythos required emotional participation or ritual mimesis to make any sense, logos established the truth by means of careful inquiry appealing to the critical intelligence. The seeds of this conflict, sown as early as in Greece, birthed western scepticism, which would affect religion in the following centuries. The western scepticism which greatly affected the status quo of mythos, is associated with the west mainly because the western religions, especially the three monotheistic faiths, claim, at least in part, to be historically rather than mythically based, and are therefore at odds with myth. Asian religions, on the other hand have a less ambivalent attitude to mythos. In Hinduism, myths are the vehicles of spiritual knowledge. "Myth in Buddhism is used at various intellectual levels in order to give symbolic… expression to [its] religious teachings" (Nakamura et al. n.pag.). In Confucianism, ritual has always been as important as narratives and therefore mythical customs were conducive (Arogyaswamy 118). But the Abrahamic[3] religions believe that their god has been active in history and the stories were actual events in this world. And therefore the question 'did these stories really happen or are they 'only' myths?' propelled the next phase of change— **from the credible mythos to the incredible myth**.

Literacy was the first toll which altered people's perception of the sacred mythos. If read outside the ritual context, it was easy to approach it in a secular manner like any other modern text. The rhetoric of science was the next blow to its credibility. *The Origin of Species* challenged the creation story. Friedrich Nietzsche proclaimed that God was dead. Nietzsche's Madman[4] asks: "Is there still an above or below? Do we not stray, as though through an infinite nothingness?" (Nietzsche 181).

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Ludwig Feuerbach argued that religion alienated people from their humanity and Karl Marx saw religion as the symptom of a sick society (Bober 65). The West were beginning to think that religion was pointless. By the end of the nineteenth century, the eclipse of logos over mythos seemed complete. This was the scientific age, and people wanted to believe that. French mathematician Blaise Pascal contemplated upon this shift:

> When I see the blind and wretched state of men, when I survey the whole universe in its deadness, and man left to himself with no light, as though lost in this corner of the universe without knowing who put him there, what he has to do, or what will become of him when he dies, incapable of knowing anything, I am moved to terror, like a man transported in his sleep to some terrifying desert island, who wakes up quite lost, with no means of escape. Then I marvel that so wretched a state does not drive people to despair. (209)

But he may have been wrong about his final perception. People did despair. The twentieth century presented us with one nihilistic icon after another. "Our demythologised world…was not the earthly paradise predicted by Bacon and Locke" (Armstrong 58). The dark epiphanies of the twentieth century, W.H. Auden in 1948 catalogued as the spiritual barrenness of modern life, science's epistemological pretensions, a lack of shared values, the excess of consumerism, the banality of mass culture, the alienating effect of contemporary urban existence and the emotional estrangement produced by the mass media (191). He posited that the inhabitants of the twentieth century were:

> …faced with the modern problem, i.e., of living in a society in which men are no longer supported by tradition without being aware of it, and in which, therefore, every individual who wishes to bring order and coherence into the stream of sensations,

emotions, and ideas entering his consciousness, from without and within, is forced to do deliberately for himself what in previous ages has been done for him by family, custom, church, and state, namely the choice of the principles and presuppositions in terms of which he can make sense of his experience. (191-92)

Scott Freer likens this twentieth century citizen to Stephen Dedalus[5] who is caught between an apparent deicide and the cold waters of nihilism (2). Dedalus "is neither the fully converted atheist nor the God-believing Jesuit... [his] post-religious position is vague and nihilism is not the adequate response" (2-3). His character which voices the "protean poetics of uncertainty" (3) reflects this period characterised by a "post-religious indeterminism" where one could find solace neither in religion nor science.

Sophia Heller's book *The Absence of Myth* documents this phase. She calls this period of indeterminism the "Absence of Myth" for the century, she claims, was devoid of a "mythic consciousness" having undergone a "loss of a religious mode of being-in-the-world" (1). The "Absence of myth... is evidenced by our lack of cult and ritual, and by our de-animated natural world, as well as in the emergence of conceptual thought and psychological awareness, which could only arise with the dissolution of a pre-reflective (mythic) mode of being-in-the-world" (Ibid). Heller believes this period of mythical vacuum lead to yet another turning point— **a return to myth**. The individual sought a mythical alternative, an alternative that was "guided not by divine dictates but swollen instead with humankind's ideas about myth and the need for a comparable substitute" (3). He "continually unearth[ed], redefine[ed], and recontextualize[ed] such that modern and postmodern notions of myth are made to substitute for something that has never been experienced, only imagined" (1). Sterenberg also notes this turn to myth in his dissertation

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"Myth and the Modern Problem: Myth Making in Twentieth-Century Britain". He illustrates how the "vacuum of meaning caused by the absence of inherited presuppositions and metanarratives that imposed coherence on the flow of experience" (3) lead to a return to "mythic thinking" which according to him is the "belief that myths... were indispensible frameworks for interpreting experience and essential tools for coping with and criticizing modernity". He illustrates how this "mythic thinking" was followed by "myth making" the design to show that ancient myths had revelatory power for modern life, and that modernity required creation of new mythic narratives. He designates the arch-modernist T.S. Eliot in the 1920's, the fantasist J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis in the 1930's and the avant-garde novelist J.G. Ballard in the 1960's as "mythic thinkers" and "myth-makers". He states that the return to myth was justified with the claims that myth gave access to deeper truths than historical or scientific explanation, and that it offered a unique means of coping with the psychological pressures that modernity brought to bear on the individual. Mythic thinkers and myth-makers targeted scientism, excessive rationalism, secularization, mass culture, and the alienation of urban life. Sterenberg insists that this turn to myth is the most audacious and unique twentieth-century attempt to fill the vacuum or the impasse here discussed (10-11).

But how exactly does one return to myth? Mythos is extinct. Religion is rigid. And myth has been established as something that is simply not true. When we hear of gods walking the earth, of dead men rising, or seas miraculously parting, we dismiss these stories as incredible and demonstrably untrue. Since enlightenment, we developed a scientific view of history. "... [T]he kind of society once held together by public myth, and the sacred kings and official religion that went with it, despite occasional nostalgia is not one in which most people today would really want to live" (Ellwood 151). But Armstrong argues that in addition to our

rational inclination, we have an irrational side too. We still want stories of an origin. We still want stories of apocalypse. We still want to be transported to sublime realms, beyond our ordinary concerns (30). An answer to this dilemma came in the form of mythopoeia.

Michael Bell, one of the first critics who exclusively address mythopoeia, in *Literature, Modernism and Myth* believes that mythopoeia is the counterbalance to this dilemma. The modern individual entertaining mythopoeia practices a "double consciousness" in which he is well aware that his world view is relative and illusory. He is also aware that any worldview "cannot be transcendentally grounded or privileged over other worldviews" (1) but is nevertheless a necessary "condition of life". This intermediate position of mythopoeia, Freer calls "twilight". In *Modernist Mythopoeia: Twilight of the Gods*, Freer place mythopoeia in the twilight zone "between the doctrinal language of religion and the reductive materialism of secular dogma" (7). He urges us to disabuse ourselves of the popular notion that myth is false or that it represents an inferior mode of thought. He admits that we cannot cancel out the rational bias of our education and return to a pre-modern sensibility, but we can acquire a more educated attitude to mythology. He believes that mythopoeia is a transfigurative language, or suitable art form, which can serve as the deliverance for the post religious individual (7-15).

Mythopoeia thus perches precariously on this wall built by the remains of a primordial mythos, and incredible myth and the resulting mythical vacuum. It is what Armstrong believes to be the solution to the problematic impasse between religion and science and their problematic relationship with each other. It is what Heller believes to be the respite for the mythically adrift man. It is what Bell calls a double consciousness. It is what Freer calls the "twilight of a secular myth" (7). If mythos is the rudimentary form of religion and myth the defunct form of religion,

mythopoeia would be what Susan Gubar calls "redemptive recovering" (311) of what mythos or religion has lost. Mythos, religion and myth have become mythical due to a metaphoric disorientation. Mythopoeia is a "hermeneutic intervention" (Freer 8) which produces a new narrative as a part of myth's reconstructive process. If myth is a distorted metaphor for the human condition, mythopoeia is a deliberate change in the signified of the signifier. This is why Freer calls mythopoeia the result of hermeneutic confusion. Does mythopoeia provides for something that is beyond the limits of myth? I believe it does. Mythopoeia reaches beyond the limits of myth to achieve something akin to mythos. The following sections illustrate this contention.

2.2 Tolkien's Mythopoeia

Is mythopoeia a mere redemption of myth? The answer to this question is not that simple. Mythopoeia is neither a mere pastiche of myth nor a simulacrum of mythos. It takes off from the incredible myth. It moves towards a make belief mythos. But unless we enter and immerse ourselves into this make belief, it will remain as incomprehensible and remote like the rules of a board game, which often seem confusing and boring until we start to play. In order to illustrate the dynamics of mythopoeia, this section discusses Tolkien's simple but succinct account of how mythopoeia moves beyond myth. I use Tolkien's rules of this board game to further the prospects of mythopoeia.

In September 19, 1931, Inklings, a group of Oxford authors which included J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis and Hugo Dyson, discussed at length about metaphor, mythology and myth-making being the fundamentals of men. The night is regarded as the seminal moment which planted in the minds of Tolkien and Lewis the seeds of mythopoeia. Tolkien's idea of mythopoeia was different from Lewis'. According to him, Lewis' mythopoeia ended up being a fantastic world of Christian allegories, and

mythopoeia is above allegory and fantasy (Tolkien xi). To reiterate his point, Tolkien composed the poem "Mythopoeia" which perhaps can be called Tolkien's manifesto of his mythopoeia. His views on mythopoeia have also been detailed in prose. His essay "On Fairy Stories" (hereafter OFS) is a guide to his mythopoeia-making. The essay came into being as a rebuttal to the then existing views (especially Andrew Lang, George Dassent and Max Müller) on fairy tales. It was published in 1947, ten years after the first novel *The Hobbit* (1937), and sixteen years after the poem "Mythopoeia" (1931). The essay explicates what he considers to be a fairy story rather than mythopoeia but I am convinced that the essay is a blue print to Tolkien's idea of mythopoeia. I believe it is this concept of a fairy story that developed into mythopoeia and on which he based the rest of his works that would complete the tapestry that is Middle-Earth. J. Reilly points out briefly that the trilogy (*The Fellowship of the Ring, The Two Towers*, and *The Return of the King*) accords generally with the specifications that Tolkien laid down for the fairy story (90). Lewis' review of the second and third volumes of the trilogy devotes some space defending the work on a basis which is evidently Tolkien's "OFS", although Lewis does not mention this. Therefore I juxtapose the essay with the concept of mythopoeia to unveil Tolkien's position on creating mythopoeia from myth.

According to Tolkien, the process of making mythopoeia is a complex one. He elaborates this process as involving "independent invention, inheritance, and diffusion". Of these three, invention is heralded as the most important and fundamental. Inheritance and diffusion are but ingredients of invention. Inheritance is "borrowing in time" from "one or more centuries". It denotes an ancestral inventor who is a source or an inspiration to a story on a temporal scale. Diffusion is "borrowing in space", and refers to an origin of a story elsewhere on a spatial scale. The inventor invents through a process of inheritance from a predecessor

and/or diffusion from another culture. To an inventor, the other two (inheritance and diffusion) must in the end lead back to inventing. According to Tolkien, compared to invention, inheritance and diffusion are irrelevant. It is with invention or when a "new form is made… [that] Man becomes a sub-creator" ("OFS" 12). It is this invention which confers the pedestal of "sub creation" ("Mythopoeia") that makes mythopoeia.

But often, the limelight shifts from the invention that is mythopoeia to inheritance and diffusion which entails myth. This according to Tolkien is intolerable. It is "akin to losing sight of the forest for the trees...the stories need to be appreciated as they are as a whole, rather than in relation to their various parts" (Indick 18). Tolkien further argues that the process of making mythopoeia from myth is like making soup, where what is important is the soup and not its ingredients. "We must be satisfied with the soup that is set before us, and not desire to see the bones of the ox out of which it has been boiled" ("OFS" 137). By "the soup" he means the story as it is served up by its author and by "the bones" the myths it is inspired from. Often, according to Tolkien, mythopoeia is undermined as a reproduction of myth. Rather than looking to mythopoeia, source critics analyse myth which according to Tolkien is disparaging (Caldecott and Honegger 51). In 1966 Tolkien called the source critic "a man who having eaten anything, from a salad to a well-planned dinner, uses an emetic, and sends the results for chemical analysis" (as cited in Fisher 30). Myth, Tolkien believes, do not determine the constructed mythopoeia. In "OFS", he states that a story cannot be held in contempt because of an early congener. He believes that investigators who study recurring similarities between a source and a story are misled. According to him statements like

> *Beowulf* 'is only a version of *Dat Erdmänneken'*; that '*The Black Bull of Norroway* is *Beauty and the Beast*,' or 'is the same story as Eros and Psyche'; that the Norse *Mastermaid* (or the *Gaelic Battle*

> *of the Birds* and its many congeners and variants) is 'the same
> story as the Greek tale of Jason and Medea' ("OFS" 117)

may convey some element of truth; but "it is precisely the coloring, atmosphere, unclassifiable individual details of a story, and above all the general purport that informs with life the undissected bones of the plot, that really count" (5). In other words, he believes that mythopoeia is as important as myth. In fact he was fain to add that mythopoeia is above myth.

In his poem "Mythopoeia", he remarks on how myths of the Primary World have been recycled to such an extent that they have become "trite". According to Tolkien mythopoeia was not just recycling of the myths of the Primary World. Its purpose was to redeem the "triteness" of myth. Tolkien stresses on this primary nature of mythopoeia which does not conform to its precedent myth.

> I will not walk with your progressive apes, erect and sapient...
> I will not treat your dusty path and flat, denoting this and that by
> this and that...
> I bow not yet before the Iron Crown, nor cast my own small golden
> sceptre down. ("Mythopoeia")

These lines while snubbing the "triteness" of the primary world and its myths foretells his conviction in the liberating nature of the secondary world that is mythopoeia.

Tolkien's idea of mythopoeia as the Secondary World is what truly gives mythopoeia an edge over myth. Myth is myth because it has lost its credibility. Mythopoeia is made out of myth in an attempt to redeem or restore credibility, no matter how fantastic that credibility may be. In other words mythopoeia is a make belief world but a credible one. Tolkien calls this aspect a Secondary World which runs on Secondary Belief. He

believes that an author in constructing mythopoeia creates a 'Secondary World' into which the reader enters. When inside this Secondary World, the reader practices a Secondary Belief. Reilly in his book chapter "Tolkien and the Fairy Story" hypothesizes that behind Tolkien's notion of Secondary world and Secondary Belief is Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Secondary Imagination, "an echo of the Primary Imagination that creates and perceives the world of reality" (97). This may very well be true. Mythopoeia is a product of the "esemplastic"[6] imagination. But Tolkien's Secondary Belief moves beyond Coleridge's "willing suspension of disbelief" (239) for Secondary Belief is more than a kind of acceptance or tacit agreement. It is what Ajana Indu Priya calls self-referentiality of mythopoeia (2). Self-referentiality entails that mythopoeia should function on a mythopoeic reality and its own set of rules. It would be independent of any outside references. The reader who enters the system is required to accept this hyper-reality. Tolkien believes that if mythopoeia is truly successful the reader lets go of the Primary World and Primary Belief system and immerses himself in the Secondary World practicing Secondary Belief system. This process of making a world in which a green sun will be credible requires labour, thought and special skill, "a kind of elvish craft" ("OFS" 126). He states that few writers attempt such a difficult task, but when attempted and accomplished we then have a rare achievement of Art. It is this rare achievement of Art that he calls mythopoeia. It is this ideal mythopoeia that surpasses myth.

The purpose of the ideal mythopoeia is fourfold. Tolkien elaborates them as Recovery, Escape, Consolation and Eucatastrophe. Please note that these are parameters that largely mimic mythos. The first stipulation is Recovery. By Recovery, Tolkien means to remember what we had known but forgotten. It recovers the original intention of a story that has now become "trite" due to appropriation. According to Tolkien, Recovery is not "seeing things as we are (or were) meant to see them". It

involves "clean[ing] our windows; so that the things seen clearly may be freed from the drab blur of triteness or familiarity". Recovery can be equated to defamiliarisation[7]. It "make[s] new" our old perception. Indick notes that Wordsworth, in his famous sonnet "The World is Too Much with Us", expresses a similar yearning for Recovery.

> Great God! I'd rather be
> A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
> So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
> Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
> Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
> Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn. (53)

The second parameter is Escape. Tolkien's notion of Escape is akin to the concept of escapist literature. But Tolkien sees it as a positive to divert oneself from the unchanging verities of human existence. Tolkien is aware of the scorn attached to "escapist" literature but believes that the fundamental reason why myths were invented was to escape from the trials and tribulations of real life. It is the oldest and deepest desire, to escape from the fear of infinite regress. Escape therefore is the fundamental aspect of mythopoeia. Following thereafter is the third parameter, Consolation, the reward for good and comeuppance for evil. This parameter, as is self-evident, is the "imaginative satisfaction of ancient desires" (22), good prevailing over evil, a blessing in disguise, the reward of karma, or any such effects that provides man with hope. The final or the climactic fourth marker is Eucatastrophe. Eucatastrophe, Tolkien's idea of the opposite of catastrophe in Tragedy, is

> ...the sudden joyous "turn" (for there is no true end to any fairy-
> tale)… miraculous grace: never to be counted on to recur. It does
> not deny the existence of dyscatastrophe, of sorrow and failure: the
> possibility of these is necessary to the joy of deliverance; it denies
> (in the face of much evidence, if you will) universal final defeat

and in so far is evangelium, giving a fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world, poignant as grief. (22)

When the eagles swoop into battle in the final scenes of *The Hobbit*; when Aslan bounds into battle just as the White Witch seems to be gaining the upper hand in *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*, in that moment of Eucatastrophe we discover that Joy Tolkien described as a "sudden glimpse of the underlying reality or truth." Trevor Hart notes that Eucatastrophe is similar to the mechanism of deus ex machina, although it can also occur without it. C.S. Lewis believed that Eucatastrophe is a way to extend the narrative of hope into a hopeless world, a means to smuggle Joy past the "watchful dragons," (37) an image Lewis liked as a reference to those inhibitions that keep religion at arm's length.

Mythopoeia the Secondary world with a Secondary Belief system which provides Recovery, Escape, Consolation and Eucatastrophe help compromise the "real world, so full of unanswerable questions and irresolvable problems" (Indick 19.) with the mythopoeic world "in which mysteries of creation are beheld, and the underlying forces of nature are revealed" (Ibid.), and true resolution is achieved. Mythopoeia redeems myth through Recovery. It provides Escape and Consolation like mythos. It promises Eucatastrophe that like mythos and elevates the man to a higher level. It is such a mythopoeia that becomes the ideal one.

Tolkien's idea of ideal mythopoeia functions like mythos. It is ideal because it provides "a totally coherent world-scape", "a structure that is so self-consistent and varied it will withstand any amount of probing" (Walker 13). Roland Barthes discusses a similar concept in relation to Jules Verne's fiction. Barthes finds that Verne in his fiction built a self-sufficient cosmogony[8] which has its own time, space and even an existential principle. This existential principle, according to him, is necessary for the "man-child's seclusion of himself in his play world"

(Barthes 65). "[T]he man-child re-invents the world, fills it, closes it, shuts himself up in it, and crowns this encyclopaedic effort with the bourgeois posture of appropriation..." (Barthes 65). An ideal mythopoeia also encloses the man-child in his play world. In fact the enthuse of the man-child, to reinvent the world and enclose himself in it, is an apt anomaly that suits the mythopoeic author. Unlike the open ended reality we live in, a mythopoeic writer builds a closed world for himself. He creates a Secondary World devoid of doubts that plague mankind. Tolkien describes this trait as follows:

> Yes! 'wish-fulfilment dreams' we spin to cheat
> our timid hearts and ugly Fact defeat! ("Mythopoeia")

Mythopoeia thus becomes a wish-fulfilment Secondary World that the heart and mind can escape to leaving the Primary World behind. The encapsulation in a fictive time and space plugs our fear of infinite regress. A mythopoeic world, constant and closed, succeeds in secluding and protecting man from the glitches of the real. According to Tolkien a writer may refuse to write about the world in which he lives in not out of cowardice which is the usual accusation, but because to write about it is in a sense to accept it. And the very reason why he/she creates mythopoeia is to allow and live in "one facet of a truth incalculably rich". This immersion in a make-belief world provides a satisfaction of "primordial human desires". It is the major consolation that mythopoeia has to offer that no other literature can equal.

Mythopoeia is the sceptre that allows man to escape from the fear of infinite regress that myth no longer provides insulation against. Myth is myth because it has lost its credibility. Mythopoeia is made out of myth fragments in an attempt to redeem or restore credibility, no matter how fantastic that credibility may be. In other words mythopoeia is a make belief world but a credible one. It is these aspects that make **mythopoeia**

better than myth. It is these markers that make **mythopoeia as appealing as mythos**. An ideal mythopoeia, ideal in the sense that it may achieve the status of mythos, can progress into mythos. The next section takes up this progression of mythopoeia. It argues that the natural progression of an ideal mythopoeia is mythos.

2.3 Mythopoeia to Mythos

Can mythopoeia transition into being mythos? Joseph Campbell believes that our society has outlived much of the mythology of the past. He claims that new myths must be created and mythopoeia fills this niche for mythology in the modern world. In other words, he considers mythopoeia as a replacement for mythos. But can mythopoeia serve as mythos? I believe it can and it will, but the process is as gradual as time. Mythopoeia does not function like mythos initially, nor are they essentially the same. Mythos, for one, is an authorless, collective and a dynamic process weathered by time and space. Mythopoeia, on the other hand, is produced by a lone mind in momentary inspiration. It is bound in a text, not prone to time and space. It is the end product of creativity, unlike myth which is a process in itself. Mythopoeia can be shared with an audience but it is yet to be internalised by a social psyche. The author and his readers can engage with it in a "willing suspension of disbelief" (Coleridge 239), but it is unlike mythos which exists in the "collective unconscious" (Jung 19) as "false consciousness" (Barthes 3). Mythos is not limited to the boundaries of art while mythopoeia is. With such a disparity in the very nature of things, it may seem that mythopoeia cannot serve as mythos. But I believe mythopoeia, with time, can serve as mythos.

When an author creates mythopoeia from myth, he does so because those myths no longer serve their purpose. When mythopoeia is constructed in accordance with the need of the time, the old myth may be forsaken and the mythopoeia may be accepted. If an audience or a

community were to internalise the mythopoeia, the mythopoeia can transition into mythos. The extant or extinct myth may be replaced with mythopoeia or the mythopoeic version may become the accepted version. It is at this juncture that the **mythopoeia transitions into mythos**. If in the course of history this mythopoeia-turned-mythos is no longer appealing or credible, it may become myth yet again. This juncture may demand the construction of another mythopoeia yet again. This process would recur repeatedly to perform the same functions. The attires of mythos, myth and mythopoeia may be different, but their functions and dysfunction remain similar or as extension of the preceding other.

This potential transition of mythopoeia to mythos can be corroborated if we were to consider the conception of the first mythos. Armstrong contemplates that "[T]he Neanderthals who prepared their dead companion for a new life were, perhaps, engaged in the same game of spiritual make-believe that is common to all mythmakers: 'What if this world were not all that there is?'" (3). The answer to this question may have become the mythos of the Neanderthals. The answer to the question may have been posited by some Neanderthal at some point. The answer may have been weaved like a story and internalised by the Neanderthal community. The first mythos thus had to have been made at some juncture. It had to be made by somebody, somewhere, sometime. In that inchoate state every mythos is mythopoeia. This mythopoeic mythos then evolved to such a degree that it no longer belonged to a particular source. If one were to go with this supposition and mythopoeia is placed at the head of mythos, then it would follow that mythopoeia is the inchoate form of myth-making. Mythopoeia becomes mythos. Mythos regresses into myth. Myth fragments reforms into mythopoeia. And this mythopoeia if internalised by a community may progress to mythos, making the tradition of myth-making cyclical.

The cyclical nature of the mythical tradition can be substantiated with Sophia Heller's and William Indick's position on mythical archetypes. Heller believes that when mythos becomes myth and there occurs an absence of myth, the mythically adrift man may construct a "personal myth. A "personal myth" is an individual's "my story, my myth, to satisfy if only for myself the need for a meaningful life in a meaningful world, irrespective of a world reality that may indicate otherwise". Personal myth "perform[s] the functions of explaining, confirming, guiding, and sacralizing experience for the individual in a manner analogous to the way cultural myths once served those functions to an entire society" (138–39). Mythopoeia is one such personal myth constructed by an author. Indick in reference to mythical archetypes also discusses a similar concept. According to Indick an individual may construct what he calls an "individual myth" which is nothing but a story "an outflowing of preexisting images and ideas from the unconscious". Unlike Heller, Indick takes this concept forwards. He posits that if this revelation of an individual is internalized by his culture it becomes a part of that culture's myth and folklore. In other words, it becomes what he calls a "collective myth". These dual parameters, according to Indick are cyclical in nature. When the individual myth evolves with that culture, becoming a collective myth, it is "reborn in the dreams and imaginations of the next generation, and are transmitted from generation to generation and culture to culture in a never-ending cycle" (20). Mythopoeia is nothing but Indick's "individual myth" or Heller's "personal myth" which if assimilated by a society becomes "collective myth". Once internalised by a community it ceases to be mythopoeia. Once incorporated into a culture it becomes mythos. **This process of myth to mythopoeia to mythos and back again is a cyclical process**.

In Campbell's perspective, it would not matter whether mythopoeia arose from invention, inheritance or diffusion. Mythopoeia

fulfils the function of mythos for both story teller and his audience which is why it is invented, indulged in and shared with. Mythopoeia arises as an authorial expression of what Indick calls "individual anxieties and psychological conflicts [that] reside in the phantasmagoric part of the psyche called the imagination". It is then expressed by the author through the gateway of imagination. This is why, Jung believed, many artists and writers experience the art of creation as a form of catharsis rather than as a deliberate or conscious act of invention (93). The artist does not produce mythopoeia from scratch; rather, he reproduces mythical motifs that emerge spontaneously from the recesses of his imagination. If this revelation of the individual, or mythopoeia, finds collective acceptance within that individual's culture, it becomes part of that culture's mythos. It is consumed by the children of that culture, moulded somewhat by time and place, are reborn in the dreams and imaginations of generation after generation.

Mythopoeia turned mythos in the course of time and space, may become myth. Mythos is the only blissful first half after the mythopoeic span. Mythopoeia initially being a construct of the author alone is debarred from outside interference. But once it is shared with an audience and assimilated into the real world, the boundaries of mythopoeia burgeon to include more and more partakers. Once it is appropriated into the collective psyche, it is incessantly bombarded, questioned and refuted. It becomes a permeable system, prone to flux or open to interpretations. It loses its self-referentiality and seclusion, and the Secondary Belief system is broken. It becomes credible no more. Like mythos turns into myth, mythopoeia turned mythos can regress into myth. The impasse repeats itself producing a need for a new mythopoeia once again. Mythopoeia to mythos to myth and back again is therefore a cyclical process in the mythical tradition.

This never-ending cycle is tailored every time authors dream up new or more relevant means of expressing older ideas. The mythopoeia perpetually changes yet remains essentially an extension of its precedent. Mythopoeia drives the "progression of our imagination into the future while simultaneously linking us to the distant past" (Indick 21) retaining in its essence the purpose of the "primordial human who journeyed into the depths of his own psyche and emerged from the abyss with the symbol of insight and wisdom that have been with us since the dawn of humankind, carried forward by his descendants in an unending chain of fantasy and imagination" (Ibid.)

This cyclical progression of mythopoeia to mythos can be further corroborated if conlang to language transition is considered. Mythos is to language what conlang is to mythopoesis. A conlang is a constructed language whose phonology, grammar and vocabulary have been consciously devised. It is product of singular authorial creation. It is built out of language fragments and may resemble its parent languages. It is first shared with a minute group who may partake in its creation and assimilation with limited proprietary. It may later become a communal engagement. Initially it is not susceptible to change. But once it is assimilated into the society, it evolves from being a conscious engagement to a subconscious one. It becomes subject to flux and dynamicity. In other words it may progress into language. There are several extant conlangs today that were either produced for linguistic experimentation, for artistic creation, for language games or primarily due to necessity. There are some successful conlangs that have become language.

The Klingon is a conlang that is widely popular. It was popularised with the *Star Trek* universe. The language was constructed in 1985 by Marc Okrand and published in the form of *The Klingon Dictionary*. The movie *Star Trek* marked the first time the language was heard on screen.

Klingon was then subsequently developed by Okrand into a full-fledged language complete with grammar. The play *A Klingon Christmas Carol* was produced entirely in Klingon. Four Klingon translations of works of world literature have been published: the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, *Hamlet*, *Much Ado About Nothing* and *Tao Te Ching*. A small number of people are capable of conversing in Klingon but according to linguist Arika Okrent, as its vocabulary is heavily centred on concepts such as spacecraft or warfare, it is cumbersome for everyday use (273). But some other conlangs have succeeded in transitioning as language.

An example of a conlang turned language is Esperanto, a conlang created in the late 1870s and early 1880s by Ludwig Lazarus Zamenhof in Białystok, an earlier part of Russia. Esperanto was fashioned as a common language between Russians, Poles, Germans and Jews to facilitate communication. Today, it has an estimated two million speakers. Arika Okrent states:

> But in terms of invented languages, it's the most outlandishly successful invented language ever. It has thousands of speakers — even native speakers — and that's a major accomplishment as compared to the 900 or so other languages that have no speakers." (Zaskey n.pag.)

Esperanto is evidence to the fact that conlangs may evolve through history and reaches a point where it becomes language. This conlang turned language in the course of appropriation, alteration and assimilation may also cease to be spoken. Its fragments may give rise to yet another conlang. This like mythopoeia and mythos may also become a transitive process.

The birth, life and death of a conlang is similar to that of mythopoeia. Both are conceived by a single mind. Both are consumed by a

community. The consumers partake in this production initially with limited proprietary, but once assimilated into a culture it becomes a part of it. Conlang or mythopoeia is not at first but may later be subject to flux and dynamicity like language and myth. They become susceptible to space and time and may become irrelevant and extinct. Its fragments may aid in another mythopoeia or conlang.

Every mythopoeia would thus have the potential to become mythos. This potential of mythopoeia to become mythos is ineludible. Kenneth Burke relates this tendency to Aristotle's principle of 'entelechy' or 'actualization of potential', the process by which an acorn insists on becoming a full-grown oak, or a child insists on becoming a mature adult. He claims that in making myth we trace the stages by which a new and perfect myth can be generated and sustained. He believes that in making myth we mimic the first makers (105). This will inevitably involve some hypothesis, since few people can claim to have been present when the first mythos was independently invented. Nevertheless, for myth makers, mythopoeia might offer, for the duration of the narrative, not just an effective narrative, but an approximation to the totality of mythos. It is this totality of mythos which an author attempts to achieve when making mythopoeia.

We arrive at this conjecture by understanding mythopoeia not in isolation but as a part of the larger mythical tradition. We arrive at this conjecture by not limiting our analysis to how myth determines or limits mythopoeia, but by following the natural and probable progression of mythopoeia. Often, as we saw in Armstrong, Heller, Sterenberg, Bell, Freer etc, mythopoeia does not receive its due credit amidst the larger discourses of myth. It is removed from spotlight in favour of what Tolkien calls inheritance and diffusion. It is only when mythopoeia is perceived in

the larger picture, that we can understand it as a part of the cyclical mythical tradition.

Campbell's claim that that our society has outlived much of the mythology of the past and new myths must be created and mythopoeia fills this niche for mythology in the modern world (Campbell and Moyers 131), may thus very well be true. Mythopoeia may indeed be the next generation of mythical tradition. It heralds new mythos planting new roots and perfecting old ones, the best part being that the contemporary time has the privilege of altering the mythical discourse. It "drive[s] the progression of our imagination into the future while simultaneously linking us to the distant past, retaining in their essence the original dream of the primordial human, who first journeyed into the depths of his own psyche and emerged from the abyss with the symbols of insight and wisdom that have been with us since the dawn of humankind, carried forward by his descendants in an unending chain of fantasy and imagination" (Indick 21). Mythopoeia in the mythical tradition reaffirms that man has come a full circle beginning at mythos, regressing to myth and now arriving at mythopoeia, standing yet again at the threshold of myth making.

Conclusion

Mythopoeia as discussed at the start is crucial to mankind. It is a game that transfigures our tragic, fragmented world, and helps us to entertain new possibilities by asking 'what if?' The ancient Egyptians who mummified their dead for the next life were, perhaps, engaged in the same game of spiritual make-believe that is common to all mythmakers:

> What if this world were not all that there is? How would this affect our lives – psychologically, practically or socially? Would we become different? More complete? And, if we did find that we were so transformed, would that not show that our mythical belief

was true in some way, that it was telling us something important about our humanity, even though we could not prove this rationally? (Armstrong 31)

Mythopoeia is an engaging answer to a question that serves its purpose in a particular time and space. It is like a board game that encapsulates the man-child in his make belief world. "Human beings are unique in retaining the capacity for play" (Huizinga 5). Johan Huizinga tells us that animals lose their sense of fun when they encounter the harsh realities of life in the wild. Humans, however, continue to enjoy playing with different possibilities, and, like children, go on creating imaginary worlds as a means of escape. In art, liberated from the constraints of reason and logic, we conceive and combine new forms that enrich our lives, and which we believe tell us something important and profoundly 'true' (Ibid.). In mythopoeia too, we entertain a hypothesis, act upon it, contemplate its effect upon our lives, and discover that we have achieved new insight into the disturbing puzzle of our world.

Mythopoeia today, or mythopoeic tendencies today, as briefly showcased in Section 1.1 can be traced in both popular and literary culture. Heller states that

…some of the clearest expressions of [mythopoeia] are found in fantasy fiction and film, such as the recent *The Lord of the Rings*, *Harry Potter*, *The Matrix*, and the comic book heroes of *X-Men* (1).

Popular fiction, film and ludology engage in mythopoeia or harbor mythopoeic tendencies at varying degrees. The concern here is not the presence of mythopoeia in artifact of popular fiction, film and ludology. The concern here is whether popular mythopoeias can fulfill the purpose of mythos. Can a mythopoeic novel really replicate traditional myth, with its gods and goddesses? This chapter established that mythopoeia has the

potential to become mythos. The popular consumption of mythopoeia can serve as a feasible arena for such a possibility. But can mythopoeia in popular fiction, no matter how popular, really become mythos? Armstrong believes that such a possibility is likely. She remarks:

> …myth could never be approached in a purely profane setting. It was only comprehensible in a liturgical context that set it apart from everyday life; it must be experienced as part of a process of personal transformation. None of this, surely, applies to the novel, which can be read anywhere at all without ritual trappings, and must, if it is any good, eschew the overtly didactic. Yet the experience of reading a novel has certain qualities that remind us of the traditional apprehension of mythology. It can be seen as a form of meditation. Readers have to live with a novel for days or even weeks. It projects them into another world, parallel to but apart from their ordinary lives. They know perfectly well that this fictional realm is not 'real' and yet while they are reading it becomes compelling. A powerful novel becomes part of the backdrop of our lives, long after we have laid the book aside. It is an exercise of make-believe that, like yoga or a religious festival, breaks down barriers of space and time and extends our sympathies, so that we are able to empathise with other lives and sorrows. It teaches compassion, the ability to 'feel with' others. And, like mythology, an important novel is transformative. If we allow it to do so, it can change us forever. (55)

In other words, if it is written and read with serious attention, truly immersing oneself in what Tolkien calls a Secondary World with a Secondary Belief System, a mythopoeic novel, like a mythos, can become an initiation that helps us to make a rite of passage from one phase of life, one state of mind, to another. A mythopoeic novel, like a mythos, can teach us to see the world differently. It can show us how to look at our

world from a perspective that goes beyond the familiar. This is precisely why Heller believes "[I]f professional religious leaders cannot instruct us in mythical lore, our artists and creative writers can perhaps step into this priestly role and bring fresh insight to our lost and damaged world". This is why mythopoeia is worthy of critical enquiry.

In order to illustrate this crucial aspect of mythopoeia— mythopoeia can transition into mythos— the dissertation undertakes a case study of two popular mythopoeias, J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Silmarillion* and Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*. I specifically chose two very different mythopoeias in order to evidence a mythopoeic resurgence across the globe and to establish that this mythopoeic resurgence is at large irrespective of a culture's mythical baggage. I analyse the mythopoeias and their possible transitions into mythos. As an analysis of all aspects of Tolkien's and Tripathi's mythopoeias was beyond the purview of a chapter each, the case studies are limited to the mythopoeic deities of the respective mythopoeias. By the mythopoeic deity I mean the idea of God that is constructed by these mythopoeic authors as opposed to extant ones of myth, mythos or mithya (in the case of the Indian mythopoeia case study). The case study chapters are based on the premise that as mythopoeia can transition into mythos, if the mythopoeic deity were consumed in popular demand; will it not replace or at least affect the deity of the mythos/myth/mithya?

Notes

[1] The Palaeolithic age is a prehistoric period of human history distinguished by the development of the most primitive stone tools.

[2] The Neolithic was a period in the development of human technology, beginning about 10,200 BC, according to the ASPRO chronology, in some parts of the Middle East, and later in other parts of the world and ending between 4500 and 2000 BC

[3] Abrahamic religions took root from the group of Semitic-originated religious communities of the ancient Israelites who worshiped the God of Abraham. Judaism, Christianity, and Islam are the largest Abrahamic religions in terms of numbers of adherents (Adams).

[4] It refers to Friedrich Nietzsche's "The Parable of the Madman".

[5] Stephen Dedalus is James Joyce protagonist and antihero of his first, semi-autobiographical novel of artistic existence A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man and an important character in Joyce's Ulysses.

[6] Esemplastic is a qualitative adjective which the English romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge claimed to have invented. Despite its etymology from the Ancient Greek word "to shape", the term was modeled on Schelling's philosophical term Ineinsbildung – the interweaving of opposites – and implies the process of an object being moulded into unity.[1] The first recorded use of the word is in 1817 by Coleridge in his work, Biographia Literaria, in describing the esemplastic – the unifying – power of the imagination

[7] Defamiliarization is the artistic technique of presenting to audiences common things in an unfamiliar or strange way in order to enhance perception of the familiar. It is a central concept in 20th-century art and

theory in movements including Dadaism, postmodernism, epic theatre, and science fiction.

[8] Cosmogony is any model concerning the origin of either the cosmos or universe.

Chapter 3
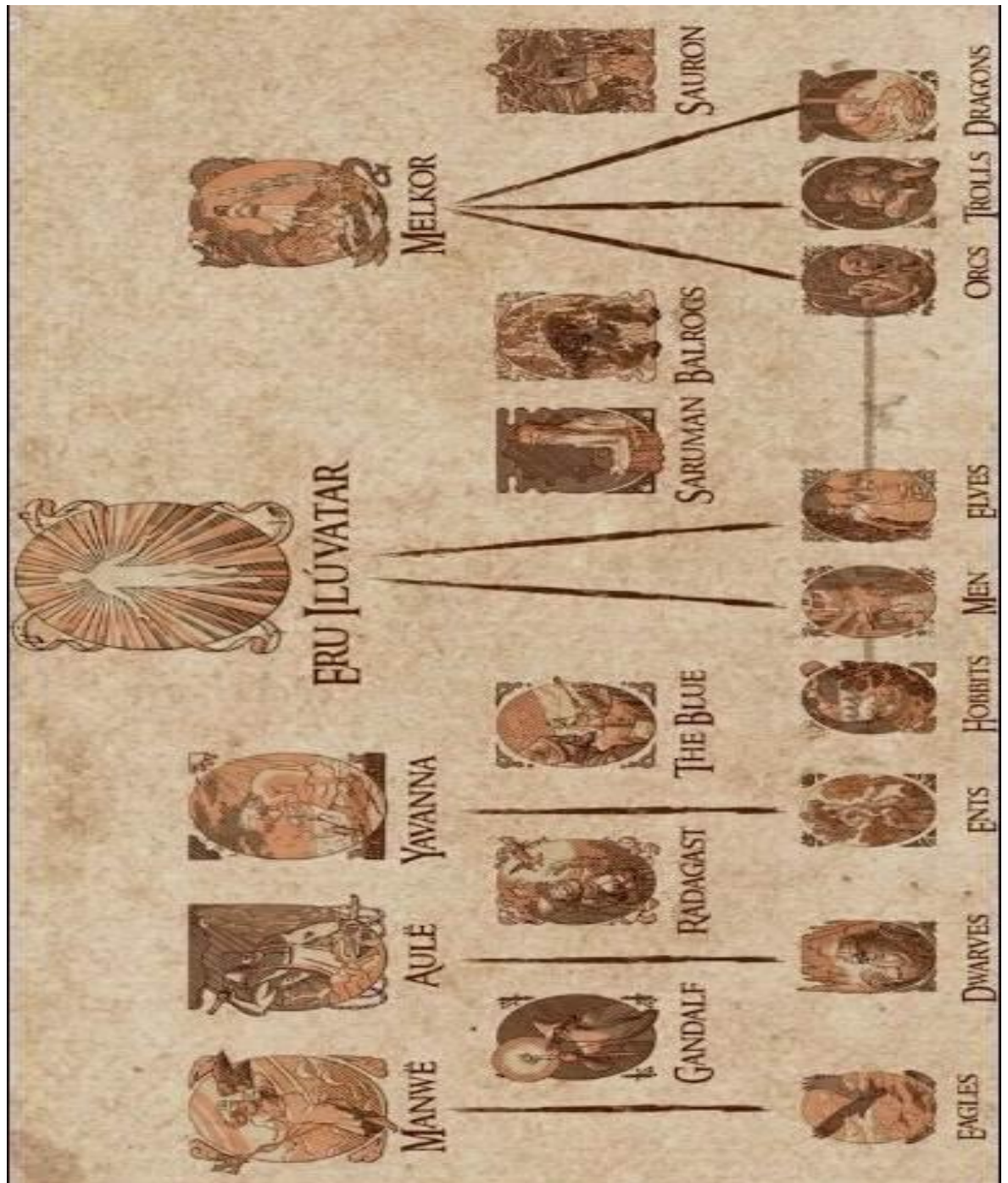
Figure 1. **Creation and sub-creation** of Ilúvatar and Valar by Paul Ronald 2017 retrieved from https://www.tolkiensociety.org/

Chapter 3

Packaging Polytheism as Monotheism: A Select Study of the Mythopoeic Deity in Tolkien's *The Silmarillion*

"An Angel who did not so much Fall as Saunter Vaguely Downwards."
(Gaiman 35)

The preceding chapter arrived at the conclusion that mythopoeia can transition into mythos. In order to establish this research statement, the dissertation undertakes a case study of two popular mythopoeias. This chapter is a case study of a British mythopoeia— J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Silmarillion*. As an analysis of all aspects of Tolkien's mythopoeia is beyond the purview of a single chapter, this case study is limited to analysing the construction of Tolkien's mythopoeic deity. By the mythopoeic deity I mean the idea of God that is constructed by Tolkien in his mythopoeia as opposed to extant ones of myth and mythos. I scrutinise the construction of Tolkien's deity and investigate the nature of the constructed model.

Tolkien has garnered much attention, both critical and fandom for his world building, its myths, its allegories, its constructed languages, its animism, its medievalism and its varied literary sources. This chapter is limited to analysing the godhead that Tolkien constructs in his mythopoeia. Tolkien's polychronicon, *The Silmarillion*, splits the godhead

between a creator God and a pantheon of gods and goddesses. Iluvatar, the primary deity, is a Yahweh-like God who engages in a creation account like that of Genesis. Perhaps finding the Christian deity lacking in terms of mythology, Tolkien constructs fourteen gods and goddesses created by this primary God, who assist in creation, shapes the world, has power over elements, and reign as 'mistaken gods' among the Elves, Dwarves and Men. This deliberate split of godhead is ascribed to his predisposition towards mythology and his conflicting Christian faith. While Tolkien's mythopoeic acumen is certainly legit in terms of his poetic licence he invariably packages a split god head which falls under the structure of polytheism as monotheism. With such a disposition, Tolkien finds favour with a Catholic reader, but his position of a polytheistic device as monotheism is misleading. Monotheism does not permit secondary gods. Polytheism on the other hand often features an abstract creator God who creates a polytheistic pantheon and the world as we know it. Tolkien's model which features a Creator deity and a pantheon of created deities falls under the second category.

The chapter posits that Iluvatar and Valar imitates the polytheistic model of creator deity and created deity. It refutes the Christian parallels associated with Iluvatar and the alleged subordination of the Valar as angels. The sub-creation of Ainur, the hierarchy of Iluvatar and Valar, the demiurge like qualities of the Valar and the subsequent absence of Iluvatar, effectively refutes the semblance of a monotheistic Christian model. It argues that Tolkien's splitting of the godhead, firstly, invalidates the norm of monotheism, and secondly, conforms to the structure of polytheism. As this chapter is limited to a discussion of Iluvatar and Valar, I have limited my study to their construction, their roles and their status as deity. I do not engage in the events that unfold in the history of Middle-earth or the Christian/polytheistic allegories thereafter. I also use the term polytheist instead of pagan, unlike Tom Shippey, Bradley J. Birzer and

Ronal Hutton, because "pagan is a pejorative term for the same polytheistic group implying its inferiority" (Brown 656). And it is this pejorative that sanctions Tolkienian undermining of polytheism and packaging it as monotheism.

3.1 Overview of *The Silmarillion*

The Silmarillion by J.R.R. Tolkien is polychronican of five parts. The first section Ainulindalë is the creation account of Iluvatar, the creator god. The second part, Valaquenta, is dedicated to the description of the demiurges— Valar and Maiar. Quenta Silmarillion, the next section, comprises of chronicles that document the First Age. Akallabeth, the fourth part, is the history of the Second Age. The last part, Of the Rings of Power introduces the Third Age, which becomes the backdrop of the sequel novels *The Hobbit* and the *LOTR*. This overview primarily discusses the Ainulindalë and Valaquenta, for it is these parts that house the mythopoeic deity constructed by Tolkien.

The first section Ainulindalë, according to Tolkien, means the 'The Music of the Ainur'. It is a primary creation narrative that tells of how Iluvatar (or "Father of All") also called Eru ("The One") (See Appendix Figure 1), first creates a group of eternal spirits called the Ainur. It is with these Ainur that he makes the Great Music, which serves as a prelude to the creation of the mythopoeic world of Ea and its history that would unfold. But in the process of this Music, Melkor, an Ainur whom Iluvatar had given the "greatest power and knowledge" breaks away from the harmony to develop his own song. Some of his fellow Ainur joins him, while others continue to follow the original theme of Iluvatar. Iluvatar successfully overpowers his rebellious subordinate with a new theme but after the third discord Iluvatar stops the music. In a display of power, he shows all Ainur the end result of the Great Music, which is a vision of Ea, its peoples, and its future. He offers the Ainur a part in its creation, a

chance to descend to Ea, and govern this new world. Many of the Ainur chose to enter the realm of Ea. They physical form and become bound to that world. Among those who descend, the greater Ainur become known as the Valar, and the lesser Ainur are called the Maiar. The Valar prepare the world for the Elves and Men whose coming was shown in the vision. Melkor who had turned away from Iluvatar and Valar wanted Ea for himself. He repeatedly destroys the creations of Valar. This goes on for thousands of years until, through waves of destruction and creation, the world of Arda upon Ea takes shape.

The next part of *The Silmarillion,* Valaquenta literally means the 'Account of the Valar'. It is devoted to describing Melkor and each of the fourteen Valar in great detail (See Appendix Figure 2.). It tells us that there were seven "Lords of the Valar" and seven "Queens of the Valar", as well as a few Maiar. Manwe is the King of the Valar. He is Lord of air, wind, and clouds. He is the noblest and has the greatest authority. Varda is his wife. They live on top of Mount Taniquetil, the highest mountain of the world, in the halls of Ilmarin in Valinor. Ulmo is the Lord of Waters. Unlike the other Valar, he is not married and has no fixed dwelling place. He lives in the depths of the ocean, and seldom came to Valinor unless the need was dire. He is one of the chief architects of Arda. He is second to Manwe in authority. Aule is the Lord of the matter that composes Arda. He is a master of all the crafts that shape it. The wife of Aule is Yavanna. Valaquenta tells us that once, impatient for the coming inhabitants, Aule created beings according to the vision. The result of his immature attempt was the seven fathers of the Dwarves, who called him Mahal, the Maker. Iluvatar was not pleased, as the stone people were not a part of the original races. Regretting his actions, Aule swung his hammer upon his creation. But when the dwarves cringed under Aule's hammer, Iluvatar pardoned Aule's disobedience, allowing the dwarves to be one amongst his other

creations. Iluvatar warned Aule that the repercussions of his action would be the love of the Dwarves' iron for Yavanna's trees.

Orome is the Huntsman of the Valar, also called The Great Rider. Orome is renowned for his anger, being the most terrible of the Valar in his wrath. He is the brother of Nessa and husband of Vana. Mandos, also called Namo, is the Judge of the Dead and the Master of Doom. He is the keeper of the souls. His wife is Vaire the Weaver. Tulkas also called Astaldo or 'The Brave One' is physically the strongest of all the Valar. He was the last among the Valar to descend into Arda. It was his arrival that helped to tip the scales against Melkor after the destruction of the Two Lampsi. He is the husband of Nessa, and is described as slow to anger, but slow also to forget.

Varda is the wife of Manwe. She is variously titled Elentari or Elbereth. She is also called the Lady of the Stars for it was she who kindled the first stars. It is said that Varda rejected him before Time, and Melkor fears and hates her the most. An Elvish hymn entitled 'A Elbereth Gilthoniel' is present in three different versions in *LOTR*. Yavanna is the spouse of Aulë. She is the Queen of the Earth and Giver of Fruits. She creates the Two Trees. It was she who requested the creation of the Ents, as she feared for the safety of the trees once her husband had created the Dwarves. Nienna is the Lady of Mercy who weeps constantly. She does not weep for herself, but for those who hearken to her. She pities them and gives endurance in hope. It is said that she gives strength to the dead souls in the Hall of Mandos. She has no spouse. Este is the wife of Irmo. She is referred to as the Gentle and 'the healer of hurts and of weariness'. Vaire is the wife of Namo and lives with him in the halls of Mandos. She is entitled the Weaver for she weaves the story of the World in her tapestries, which are draped all over the halls of Mandos. Vana also called Queen of Blossoming Flowers and the 'ever-young', is the wife of Orome and the

younger sister of Yavanna. Tolkien wrote that "Vana was the most perfectly beautiful in form and feature, also 'holy' but not august or sublime, representing the natural unmarred perfection of form in living things" (211). Nessa is the wife of Tulkas and is noted for her agility and speed. She is also called the Dancer.

The last but not the least is Melkor, the First Dark Lord. His name means 'he who arises in might'. He was the first of the Ainur to be created by Iluvatar. He was once the most powerful of the Valar, as he possessed all aspects of Iluvatar's thought. The other Valar only possessed some parts of it. It is said that since his rebellion against Iluvatar, the first time being the discord in the Music of the Ainur, he began his descend to the dark side. In the course of *The Silmarillion* he steadily turns evil. He is captured and imprisoned in Valinor with the chain Angainorii after the Awakening of the Elves in Cuivieneniii. He remains on parole in Valinor for three ages, but after the poisoning of the Two Trees and the theft of the Silmarils, he flees from Valinor. Since then, the Valar no longer counted him as one of them. He is cast out of Arda at the end of the War of Wrath.

The Maiar are "spirits whose being also began before the world, of the same order as the Valar but of less degree" (*The Silmarillion* ix). They also descended to Arda along with the Valar. They bound themselves to a Valar and served as vassals or messengers. Valaquenta documents the names of some prominent Maiar who were associated Valars. Uinen and Osse, who ruled the Seas, acted under Ulmo. The Maiar Eonwe served as the herald of Manwe. Curumo, who came to be known in Middle-earth as Saruman and the Maiar Sauron worked with Aule. Sauron was later corrupted by Melkor and switched masters. Melkor seduced many more Maiars into his service, including those who would eventually become the Balrogs.

The rest of *The Silmarillion* chronicles the events that serve as a history to *The Hobbit* and *LOTR*. It features the events that unfold in Middle-earth during the Second and Third Ages. In the Second Age, the Maiar Sauron emerges as next Dark Lord in Middle-earth. It is during Sauron's rule that the Rings of Power are forged by Elves with Sauron secretly forging his own One Ring to control the others. This leads to the war which was fought between Sauron and the Elves and Men of Middle-earth. The war was called the War of the Last Alliance for the Elves and the remaining Numenoreans united to defeat Sauron. With the defeat Sauron and the seizing of the One Ring, the Second Age comes to an end. The Third Age begins with the passing of the One Ring to Isildur, who when ambushed at the Gladden Fields looses the ring in the River Anduin. This section is an introduction to the events leading up to and taking place in *The Hobbit*, followed by *LOTR*. It also serves as a backdrop to the waning of Gondor, the re-emergence of Sauron, the White Council and Saruman's treachery. In *LOTR* when the One Ring is finally destroyed, the age of Sauron comes to a decisive end. With the departure of the elves and the Arda left to Men, the ages of magic end. As this chapter is limited to an analysis of Iluvatar and Valar, only Ainulindale, Valaquenta, and some portions of Quenta Silmarillion have been dealt with in the following sections.

3.2 Christian Tolkien vs. Pagan Tolkien

The Introduction to *J.R.R. Tolkien* by Mark Horne states:

> Recognising Tolkien's faith is important to understanding his works. Being raised by his mother in *Christian* faith was something he remembered—and appreciated— all his life. He was grateful to the *Christians* who aided her in his upbringing. As a high school and college student, he was already concerned about how his *Christian* faith might be involved in his artistic ambitions.

He later joined with other *Christian* friends, especially C.S. Lewis, who were committed to artistic endeavours empowered by their *Christian* faith. Possibly even more important than the *Christian* theology and literary influences on Tolkien's writing, the way *Christianity* helped him deal with the crises and losses in his life made it possible for him to write with maturity and character. (Horne xi)

'Christian' is an adjective that is so often clubbed with Tolkien and his works that there is little space for an alternate perception. Tolkien's biography leaves no doubt about his being Roman Catholic. But his works, especially his mythopoeia, ever since the publication of *The Lord of the Rings* in 1954 has embroiled Tolkien scholars in the question— Is Tolkien's work Christian or Pagan? Claudio A. Testi summarises this dispute which continues to the present day. Some critics are of the opinion that Tolkien's mythopoeia is a world that contains explicit and exclusive Christian elements. This group consists of critics such as Joseph Pearce John G. West Jr., Stratford Caldecott, Peter J. Kreeft, Ralph C. Wood, and Nils Ivar Agøy (Testi 1). Other authors, even if they do not totally deny the importance of Christian elements in the conception of the legendarium, assert that an essentially polytheist perspective is predominant in Tolkien's mythopoeia, and that such a perspective more or less markedly contradicts the Christian orthodox vision. This latter group consists of critics like Catherine Madsen, Ronald Hutton, Stephen Morillo and Patrick Curry (Testi 5).Unlike these critics, I do not venture into Christian/polytheist allusions interspersed in Tolkien's mythopoeia. I believe an enquiry into Tolkien's constructed godhead can resolves the larger debates the work's Christian/ polytheist affiliation. But determining the godhead of Iluvatar and Valar is not an easy task. It is riled in the author's conflicting claims, the palimpsest of modifications and editions that have occurred between 1948-1977 by both Tolkien and Christopher Tolkien, and interpretations of texts by aforementioned groups.

In order to construct a mythopoeic world, one has to start with a beginning. Tolkien being a self acclaimed devout Catholic, rather than depicting the Big Bang opted to mimic the Christian account of creation. But Tolkien's creation narrative is not as conforming to the biblical model as he would have us believe. Tolkien's *The Silmarillion,* establishes the genesis of his mythopoeic world in its first part— Ainulindale. Ainulindale tells how Iluvatar ("Father of All") also called Eru ("The One"), first created the Ainur, a group of eternal spirits. The author Tolkien, the editor Christopher Tolkien, and a group of Tolkien scholars claim that Iluvatar is modeled upon Yahweh[1] (meaning 'I Am') of Genesis and the Ainur resemble angels of the Abrahamic religions. But this chapter begs to differ. Iluvatar may have been modeled upon Yahweh, but the presence of Ainur as sub-creators, refutes his monotheistic identity. The Ainur may have been modeled upon biblical angels, but their role in sub-creation refutes their allusion to angels.

Yahweh's Hexameron[2] Creation Act (Genesis 1:1-2:3) is a monodrama. In the famous first chapter, Yahweh appears center stage, with no rival, supremely powerful and benign, blessing all the things that he has made. It does not mention the creation or even the participation of angels in the creation act. In fact, the first mention of the term "Angel of Jehovah" occurs in Genesis 16:7-11, well into the timeline of Abraham. But in some versions of the Genesis 1:26, we hear God strangely declaring: "Let *us* make man in our image". Ralph C. Wood opines that Christians has seen this plural reference as a foreshadowing of the Trinity, although it "may point to a heavenly court, as if God employed intermediate beings to assist him in his action" (12). Tolkien may have drawn inspiration from this latter possibility.

But Tolkien takes this possibility to fictive heights. Unlike Genesis, he conceives the Ainur in the first sentence of Ainulindale. He tells of how Iluvatar brings the Ainur "the offspring of his thought" and shows them a theme, from which he bids them to make a great music. This Great Music conjointly produced by Iluvatar and Ainur is a prelude to the creation of Eä (Tolkien's mythopoeic earth), its life forms, and the history of Middle-earth that is to unfold. The Ainur are asked by Iluvatar to join in the Great Music and supplement it with their ideas. They are invited to show forth their powers in adorning the theme with their own thoughts and devices (145). Iluvatar's role in creation thereafter comes to an end. The rest of creation is carried out by Ainur. They fashion the formless Ea into form. They carve out oceans and make mountains. They create the sun and the moon. They create both flora and fauna. Tolkien mythopoeia tells of how Aule creates Dwarves, Yavanna creates Ents, Manwe creates Eagles, and Melkor creates Orcs, Trolls and Dragons. "[T]hey interpreted according to their powers and completed in detail the design propounded to them by the One" (Carpenter 284). The creation account of Tolkien's mythopoeia is such that the creation act does not belong to Iluvatar alone. It is shared although not equally between Iluvatar and Ainur. Iluvatar creates and Ainur sub-creates. This privilege of sub-creation conferred upon Ainur contradicts the Christian doctrine. The Bible does not mention angels playing any role in creation. Apart from the aforementioned plural pronoun in 1:26, it states that God made everything absolutely on his own. But Tolkien's Iluvatar invites the participation of Ainur in creation. The Ainur not only participate but have the privilege to personalise creation. Such a sub-creation elevates Ainur above an angelic order. In fact it bestows a share in godhead.

John William Hougton believes that the godhead of Tolkien's Ainur's is a leaf out of St. Augustine's interpretation of the biblical genesis *De Genesi*. According to Hougton "...the actual text of genesis

focuses rather determinedly on the primary creative activity of the one God, leaving little room for more reflection on sub-creation..." of the angels (180). St. Augustine in *De Genesi* dips into a possible sub-creation by angels, but his anti-Manichean upbringing did not let him expand it further. Tolkien takes up this concept and infuses deity like qualities into biblical angels. In fact his conception of the Ainur, their participation in creation and Melkor's rebellion are more detailed than Genesis. Ainulindalë gives far more attention to the Ainur's development of the divine design. Although Hougton admits to have found no evidence of Tolkien having read Augustine, he guestimates that an influence was likely.

But Tolkien does not admit to being inspired by *De Genesi* let alone conferring godhead onto Ainur. His position on the matter is ingratiating. In his letter to Milton Waldman, he details how the Ainur were "angelic powers, whose function is to exercise delegated authority in their spheres (of rule and government, *not* creation, making or remaking)..." But curiously, as Martina Juričková points out, Tolkien's mythopoeia crosses over to more. Ainur in *The Silmarillion* partake in creation, making and remaking. In various other letters, Tolkien describes the Valar as ''created spirits—of high angelic order'' (*Letters* 193), and as ''regents under God,'' ''angelic immortals (incarnate only at their own will)'' (*Letters* 411). But Ainulindale evidences how they evolve from being created spirits or angelic immortals to demiurge like deities. The task of angels, especially in the Biblical chapters, apart from the celebration of God, is to be his messengers. The Ainur also mediate the will of Iluvatar as a representative of God; or in Tolkien's own words they "exercise" his "delegated authority" in the world. However they also exercise their free will. "Tolkien's treatment and use of them, the [] foreknowledge he gives them, their power to act in ways seemingly both

good and ill, take them a good way beyond the conventional view of angels (Flieger 54).

Following Tolkien's assertions, a considerable group of Tolkien scholars, also insist that the Ainur are similar to the biblical angels. Harold Bloom (113) and Brian Rosebury (187) state that the structural resemblance of Ainulindalë to the Christian myth is clear enough. Peter Kreeft is convinced that "[i]n *The Silmarillion* the angels are named the Ainur" (213). Ralph C. Wood believes that the Valar and Maiar are intermediaries or what "we would call angels" (11). Michael D. C. Drout draws parallels between Ainur and archangels and Maiar and angels. These Tolkien critics claim that Iluvatar being an imitation of Yahweh makes Ainulindalë a Christian allegory. They point out that Iluvatar's supremacy over the Ainur negates any contradiction in godhead. They unilaterally use the author's statements where he insists that the God of his mythopoeia is Iluvatar as buttress to their claims.

Tolkien's insistence that Iluvatar is God and he is the only god has been taken for granted by many Tolkien scholars. It has been transcribed as evidencing a negation of Ainur's godhead. But Tolkien's statements cannot be taken at face value. His authorial stance has varied over the years. Ronald Hutton in his essay "The Pagan Tolkien" remarks on "the general difficulty of matching Tolkien's writings with some of the things that he himself said about them" (57). The following instances are a clear evidence of this.

In his formative years, Tolkien was enamoured with mythology— "Greek, and Celtic, and Romance, Germanic, Scandinavian, and Finish" (xi). He bewailed the absence of "mythology for England" (Carpenter 145). He stated that countries such as "Greece, Italy, Iceland, and Norway" all possessed "a religious pantheon of the gods attached to a

creational act of genesis that functioned as an expression of origin and identity" (Chance 1): why not England? In his Letter to Milton Waldman, Tolkien complains how the Arthurian legends "does not replace what I felt to be missing", how it is "too lavish, and fantastical, incoherent and repetitive", and "another and more important thing: it is involved in, and explicitly contains the Christian religion" (xi). Tolkien's mythopoeia was to redress this perceived gap or lack thereof in mythology. His *The Silmarillion* was a testament to this grievance redressal. Tolkien attempted what Burns calls "Integrative Theology", an integration of Christian and polytheist theology. But it appears that in his later years, Tolkien's Christian identity conflicted with his mythopoeic polytheism. Or, as Burns believes Tolkien "... as a creator of his own deific beings..." filled the perceived lack of mythology in England with polytheistic gods but did not accredit it in fear of his Catholic roots (163). Whichever the case, it is true that Tolkien first constructed polytheist gods in his mythopoeia and later altered them to suit a predominant Christian setting, perhaps in an attempt to make it more appealing to a Christian audience.

In a 1966 transatlantic telephone interview, Tolkien stated "Mostly mythology moves me" though it "also upsets me because most mythology is distasteful to people." Although he does not mention the reason why most mythology is distasteful, it can be safely accounted to the pejorative of polytheistic elements. Tolkien's agenda was to produce a mythology that would not be distasteful, a mythology "which we can bring up to our own grade of assessment." What this grade of assessment was we only guess. Critics such as Flieger, Burns and Hutton state that Tolkien's above mentioned "grade of assessment" was to Christianise the early polytheistic elements of his mythopoeia, an attempt to redeem his mythology. Others sympathetic to Tolkien claim that the author, in the early years of work on his legendarium, was unsure about how he, as a Christian, should handle the clearly polytheistic traditions which constituted one of his main

sources of inspiration "and which he felt obliged not to misrepresent or falsify, but rather to show in their true light" (Agoy 82). Some also believe that it was Christopher Tolkien (as *The Silmarillion* was a posthumous publication) who was not ideologically neutral and has "put a Christian gloss on passages that... do not necessarily sustain it" (Hutton 62). *The Silmarillion* was edited by Christopher Tolkien from the manuscripts left behind by his father. As both Christopher Tolkien and Humphrey Carpenter tells us, there were a number of versions of each of the works contained in *The Silmarillion*, and one of the reasons that Tolkien himself did not publish the work before his death was his reluctance or inability to chose between different versions. Richard L. Purtil therefore cautions against accepting the versions chosen by Christopher Tolkien as representing Tolkien's settled views on some difficult points (7).

In the light of the author's conflict between his professional love for mythology and his personal faith, it is unfair to base the interpretation of Iluvatar as Yahweh and the Ainur as angels, on Tolkien's selective claims. The varied version of *The Silmarillion* also evidences an erasure of polytheistic elements and any explicit references to godhead of the Valar assigned in earlier designs. Kristine Larsen notes that in one of his early etymologies Tolkien cites the term Ainur as having derived out of the term ainu, "a pagan god" (262). Had Tolkien wanted to retain angelic allusions he could have drawn upon terms such as seraphim[3] and cherubim[4]. In his letter to Waldman he admits to how "on the side of mere narrative device, this [Ainur] is, of course, meant to provide beings of the same order of beauty, power, and majesty as the 'gods' of higher mythology, which can yet be accepted – well, shall we say baldly, by a mind that believes in the Blessed Trinity" (*From A letter by J.R.R. Tolkien to Milton Waldman, 1951* xiv). In other words Tolkien wanted the Ainur to be gods who would not offend the Christian sentimentality. His Valar, he wrote in a letter to Rhona Beare, "take the imaginative but not the theological place of

'gods'" (*Letters* 248) which loosely translates the Ainur/Valar as a strategy to allow the presence of 'gods' of higher mythology but not credit their role.

If Tolkien had indeed intended only a trivial role for the Ainur, he would not have given then titular roles in Ainulindalë. He would not have infused them with names, powers, personas, spouses and a lot more. He would have retained them as mere angels. In mainline Christian tradition the word "angel" means "messenger". Angels are pure spirits with not physical but "spiritual bodies" (Kreeft 213). But Tolkien's Ainur, especially after they descend to Eä, have physical attributes, names and personas, are gendered, have spouses, communicate with each other and the children of Iluvatar, and are affiliated to natural forces. Ainulindalë records the fourteen Ainur who descend to Eä. It documents each of them in great detail. Manwe rules the winds and sky, Ulmo governs the waters, Yavanna cares for plants, Tulkas is a fighter, Lorien is the lord of dreams, Nienna is the lady of grief, Mandos is the keeper of the death, Orome is a friend of beasts and a hunter of demons, Vaire records the history, Este has healing power, Aule is interested in ground and metals and Varda in stars. Such an organisation reminds one of the chorus of pagan gods, like those from ancient Greek or Roman mythologies. Furthermore, as Curry points out, each of the Valar are associated with natural elements in a characteristically polytheistic way (43).

Each has various names amongst different races. The Dwarves called Aule, Mahal. The Rohirrim knew Orome as Bema. Varda is also called Elbereth. The brothers Lorien and Mandos and are jointly referred to as the Feanturi. The Valar come to the aid of Elves and Men in their battles against evil much like the gods of mythologies. The dwelling place of the Valar is Valinor situated amidst Pelori Mountains where Manwe rules on his throne. It reminds one of Mount Olympus where the throne of

Zeus is located. Drout points out that both Valinor and Mount Olympus becomes the stronghold of their gods after their first war (442). The Maiar or the lesser Ainur who serve as the vassals of Valar are also an important addition. The Maiar are "an order of semi-divine spirits created to assist the Valar in protecting and preserving the ongoing creation and refinement of the world" (Drout 401). Of the same order as the Valar, ''but of less degree,'' *The Silmarillion* says their exact number is unknown, and few are named. Their cosmological role is similar to that of the Valar: each Maiar has a function closely associated with one of the Valar. They are strikingly similar to the vassals of mythic gods. Valar and Maiar resemble the concept of major and minor among deities common in many mythologies. All these, according to Verlyn Flieger, are the typical markers of polytheistic deities (58).

Ronald Hutton's study of earlier versions of *The Silmarillion* has lead him to believe that *The Silmarillion* in the 1920s (earliest version) explicitly featured the Valar as Gods. It is only in the published version of 1977 that their claim to divinity is in doubt. In the earliest version, the Valar are not just gods but "the Gods," spelled with a capital G. By 1930, however, the opening of the Quenta states that Valar means the "Powers," though Men often call them "Gods". "God" in all the early version is also consistently capitalized. Slowly this too changes. The suggestion of a Valar godhead is lessened. The capital G is dropped. Emphasis on Iluvatar's creation of the Ainur is increased. The fact that Men called the Valar "gods" (now a small g) further weakens their rumoured godhead. In the passage below Eriol and Lindo discuss this very conundrum.

> "But," said Eriol, "still are there many things that remain dark to me. Indeed I would fain know who be these Valar; are they the Gods?" "So be they," said Lindo, "though concerning them Men tell many strange and garbled tales that are far from the truth, and

many strange names they call them that you will not hear here." (*BoLT* 45)

The Valar, here, have been reduced to a case of mistaken gods, a misunderstanding of Men. The narrative voice also speaks of the Valar as the "Holy Ones" not G/gods.

The physical attributes of the Valar are also a departure from biblical angels and more in line with polytheistic deities. The Ainur are said to have taken on material form when they descend to Ea. They are said to have modelled themselves on the form of the to-be-created Elves and Men that they had seen in the Great Music. Purtil states that the idea of spiritual beings embodied in this way appears in various legends and stories. He cites a passage in the Old Testament that says the "sons of God had relations with the daughters of men who bore children to them (Genesis 6"4) has been interpreted in some para-scriptual legends as meaning that angelic beings took human form and had intercourse with human women (Purtill 8). Perhaps anticipating the blasphemous nature of such implications, Tolkien markedly reduced the physicality of the Valar. *Tolkien Encyclopaedia* states that "[T]hough not physical beings, the Valar could put on visible form as one wears a raiment, appearing fair and noble, alike to Elves in form but much greater in majesty and splendour" (Drout 689). But this change is mainly a product of his ideas on the Valar and physical bodies ("hroa" in elvish, or "hroar" for the plural form) which was modified as an afterthought. In his essay "Osanwe-kenta" he says:

> The longer and the more the same hroa is used, the greater is the bond of havit, and the less do the "self-arrayed" desire to leave it… If a "spirit" uses a hroa for the furthurance of its personal purposes, or (still more) for the enjoyment of bodily faculties, it finds it increasingly difficult to oeperate without the hroa. The things that

are most binding are those that in the Incarnate have to do with the life of the hroa itself, its sustenance and its propagation. Thus eating and drinking are binding, but not the delight in beauty of sound or form. Most binding is begetting or conceiving. (123)

With such a backdrop, Tolkien provides for the exceptional physical attributes of Valar and Maiar. The tale of Melian, a Maiar who fell in love with the Elven-king Elu Thingol, and later ruled the kingdom of Doriath by his side, presupposes her physical form. Her giving birth to Luthien also confirms her physicality. It also ushers in the concept of demi-gods that had been initially present. In *BoLT*, there is a mention of children being born to the Valar. Fionwe and Ilmare were first conceived as the children of Manwe and Varda and Gothmog as the son of Melkor. In earlier drafts of *The Silmarillion*, the Valar did have children, called the Valarindi. Tolkien described them alongside the Maiar, saying,

There are also those whom we call the Valarindi, who are the Children of the Valar, begotten of their love after their entry into Ea. They are the elder children of the World; and though their being began within Ea, they are of the race of the Ainur, who were before the world, and they have power and rank below that of the Valar only. (125)

Later on, though, Tolkien changed his mind, deciding that the Valar didn't have any children, saying "they beget not." These "Offspring of the Valar" or the Valarindi were later made Maiar or "heralds" and "handmaidens," rather than their children. Thus the concept of demigods which would invariably result in Valar being gods was also removed. The cohabitation among the Valar is also no longer described in earthly, familial terms. Burns points out how the word 'wife' is dropped and the Valar now has a 'spouse' (175). In *The Silmarillion*, the Valar's genders are an essential part of their natures: they assume male or female forms because ''that

difference of temper they had even from their beginning'' (*The Silmarillion* 11). The Valar replicate traditional gender norms, with feminine activities including nurturing, gardening, healing, weaving, and mourning, and the masculine qualities being more active and vigorous (Fredrick and McBride, 115). These again take them farther away from biblical angels and closer yet to polytheistic deities.

But some Tolkien scholars contend that the Valar are not deities as they are created beings are therefore not gods. Wood in *The Gospel According to Tolkien* contends that Valar are not gods for "nowhere in Middle-earth are they worshipped" (13). But these statements stand true only in the case of monotheist faith. In polytheism created beings like the Valar are created deities. The created deities of polytheism, as the following section will further demonstrate, are created by the creator deity. They are like the Valar meant to exercise delegated authority in the world. They are like the Valar "vaguely personified and mutable natural forces" (Taube 7) who may or may not be worshipped. Worship may be the deciding factor of monotheist faith but polytheism does not necessarily deify deities because they are worshiped. Polytheist deities are created beings, imperfect and erroneous and sometimes even defy the creator deity. These markers of Valar not only refute their allusion to biblical angels but make them akin to polytheistic deities.

3.3 Creator Deity and Created Deities

The following section posits that Tolkien's construction of Iluvatar and Valar follows the formula of creator deity and created deity, predominant in most polytheistic myths. Being a self proclaimed mythology lover, it is unlikely that Tolkien was unaware of the hierarchy of creator deity and created deity. An earlier version of *BoLT* mentions that another name of Iluvatar was Ainatar "Father of Gods". It is likely that Tolkien conceived of Iluvatar as the creator deity and the Valar and created deities. Although

there are no other explicit references to the concept of creator deity and created deity in Tolkienian sources, the similarity between formulas are too evident to ignore.

The concept of creator deity and created deity is common to most polytheistic myths. Although their respective roles vary significantly from one early civilization to another (this would accord with a widely accepted particularist view of each religion), the basic features appear to be cross-culturally recurrent. Bruce G. Trigger's study shows that polytheistic deities were often created by a primordial creator deity. "People in most early civilizations believed that all deities were in some manner created or engendered by a single primordial deity or pair of deities" (Trigger 435). This primordial deity is the "First Cause or Prime Mover" who exists for the sole purpose of creation— creation of gods and creation of the world. The Egyptians maintain that all things came into existence due to an original creator god [Atum in the Heliopolitan creation myth] who gave rise to other gods and to all else that exists. The Egyptian holy foursome, Set, Isis, Osiris and Nephthys were sent to govern the earth on behalf of this supreme transcendent deity whom the inhabitants of the Nile Delta considered so great as to be above naming and worshipping. The Aztec and their neighbours maintained that all the gods were in some fashion emanations of Ometeotl (The Lord and Lady of Two-ness), an undifferentiated form of cosmic power that continued to exist in the highest celestial sphere. The Yoruba revered an elaborate hierarchy of deities of which the most senior was the creator god, Olorun (Trigger 420).

Iluvatar is a prime example of the Creator God/High God whose primary role is creation. Tolkien details five stages of Iluvatar creation. First, Iluvatar's creation of the Ainur. Second, the communication by Iluvatar of his design to the Ainur. Third, the great Music, which was as it

were a rehearsal, and remained in the stage of thought or imagination. Fourth, the "Vision of Iluvatar which was again only a foreshadowing of possibility and was incomplete. And last, the Achievement, which is still going on (Morgoth's Ring 336). Such an elaborate creation, without doubt establishes his role as creator deity. Tolkien's Iluvatar as discussed earlier is inconspicuous after creation. This is seen as being at odds with a Yahweh like role. But if one were to perceive Iluvatar as the Creator deity, his absence will no longer be prominent. In polytheist myths the creator deities generally retires to become the Deus otiosus— the" idle god who has grown weary from involvement in this world and has been replaced by younger and more active gods" (*OED*); or the Deus absconditus— a "god who has consciously left this world to hide elsewhere" (*OED*). Iluvatar is what one would call Deus otiosus. He retires after the creation account of Ainulindalë and the Ainur take up his mantle. Even among the Children of Iluvatar, he remains a mysterious memory of a beginning. Such a creator god who ceases to exist after creation, according to Karen Armstrong, is an unavoidable deity of polytheism whose myth is almost always jettisoned. Catherine Madsen states that Iluvatar is absent in *The Lord of the Rings*, save for "two fairly cryptical and untheological references in the appendices" (35). The Creator deity is elevated to a special plane and considered too exalted for ordinary cult. No sacrifices are performed in his honour; he has no priests, no temples, and virtually no mythology. Iluvatar is also doomed to stay as a mere Creator deity. Finrod Felagund in *Morgoth's Ring* claims "For that name we do not utter ever in jest or without full intent". His name was too holy to be invoked. He is neither worshipped not mythified.

The few occasions where he features as God after creation can be numbered. Manwë made a high feast in praise of Iluvatar to celebrate each gathering of fruits. The Númenoreans worshiped Iluvatar in the Three Prayers held during the course of a year. Fëanor swore his oath in the

name of Iluvatar. Elendil bound the Last Alliance of Elves and Men with an oath to Eru. The last known instance when a Man invoked Iluvatar 's name "who is above all thrones forever", was by Cirion, separated by millennia. Hardly any character, save the occasional remembrance by the Valar, exalt his name. The Valar also call upon him in only dire situations, namely two occasions, which has been discussed later. Trigger also notes that the polytheists call on the Creator deity in emergencies, but otherwise he scarcely ever impinges on their daily lives. Reduced to a mere explanation- First Cause or Prime Mover- he becomes a "useless" or "superfluous" deity, and gradually dims from the consciousness of his people. In most mythologies this Creator God is often depicted as passive, figure, retreating to the periphery of the pantheon and finally fades away (Armstrong 20). Indigenous peoples-Pygmies, Aboriginal Australians, and Fuegians- speak of a High God who created heaven and earth, but, they tell anthropologists, that he has died or disappeared; he "no longer cares" and "has gone far away from us" (Eliade 120-125). Iluvatar also recedes from Eä after the creation account. He never helps its inhabitants directly or indirectly. He remains only a memory of the Ainur. In Tolkien's later works which unfolds the history of Middle-earth, he seems to have vanished. Peter Kreeft explains that the reason why "Tolkien never brings God into [the later parts of his history] is that He is never out of it" (Kreeft 51). He states that Iluvatar needs to be explicitly present and actively involved at the beginning of *The Silmarillion* as there could be no creation without the god. But once the limelight shifts onto his creation, Elves and Men, he ceases to appear. Similarly, the Christian God actively influences the course of history only during the time span captured in the Bible, if not directly, via prophets. The same can no longer be said about the centuries that follow the Bible. As Christians believe, and perhaps Tolkien also, the presence of God from then onwards is as Providence (Ibid.).

But this argument of Iluvatar as Providence holds water only if Iluvatar like Yahweh were Deus absconditus, a god who has consciously left this world to hide elsewhere. The biblical Yahweh as Deus absconditus generally takes warrant from Isaiah 45:15, "Truly, you are a God who hides himself" (Lisagor n.pag..) Iluvatar in *The Silmarillion* is not Deus absconditus. Rather he is Deus otiosus, a creator god who has grown weary from involvement in this world and has been replaced by younger, more active gods. If he were like the biblical Yahweh, he should have surfaced in the face of competition. Tolkien tells us how the Valar are 'mistaken' as gods. The Valar Varda and Unien are the object of song, prayer and supplication. The Elves often call upon Varda/ Elbereth, so does Frodo in *The Lord of the Rings*. Some Tolkien scholars counter the Elves' devotion to Varda as bearing close resemblance to Catholic devotion to Mary. But that does not eliminate the fact that sanctioned or not, the worship of Valar, was a threat to Iluvatar. Even Aule's creation of Dwarves, despite being an impingement on a role that is reserved for Iluvatar, is forgiven. And it is said that the Dwarves loved and revered Aule. The worship of the Valar has also been hinted at when the Valar summon the Elves to Valinor (*The Silmarillion* 52). It is suggested that the desire to have the Elves gathered at their knee, was erroneous on the part of Valar as it implied too much of worship, thus transplanting the proper worship of Iluvatar. But in these instances Iluvatar does not reaffirm his god head. The biblical Yahweh, on the other hand, is described as a "jealous" and "wrathful" god. He is believed to regard the worship of any god other than himself as an "abomination". But Iluvatar has no qualms about the Valar replacing him, or about the Valar being called gods by his Children (Elves, Dwarves and Men). He is in fact more in line with the polytheist creator deity who does not always rule over younger gods, who even allows open conflict with him. It is unlikely that a monotheistic god would allow a transfer of godhead let alone permit a claim to title. Tolkien's Iluvatar by transferring his godhead to Valar is no longer a

mirror image of Yahweh. Tolkien's Iluvatar being an original supreme deity who brings lesser divinities into being, who then have direct responsibility for worldly affairs signals a severance from the Christian theistic model. He cannot be understood as Providence. He is more befitting as a Creator Deity who delegates his role to created deities and then retires from the world.

The intermittent participation of the Creator Deity is the only thing that reminds his people of his existence. In such events the younger deities compromise their godheads such that they do not diminish the substance of the original deity (435). These exceptions or interventions as mentioned earlier occur at crucial points such as when younger deities are unable to handle a crisis. The Yoruba believed that their supreme god, Olurun heard peoples's prayers, intervened directly in terrestrial affairs if the need occurred. Unlike the other gods, Olurun could not behave badly and all the other gods were accountable to him for their actions (Awolalu 1-20, 50; Barber 729). In the Andes, Wirqucha who was either a single creator and fertility god or a complex of such deities, was believed to have vanished into the Pacific Ocean after fashioning the world and the ancestors of all people, animals, and plants. Yet he continued to appear to Inka rulers at times of crises (Sullivan 23). Iluvatar's intervention after creation occurs in two dire places. First Aule's creation of Dwarves and second, Númenóreans' attack on Valinor. In the first case, Aule, one of the Valar, impatient for the coming of the Children of Iluvatar, creates Dwarves, an imperfect rendition of what he saw of Elves and Men in the Great Music. However Aulë did not have the power to give independent life to his creations. They could act only when his thought was on them. When Iluvatar confronted his impingement into creation, Aulë repented, answering that the drive to create was kindled in him by Iluvatar. He admitted that his impatience had driven him to folly and offers his

creations to Iluvatar. Iluvatar graciously forgives Aulë and adopts the Dwarves as one among of the Children of Iluvatar.

In the second case, at the end of the Second Age, the Numenorean king Ar-Pharazon built a huge fleet with the intention of invading Valinor and taking immortality by force. They sailed west until they successfully landed in the Undying Lands, at which point the Valar "laid down their guardianship of the world and called upon Eru" for aid. With Iluvatar's intervention the island of Númenor is sunk like Atlantis and Valinor is removed from Ea, thereby bringing the Valar's reign also to an end. Other negligible interventions of Iluvatar are his allowing of the Ents[5] into being at the behest of Yavanna, his awakening of the Elves and Men, and his changing of the world from flat to globe.

The Valar's subordination to Iluvatar has been quoted as demeaning their godhead. They being susceptible to both moral errors and errors of judgment are seen as qualities not befitting godhood. But in fact such a hierarchy and such qualities are prevalent in polytheist deities. The lesser qualities establish the levels in this hierarchy. Iluvatar the primary deity or creator deity is so benign to the point of being inhuman. The created deities on the other hand are often petty like humans. The creator deity in all its omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence is but an observer who surveys his creation from up above. This is often why, Armstrong tells us, the creator deity is associated with terms such as Sky God, High God, God in heaven etc. "It was thought that one of the gods, known as the "High God" or "Sky God" because he dwelt in the farthest reaches of the heavens, had single-handedly created heaven and earth" (Eliade 367-388). *BoLT* similarly documents Iluvatar as meaning "Skyfather" but this etymology was dropped in favour of the newer meaning in later revisions.

The hierarchy of the creator deity and created deity is such that the latter by default is subject to the former. "There was no ontological gulf separating these gods from the rest of the cosmos; everything had emerged from the same sacred stuff. All beings shared the same predicament and had to participate in a ceaseless battle against the destructive lethargy of chaos" (Armstrong 23). Therefore, the supremacy that Iluvatar imposes on the Valar is not a qualifier that implies monotheism. Tolkien in his letter to Milton Waldman subordinates the Valar by explicitly stating the absolute power and knowledge Iluvatar wields is unlike the Valar. He reckons "[T]he Knowledge of the Creation Drama was incomplete: incomplete in each individual 'god', and incomplete if all the knowledge of the pantheon were pooled. For the Creator had not revealed all" (xv). But it is this very fact of hierarchy that makes them creator deity and created deity.

The Valar are created deities who completes the designs of Iluvatar and aid the creations in their war against evil. The Ainur, the primary form of Valar, existed before creation Apter notes that "[t]he most powerful deities had already existed prior to the creation of the world, but their natures were defined only later as a result of their achievements in the terrestrial realm (Apter 151). It is only when the Ainur descend to Ea, they are delegated to the world as Powers. Iluvatar necessitates "that their power should thenceforward be contained and bounded in the World, to be within it forever, until it is complete, so that they are its life and it is theirs. And therefore they are named the Valar, the Powers of the World." (10) Such a representation as is akin to polytheist created deities who are "manifestations of the forces of nature..." (Trigger 414). *The Silmarillion* also classifies each Valar according to the areas of specialisation. They are also classified as major and minor, the Valar being major and the Maiar being minor deities. Such a specialisation and classification falls under Trigger's study of polytheist deities. Trigger notes that "...deities differed from one another in the extent of their powers and the aspects of nature

they controlled... Minor deities occurred in large number and were regarded as subject to the authority of more powerful ones (418). Their physical attributes and personas also the formula of polytheist created deities. Polytheist "[D]eities possessed reason, will, full array of human emotions (including love, anger, jealousy, ambition, and compassion), and the ability to communicate with each other and with human beings" (Trigger 411-412). Their gendered depictions are also in line with this formula. The vast majority of [polytheist] deities were either male or female (Clendinnen 168).

The only point of divergence is the depiction of the Valar unlike their polytheistic counterparts. Critics who identify Norse legends, Icelandic saga, Germanic heroism and Celtic myths as the sources of Tolkien, believe the Valar to be an imitation of pre-Christian pantheons. Only, as Juričková notes, the ancient Greek and Roman gods often seem to be quite egoistic, malicious, lascivious and cruel, these all being rather negative and very human qualities (151). Tolkien's deities have a moral order unlike its mythical counter parts. For example, there is no slaying of the primordial deity (like the Mesopotamian Tiamat slayed by younger gods, or the Olympians replacing the Titans), or a struggle for power (like between Ometeotl's four sons) or fratricide (like Seth's murder of Osiris) or rapes, seductions or adultery. Neither do Tolkien's deities indulge in deceit, robbery and betrayal of each other. Tolkien's Valar do not belittle their divinity and display predominantly positive qualities, such as countenance, mercy, and kindness. While mythic deities are indecisive and cowardly, easily offended and capable of great severity in their dealing with human beings, their actions killing innocents and guilty alike, Tolkien Valar are black and white.

Majorie Burns also remarks how the Valar devoid of grey, are unappealing. She opines that " [g]iven his tastes and preferences, given his

determination to place all evil in Melkor alone, much of what holds our interest in Asgard[6] is gone from Valinor. Gone is the joy of giant bashing, gone the good times found in sneaking and trickery, and gone the open pleasure of pre-Christian sex. In Tolkien's twentieth century descendents of Norse gods, all the blood, fire, lust and self-seeking behaviour have been allotted to villains alone..." (Burns 176). This transformation can be understood as Tolkien's attempt to give the polytheistic gods a nicer and more humanistic face in the Christian image. Listing the voluminous and contradicting descriptions of Norse gods, which is often the case in most polytheistic models, sometimes the result of cults snowballing over other cults, Burns states that "Faced with such an untidy listing of roles and attributes, Tolkien's answer was to pick and chose... for his improved pantheon— downplaying and redistributing certain conventional traits, removing other traits entirely, and now and then adding traits that are lacking or underdeveloped in Norse mythology" (256). In doing so Tolkien avoids the inconsistencies and unevenness found among Norse gods and gives us instead seven Valar lords, matched and balanced by seven Valar queens with more kindly personalities and a higher moral tone.

3.3 Why *The Silmarillion* is not Christian

In Tolkien's *The Silmarilion* we have two types of deities— Iluvatar the creator deity and Valar the created deities. It is the Iluvatar who designs and the Valar who executes. With such a hierarchy we have two sets of divine rule, two coexisting versions of godhead, both of which are needed to bring the world into being. Iluvatar has the ultimate power. This is clearly stated and stated repeatedly, yet Iluvatar soon fades from the main narrative tale, becoming more a figurehead than a participant, and the Valar— in spite of reassurances to the contrary— now seem in charge. Burns opines that this is cleverly done. By sharing out the godhead role into two differing forms, Tolkien is able to evoke the ancient mythological

world and still satisfy the religious beliefs of the modern one. The construction of Iluvatar and Valar is also not an unbiased one. The share of godhead is not equal. While it is the Valar who does all the work, it is Iluvatar who gets the credit. Tolkien calls Iluvatar God and the Valar, mistaken gods. Tolkien reinstates that Iluvatar is the primary deity. He apparently tries to give monotheism an edge over polytheism. Does Tolkien achieve his intention? Does his mythopoeia boast of reigning monotheistic model? This chapter begs to differ.

This chapter argues that despite the implication drawn from the apparent subordination of the Valar to Iluvatar, *The Silmarillion* is not Christian. Tolkien claims that his mythopoeic deity is monotheistic, that the Valar are angelic beings, and that his work is Christian. Tolkien in an interview with Hery Rensik in *Niekas* when asked about the god of his mythopoeia responded: "Of course God is in *LOTR*. The period was pre-Christian, but it was a monotheistic world". When the interviewer pushed him further, asking who the God was, Tolkien responded: "The *one*, of course! The book is about the world that God created— the actual world of this planet." Please note that the above response is in relation to *LOTR*. *The Silmarillion* then was still underway. If Tolkien had then established the Christian affinity of *LOTR*, which was in no way an explicit Christian allegory like that of C.S. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia*, even before *The Silmarillion* had been published, it is evident he would establish Iluvatar as a Christian God. Had Iluvatar not been a Christian God in his conception Tolkien would have in his later years tailored him to be. As he told a Jesuit friend, his work is "a fundamentally religious and Catholic work; unconsciously so at first but consciously in the revision". To American evangelical Clyde Kilby, Tolkien wrote: "I am a Christian and of course what I write will be from that essential viewpoint" (Brown 25). Tolkien in other words sought to establish his Christianity through his works. *The Silmarilion* being a posthumous publication should have

reaped the benefits of his much necessitated show of faith. But curiously, it projects that "...the relation between Tolkien's faith and his writing has reached an impasse..." (Holmes 119). It does not as many claim, establish *The Silmarillion* is Christian. It is misleading transcription of the structure of creator deity and created deities as Christian.

If Tolkien was indeed hell bend on Christianising his mythopoeia, why did he split the godhead in the first place? If he revised and redeemed his mythopoeia for the sake of personal and public faith, why did he retain the Valar along with Iluvatar? Given that Tolkien saw his writing as essentially "religious" and "Catholic," yet was preoccupied with polytheistic mythology, animism and faerie, strongly suggests that his understanding of these subjects were not wholly integrated with his Christian faith. Hutton believes that Tolkien can be accepted as a Christian author with reference to his personal beliefs but not with reference to his mythology. He suggests that Tolkien should be grouped instead with those authors who mixed together polytheistic and Christian themes to produce a blend of both.

John R. Holmes posits that *The Silmarilion* is a Christian palimpsest of its pagan elements (120). The section—Christian Tolkien vs Pagan Tolkien— evidenced how the godhead of the Ainur is compromised in the published version and how Tolkien insists on the godhead of Iluvatar. But the fact that Tolkien slowly and slightly brought his Valar more in line with his Christian belief does little to change the fact that Valar are a pantheon. Even when we take Iluvatar fully into account, even when we remember how Tolkien emphasizes Iluvatar's primary role and the Valar's derivative one, it is hard not to feel that the Valar are at least serving gods. In fact Iluvatar has a hand in retaining the godhead of the Valar. Iluvatar is a watered down version of Yahweh. Whereas Yahweh often intervenes in the happenings on the Earth and reveals Himself

throughout the history, Iluvatar is a passive god. During the Great Music, Iluvatar invites the participation of the Valar. He bids them to make Music. It is only when there arises a rift (due to Melkor) that Iluvatar intervenes. Even during the actual creation, it is the Valar who are at the forefront. They fashion a formless Ea into existence. They make mountains, rivers, oceans. They create the sun, the moon and the stars. They create flora and fauna. Iluvatar during all of this is non-existent. The role of Tolkien's Iluvatar after a preliminary creation comes to an end. He does not, like Yahweh, preside over his creation. Neither is he worshipped or remembered by any save Valar. Rather than Iluvatar gracing with his benevolence, the Valar, being his vicegerent, upholds his godhood. Tolkien's insistence that Iluvatar is God, and that he is the only God, falls flat with a textual analysis of Iluvatar. If he had indeed meant to preserve the divinity of Iluvatar, he should not have allotted the Ainur/Valar more room than Iluvatar. And more importantly, he should have retained the god head of Iluvatar.

This splitting of godhead suggests a rift from monotheism. Tolkien, in his concession of the split, no matter how the watered down the godhead of the Valar, inadvertently abandons monotheism. Monotheism by it very definition does not allow a sharing of the pedestal, especially with polytheism. Therefore the question—why Tolkien chose to keep both a monotheistic god and a polytheistic pantheon of gods— is still at large. What sort of position could Tolkien have taken when constructing his mythopoeic deity? He could either say that at least one god exists (theism), that no gods whatsoever exists (atheism), that more than one god exists (polytheism), or that only one god exists (monotheism) (Dillon 10-11). But Tolkien chose to combine the last two types of theism, which by default contradicts the other.

Patrick Curry in *Defending Middle-earth: Tolkien, Myth and Modernity* remarks: "What [is] the natural theology of Middle-earth? True, it is nominally monotheistic. At top is God, called the One'. Below Him is a pantheon of gods and goddesses called the Valar." But I believe this hierarchy is naturally polytheist. An original supreme deity who brings lesser divinities into being, who then have direct responsibility for worldly affairs is indicative of polytheism. The two tier structure with a primary God and a pantheon of secondary gods, according to Darren Philip Armstrong, resemble the structure common to most polytheistic creation myths. Polytheistic gods are usually created by a primary god who recedes to the background after creation. The previous section drew an elaborate comparison of Iluvatar as creator deity and the Valar as created deities. "[T]he Egyptian holy foursome, Set, Isis, Osiris and Nephthys, [are] sent to govern the earth on behalf of the supreme transcendent deity whom inhabitants of the Nile Delta considered so great as to be above naming and worshipping" (Armstrong 109). The Egyptian mythology is polytheistic not monotheistic. A supreme transcendent deity, or a God of gods, is what Iluvatar is. "Holy one" as Tolkien calls them is what the Valar are. No matter how ultimate Iluvatar's position is over the Valar, the very existence of the latter signals a severance from monotheism. Robert Laynton in *Behind the Masks of God* clarifies:

> The Supreme, Ultimate Power and Control of one deity amongst other deities is *not* the factor that defines monotheism. As soon as it is considered that there is another deity: another god or goddess-then the position has moved to polytheism, even if one deity ... ultimately has the supreme power. (73)

Thus the two-tier theism of Iluvatar and Valar would resemble creator deity and created deities of polytheism and not monotheism as opposed to what the author claims.

Also, the peaceful cohabitation of the former and the latter suggest a polytheistic tendency. Jonathan Krisch holds that "[P]recisely because the monotheist regards the pagan with such fear and loathing, peaceful coexistence between the two theologies is possible only from the pagan's point of views and never for the true believer in the Only True God"(Kirsch 8). At the heart of polytheism is an open-minded and easy going approach to religious belief and practice, a willingness to entertain the idea that there are many gods and many ways to worship them. But monotheism, on the other hand, insists that only a single deity is worthy of worship for the simple reason that only a single deity exists. Kirsch states that polytheists acknowledged the idea that some gods are more powerful than the other gods, and phrases like "Supreme God" and "Highest God" fit comfortably into the language and theology of polytheism (6). But monotheism insists that the other gods to whom worship is offered are not merely inferior in power or stature; rather, they are false, according to the Hebrew Bible, or even demonic, according to the Christian Bible (Kirsch 7). The deities who populate the crowded pantheon of classical paganism, by contrast, were never shown to deny one another's existence or demand the death of someone who worshipped a rival god or goddess (Ibid.). The polytheist can therefore live in harmony with the monotheist but not the other way around. By that logic, Tolkien by choosing to accommodate the Valar along with Iluvatar invariably opts for polytheism.

Was Tolkien ignorant of this implication? Burns states "There is no question that Tolkien was not well aware of the philosophical contradictions inherent in *The Silmarillion*, his own cosmogonic myth" (164). She believes he plays on this contradiction. Trevor Hart seconds this. He states that Tolkien "deliberately casts his own imaginary world ... in a remote pre-Christian and pre-Jewish stage of earth's past, a move which frees him conveniently from expectations of finding any close correlations between the religious outlooks..." (Hart 42). He was therefore

safe in his position between monotheism and polytheism. Even with the markers of polytheism in Tolkien's mythopoeia, one might argue that this would not much matter, any more than the existence of polytheism in actual historical religion pre-dating Christianity matters. Tolkien's claim that a pre-Christian polytheistic past was but a case of mistaken gods, could thus have a foothold.

Whether it was Tolkien who Christianised *The Silmarillion*, or whether it was Christopher Tolkien who did so during the editions, the fact remains that the mythopoeic deities of *The Silmarillion* is not Christian. This chapter evidenced the fault in Tolkien's claim of a monotheistic godhead.

Conclusion

Tolkien in his mythopoeic deity construction claims to favour his personal faith. Although there is textual evidence of polytheistic affiliation especially in the construction of the two-tier mythopoeic deity, there is a much acclaimed and deliberate displacement of polytheistic devices as monotheism, on the part of Tolkien, Christopher Tolkien and Tolkien scholars such as Joseph Pearce, John G.West Jr., Stratford Caldecott, Peter J. Kreeft, Ralph Wood, Nils Ivar Agøy etc. Their conjectures and reasoning which appears to favour monotheism, in fact does not. This chapter evidenced the fault in Tolkien's supposedly Christian mythopoeic deity. No matter how Tolkien or Christopher Tolkien christianised *The Silmarillion*, the deities still remain essentially polytheistic. The two-tier godhead of Iluvatar and Valar conforms to creator deity and created deities of polytheism. Tolkien by admitting a pantheon rejects monotheism. His conjunction of two godheads makes *The Silmarillion* anything but Christian. The transcription of polytheistic devices as monotheistic is misleading. The focus on a single religion— Christian—

has done the text a disservice as the complex beauty of the way in which Tolkien blends polytheistic themes is ignored. I believe it is blending of religious themes that are unique in Tolkien. I believe it is imperative that the presences of such devices be acknowledged and accepted for what they are. This case study established that Tolkien evidently packages polytheism as monotheism in his construction of the mythopoeic deity.

But as section 3.2 illustrated, Tolkien and his works are predominantly consumed as Christian. If a polytheistic deity is consumed as monotheistic, what are the implications of such a consumption? Chapter 2 predicated that a mythopoeia if consumed in popular demand can be internalised by the collective unconscious, transforming into mythos. In the case of a worldwide consumption like that of Tolkien, what will the internalising of a polytheistic device as monotheistic amount to? Chapter 5 which is an extension of the case study chapters takes up the implications of such a consumption.

The next chapter is a case study of an Indian mythopoeic deity. Similar to this chapter which deconstructed the mythopoeic deity construction of Tolkien, the next case study analyses the mythopoeic deity construction of Amish Tripathi. It demonstrates how Tripathi's mythopoeic deity is a euhemerized avatar of a polytheistic god.

Notes

[1] Yahweh is the Hebrew name of the god of the Israelites, whose name was revealed to Moses as four Hebrew consonants (YHWH) called the tetragrammaton. Its alternate transliteration is Jehowah. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*)

[2] Hexaemeron signifies a term of six days, or, technically, the history of the six days' work of creation, as contained in the first chapter of Genesis.

[3] A seraph meaning "the burning one" is a type of celestial or heavenly being in Christianity and Judaism. A seminal passage in the Book of Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-8) used the term to describe six-winged beings that fly around the Throne of God crying "holy, holy, holy". This throne scene profoundly influenced subsequent theology, literature and art. Its influence is frequently seen in works depicting angels, heaven and apotheosis.

Seraphim are mentioned as celestial beings in an influential Hellenistic work, the Book of Enoch, and the Book of Revelations. (*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, n.pag.)

[4] A cherub is one of the unearthly beings who directly attend to God according to Abrahamic religions. The numerous depictions of cherubim assign to them many different roles; their original duty having been the protection of the Garden of Eden. Angelic status is not attributed to cherubim in the Old Testament (at least not explicitly); only in later sources such as De Coelesti Hierarchia are they identified as a hierarchical rank of angels (Kosior 56-57)

[5] Ents are a race of beings in Middle-earth who closely resemble trees. They are similar to the talking trees in folklore around the world. Their name is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word for giant

[6] In Norse mythology, Asgard is one of the Nine Worlds and home to the Æsir tribe of gods. One of Asgard's well known realms is Valhalla, in which Odin rules. (Daly and Rengel n.pag.)
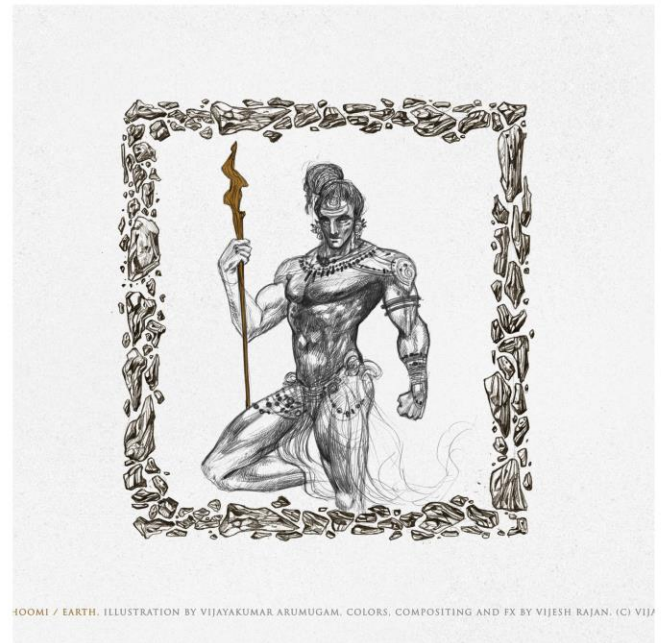
Chapter 4

Figure 2. **Illustrations of Lord Shiva** by Vijayakumar Arumugam in the Chapter Titles of Bejoy Nambiar's *SOLO* retrieved from https://imgur.com/gallery/Uv2iz for representation purpose only

Chapter 4

Polytheism to Euhemerism: A Select Study of the Mythopoeic Deity in Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*

"Everything is recycled in India, even gods." (Tharoor n.pag.)

The previous chapter arrived at the conclusion that Tolkien packages polytheism as monotheism. The chapter posited that the consumption of Tolkien's mythopoeic deity as Christian may affect the perception of monotheism. The chapter was based on the premise of Chapter 2—that mythopoeia can transition into mythos and it is therefore imperative that popular mythopoeia be scrutinised. With the case study of Tolkien's mythopoeia, the dissertation evidenced the necessity of critiquing popular mythopoeic renditions. This second case study serves to further corroborate the research statement.

This chapter is a case study of an Indian mythopoeia—Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*. As mentioned in the previous case study an analysis of all aspects of Tripathi's mythopoeias, like Tolkien's is beyond the purview of a single chapter. This case study is therefore also limited to analysing the construction of Tripathi's mythopoeic deity. This case study also serves to drive home the aforementioned primary research statement.

In order to facilitate this enquiry, it is imperative that the peculiarity of myth in India be first established. The chapter therefore introduces the term mithya as apt for Hindu myth/mythology/religion because none of these can account for the "living myths" (Heller 3) of Hinduism. The chapter substantiates the adoption of the term mithya, introduces the precarious nature of Hindu mithya and highlights the ideology of popular fiction authors who reproduce and reconstruct it. The Introduction chapter introduced mythopoeia as a proliferating offshoot of Indian popular fiction. This chapter begins with an analysis of the dynamics of mythopoeia as showcased in the field. It establishes that the contemporary mythopoeic renditions of mithya may have far reaching implications. The chapter discusses several writers' rendition of mithya to mythopoeia with Tripathi's as central example. It examines the construction of Lord Shiva in Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* and demonstrates how the mythopoeic deity is a euhemerized avatar of the polytheistic god. It argues that euhemerizing a polytheistic god is unorthodox.

4.1 Mithya ≠ Myth

"In early 2016, advocate Thakur Chandan Kumar Singh filed a case against Lord Rama[1] – a much worshipped deity of the Indian pantheon – in a court in Sitamarhi, Bihar. In an interview given to the *Hindustan Times*, Singh demanded justice for Sita, wife of Rama, alleging that "Lord Rama had banished Devi Sita to a life in exile in a forest without any suitable justification for doing so". Advocate Singh also stated that "the Devi was exiled (given "vanvasa") for no fault of hers. It was a hypocritical order from king Rama. How can a man become so cruel to his wife that he sends her off to live in a forest?" To accentuate his grievances with

legal discourses, he invoked Section 367/34 of the Indian Penal
Code in an interview given to *First Post*." (Khan 17)

This anecdote by Sami A. Khan, one in which a lawyer sued a god (for his
patriarchal outlook), serves as an effective entry point into the discourse of
Hindu mithya. This peculiar incident showcases not only a real time
religious faith of a lawyer but also his reactive measure towards that faith.
It shows a certain discontent for the ways of a mythical god and entails an
individual's attempt to harbour change in the dynamics of a deity. The
terms myth/mythology/religion cannot account for the above scenario.
Thakur Chandan Kumar Singh's credence falls outside the purvey of
myth. His proactive stance places it outside the rigidity of religion. His
corrective measures extend to outside mythology. This is so because
Hinduism is unlike the Abrahamic religious models (Kurien 194).
Hinduism is a religion whose identity is integrated to its myths. Myth in
the Hindu context is not just an ancient traditional story. "[M]ost Hindus
do not separate myths from ordinary experience" (Williams 1). There is
such a familiarity with the sacred that the myths adorn almost everything.
Khan's anecdote is one such example. In other words the myths of
Hinduism are unlike the established notions of myth/mythology/religion.
It myths are still credible, it rituals reaffirming. It includes but is not
confined to its mythological epics. It is an amalgam of sacred myths,
rituals, texts and a myriad of other practices. Above all, it is as relevant as
it was in the Vedic times (Hiltebeitel 12). Therefore the term myth is
unsuitable of in the Hindu context.

Hindu myths can be transcribed to mean what Sophia Heller calls
living myth. Living myth, Heller states is more than a primordial story; it
is "the reality or truth of lived life, expressed in the form of narratives held
to be sacred, requiring a literal re-enactment through ceremony or
worship" (Heller 1). Myth, she argues, is a metaphoric and conceptual
understanding of living myth which was once an objective reality. It is the

transcendence from the "inviolable domain of Supernatural Beings... [into]... a method to be adopted or discarded at will" (3). Lord Raglan also demarcates "living myths" from "dead myths". According to Raglan, "living myths are those narratives that are still linked with their associated rituals such as the Catholic Communion or the Jewish Passover Sedar. Dead myths are those narratives that are no longer connected with their associated rituals, such as the myths of Ancient Greece" (qtd in Indick 21). Heller also gives an example of living myths. She cites Carl Jung's record of Pueblo Indians as a record of living myth. The Indian chief told Jung,

> [W]e are a people who live on the roof of the world; we are the sons of Father Sun, and with our religion we daily help our father to go across the sky. We do this not only for ourselves, but for the whole world. If we were to cease practicing our religion, in ten years the sun would no longer rise. Then it would be night forever (Jung 252).

Living myths such as these are few in number today. Most have regressed into myth. Out of the few that still exist, the myths of Hinduism may be the most predominant.

Rather than using the term living myth for Hinduism, this chapter resorts to the original Indian term 'mithya'. Mithya the Sanskrit counterpart of myth is more than myth/mythology/religion. The Indian mythologist Devdutt Pattanaik defines mithya as "subjective truth", or "truth seen through a frame of reference". It is the limited or coloured view of satya "objective truth", or "truth independent of any frame of reference". Osho also defines mithya in a similar sense. Osho believes that mithya is "that which is untrue but appears as true" (150). He explains the concept with an example.

> It is dark, and there is a rope lying on the road, and it appears to you as a snake. In the darkness you lose all courage. You are on

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the run, sweating profusely, your heart racing fast. Then somebody says, 'You are frightened and troubled unnecessarily. Take this lamp and go back and see for yourself; there is no snake, it is only a rope lying there.' You then see it in the light and find it to be a rope. Now what will you call that snake which you had seen? It certainly was not a true snake, but you cannot call it untrue either, because it worked as if it were true. You ran away from it just the way you would have run away from a true snake. You perspired, and the perspiration was real— and it was caused by an unreal snake! A heart attack was very possible, and you could have died. And this is the puzzle: how can a true heart attack happen due to an untrue snake? But a true heart attack can happen due to an untrue snake. Indian philosophy is not prepared to call that snake altogether untrue. (Osho 151)

The snake is definitely not true because on investigation it is discovered to be a rope. But it is not untrue either because it brought the same results that a true snake would bring. This 'almost true or almost untrue is a middle category between satya (truth) and asatya (untruth). Mithya is such a snake that hovers between satya and asatya.

Osho holds that "[m]ithya is purely an Indian word" (151). Pattanaik also challenges the Western definition of myth (as "the irrational, the unreasonable, the false") as incompatible in the Indian context and replaces it with mithya (Pattanaik xv). He believes the term mithya is closest to the Greek term mythos. This is the reason why Diptanu Dey contends that "Hinduism is a religion in the same sense that all of Greek philosophy and mythology is one self-contained religion" (Dey 4). Concurring with both Pattanaik and Osho, this chapter also adopts the term mithya as apt for the living myths of Hinduism.

Hindu mithya is both religion and myth. This precarious duality requires some more elaboration. According to Raghuvir Sinha the reason for this dual existence are twofold. First, the mythological texts— *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyana*— identified as religious scriptures of Hinduism are varied not only in types but also in versions and translation of each type. These varied texts result in multiplicity of voices unlike single iconic scriptures of the Abrahamic religions. This plurality of versions facilitates its existence as myth. Secondly these mythological epics are prevalent over the sacred texts— *Vedas*[2] and *Puranas*[3]. In spite of being mythological epics, they are revered as religious texts. In fact, it is these epics that reign as the most read and preached (Sinha 73). This puts Hindu mythology in a precarious situation. It is mythical yet sacred. It is alive in every ritual, everything festive, yet also preserved in literature, art forms and architecture. In other words, myth in the Hindu context is literally and conceptually living myth. Therefore it is befitting that mithya be the term that labels the living myths of Hinduism.

4.2 Negotiating Hindu Mithya

Hindu mithya is a cumulation of not just the four *Vedas*, the *Purānas*, the two epics (the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyana*), the *Vedāngas* (the auxiliary sciences in the Vedas), the *Dharmasūtras* and *Dharmaśāstras,* the *Arthasaśāstras,* the *Kāvya* (poetical literature), extensive *Bhasyas* (reviews and commentaries on these texts), and the numerous *Nibandhas* (digests covering politics, ethics, culture, arts and society) (Bilimoria et.al. 104); but also every symbol and ritual that translates this body of texts into religion. Such vast body of literature, its translations, interpretations, adaptations and revisions, has resulted in multitude of versions of its myths. This plurality naturally bestows a certain liberty and flexibility in any reproduction of myth. But unlike defunct European mythology overshadowed by Christianity, which bestows unrestricted liberation in terms of reinterpretations, construing Hindu mythology can be limiting

and controversial. The reason for this is that it not myth but mithya. It is not just extant but living. It is not just a story but a cumulation of symbols and rituals that translates into religion.

Although there are differing and contradicting translations and versions of every Hindu mythology, the prevalent ones are those that conform to popular religious ideologies. The literary interpretations that deviate from rampant notions, even if popular in critical and academic circles, are shunned by common public. Indian literary fiction writers of the eighties and nineties "whose language has a dazzling brilliance of a firecracker, have paid the price for a superficial use of the readily available mythical stock" (Srinath 149). Use of myth as a strategy to present contemporary truth, however effective, is therefore challenging. If one is not sufficiently rooted in mythical tradition, his use of myth on a technical plane only will lead to either distortion, willing or otherwise, or stereotypical yoking of myth with reality. Myth interpretation/adaptation/revision (Mcsporan 45) in Indian fiction would therefore require doubly precarious and delicate handling. Despite the inflammable nature of Mythic fiction, Indian authors, literary and popular, regional and nationwide have attempted and sometimes succeeded in its execution. To name a few are Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, G.V. Desani's *All About H Hatter*, Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* and *Mrityunjaya* by Shivaji Sawant. But in spite of such a liberal usage of myth in fiction, the popular ones are those that have opted not to stray away from the prevalent religious ideologies. In other words only few have endeavored near what one could call blasphemy.

Unlike literary fiction which with its critical inclination is free to construe radical and deviant interpretations of Hindu mythology, popular fiction cannot deviate without limitation from the mithya. It has to be mindful of popular sentimentalities and be appealing. But interestingly,

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popular fiction has demonstrated a more confident stance in its engagement with mithya. Rather than limiting to myth interpretation and adaptation, popular fiction has come to produce more of myth revision. Following are some of the notable examples from Indian popular fiction.

Anant Pai the author of *Amar Chitra Katha*, India's largest selling comic book series since 1967 tailors gods to a certain heroic template or omits certain godly aspects he feels will harm the popularity of his books. John Stratton Hawley demonstrates how Pai downplays violence and blood thirst in his comic books featuring Kali[4]. But Pai justifies this as: "It is not just too violent for children. It is also too violent for adults. You see, Hindus do not do blood worship, sacrifice. They do not want to see blood drinking" (McLain 110). Hawley states that "for Pai, an upper-middle-class, upper-caste, vegetarian Hindu... a more sanitised version of the Goddess and her story was needed than the one found in the *Devī Māhātmya*[5]" (111). Ashok Banker is a popular fiction author who has a series of eight books that are 'retellings' of the *Rāmāyana*. While retelling is the technique that publishers and newspapers has ascribed his works with, in an interview Banker claims that "Valmiki's[6] Ramayana was too detailed in some parts and not so detailed in others. So I had to bring in some balance to the narrative" (Vakkalanka n.pag.). Ashwin Sanghi is the author of three bestselling novels which *The Hindu* calls "mythological thrillers" although they are liberally infused with history too. According to Sanghi, when an author weaves a mythological story around historical facts, "the historical markers are absolutely non-negotiable. Once that is established, a writer can take creative liberties… to suit the story', for his audience, he claims, "want to consume mythology but in a well-packaged and easily digestible way "(Vincent n.pag.). *The Telegraph* noted that Ashok Banker's

> The Prince of Ayodhya... frames the battle between Rama and Ravana as a fight between good and evil, a Manicheanism that

wasn't part of the Indian religious tradition. In earlier versions of the Ramayana, Ravana is a learned man, well-liked by his subjects who is led astray by his lust for a married woman. Banker's Ramayana does not stray too far in terms of narrative, but his characterization of Ravana as an embodiment of the forces of darkness is a significant deviation: The original's metaphysical complexity has been lost. (n.pag.)

These popular fictions with the disclaimer of authorial freedom are not just revising mithya but producing mythopoeic versions of it. But despite their deviant reproductions, they have been accepted by the target audience and have topped the best-selling charts. Media persons—Swati Daftuar, Tania Bhattacharya and Gunjan Verma— unanimously herald these works as *the* Indian Mythic Fiction. The fact that these fictions are mythopoeia, and due to their popular production and consumption, could play a crucial role in the subsistence of mithya is largely overlooked. If a mythopoeic version were to coexist with mithya, it may become yet another avatar of mithya. If a mythopoeic version were to replace mithya, the former becomes mithya and the latter myth. In both cases the mithya stands to change. "Such a pervasive, percolated, mythical climate" C.N. Srinath states "has... a great potential to merge with and even mould contemporary reality" (149). But because they belong to popular fiction rather than literary, the implications of their popularity have gone unreckoned. Their liberal treatments of mithya has led to the dangerous supposition that although "India has a mythological base that's second to none" (Bhattacharya n.pag.), "revisiting…the repertoire of [Hindu] myths" is a "safe bet" (*The Telegraph)*. But will this 'safe bet' amount to? If mithya is redefined and recontextualized, given a different meaning from what it anciently had, is it still mithya? The chapter believes that such a redefined and recontextualized mithya is a mythopoeic version of mithya. But if a mythopoeic version were to be internalized as mithya and replace

the extant mithya in the collective unconscious, then the mythopoeic version will become mithya and the extant mithya will become myth.

According to Heller a culture still living in myth would not need to theorize about that which fashioned the fabric of its existence. The narratives would be self-explanatory and sufficient (1-2). The fact that a mythopoeic version of mithya is produced and consumed implies that the extant mithya does not suffice. When mithya is intentionally conflated with thought and reflection in the attempt to cultivate a "mythic consciousness that aims to restore meaning to life and assuage the spiritual malaise of contemporary culture" (2), it implies "a desire for a spiritual meaning in a world or religious tradition that is apparently not providing it" (Ibid). The moment mithya is "subject to human rather than divine modification... whittled down to its romantic appeal and entertainment value... [with]... the ordinary human being behind the curtain pulling all the strings" (1), it loses its face value. The consumption of a mythopoeic version of the mithya, guided not by divine dictates but man's ideas about myth but man's ideas about myth and the need for a comparable substitute evidences a shift in the mythical tradition. This mythopoeic tendency showcased by Indian popular fiction is therefore significant.

The second part of this chapter evidences this shift. It demonstrates how a mythopoeic version of a mithya euhemerizes a deity of a polytheistic religion. A euhemerized deity subverts a polytheistic mithya into apotheosis.

4.3 Mythopoeia in *Shiva Trilogy*

Shiva Trilogy by Tripathi is the most popular among Indian mythic fiction. The first installment of *Meluha* was a bestseller that broke into the top seller charts within a week of its launch (Reddy n.pag.). The succeeding installments *Nagas* and *Vayuputras* established it as the fastest selling

book series in the history of Indian publishing, with 2.5 million copies in print and over Rs 700 million in sales (Harikrishnan n.pag.). Such a resplendent consumption of mythopoeia in spite of its extant mithya is what sparked this case study.

From the thirty three *koti*[7] gods in Hinduism (Chandra 340), Tripathi chose to redefine and recontextualize the life of Lord Shiva. In Hinduism, Lord Shiva, the constructive destroyer in the Hindu triumvirate is also known as Rudra[8] Mahadeva[9]. The Puranic mythology holds that he is either supreme or subordinate to Vishnu[10] or Devi[11] (Frawley i).

> He wears the crescent moon on his forehead, from which flows the celestial river Ganga. The river represents ceaseless flux of time and is the embodiment of the nurturing life-force. Shiva's body is smeared with ash, and a tiger skin is girt around his loins. Of his four arms, one carries a trident, one an axe, and the other two are set in classical mudras, granting boons and removing fear. Lord Shiva has three eyes, through which he can view the past the present and the future. The third eye, that of higher perception, looks inwards. When its vision is directed outwards, the searing intensity of its gaze emblazons and destroys all it looks at… The crescent moon rests like a diadem on Shiva's long matted hair. According to myth, Soma, the moon, was discredited by an assembly of the gods for some indiscretion and so cast into the ocean. Later, during the samudra manthan, the churning of the ocean, Shiva resurrected Soma by placing the moon on his brow… The trident of Shiva, his trishul, represents the triad of the creator, the preserver and the destroyer. His spear, the pashupata, is the weapon with which he destroys the universe at the dissolution of the yugas, the ordained time cycles. His axe is called the parashu, which he gifted to Parashurama. He also carries a club called khatvanga, which has a skull at its head. Around his neck is a

garland of skulls, which earns him the epithet of Kapalin. The drum in his hand, the damru, heralds the dance of creation, just as the ashes which anoint him signify the forces of destruction ever present in all that is living. (Gokhale iii)

His vehicle is "the sacred bull Nandi, [which] represent[s] the powers of fecundity, procreation and constancy" (Ibid.) and his abode is Mount Kailash. He is lord of yoga, lord of the animals (pasupati), and lord of the dance (nataraja). He is the only god who left a part of himself to be worshiped by his devotees, the Linga. He is therefore generally worshiped in the aniconic form of the Linga. In one of his manifestations he is united with his feminine power to become the androgynous Ardhanarishvara (Williams 19).

"Shiva is accompanied in popular iconography by his wife Parvati, a beauteous ever-auspicious figure who shares his austerities and penance" (Gokhale iv). She is the manifestations of Adi Parashakti[12], her other forms being Sati or Uma. "The story of Daksha and Sati's birth as his daughter, who became Shiva's wife, only to have Shiva rejected by her father Daksha, is a well known subject in the Puranas" (Frawley ii). According to the mithya, Sati, in the face of her husband's defamation by her father, immolates herself. An enraged Shiva almost destroys the world with his dreaded dance of rage. He then retreats to the mountains becoming the meditating ascetic. It is not until Sati is reborn as Parvati that Shiva finally comes out of meditation. They have two sons, "Ganesha, the elephant headed remover of obstacles, and Skanda or Kârttikeya" (Gokhale iv). They too are worshipped as deities.

As this chapter focuses on euhemerized avatar of the primary deity the analysis will be limited to demythologizing and remythologizing of Shiva, although Sati, Parvati, Kali, Ganesh and Karthikeya are also equally demythologized and remythologized. Before I analyze the

mythopoeic deity construction of Shiva, I give a brief summary of the primary texts.

4.3.1. Overview of *Shiva Trilogy*

The *Shiva Trilogy* comprises of the first installment *The Immortals of Meluha* (hereafter *Meluha*), the second novel *The Secret of the Nagas* (hereafter *Nagas*), and the final book *The Oath of the Vayuputras* (hereafter *Vayuputras*). The story is set in 1900 BC which according to the author is the Indus Valley Civilization. According to the novels the inhabitants of that period called it the land of Meluha, the Ramrajya, a near perfect empire created many centuries earlier by Lord Ram, one of the greatest monarchs that ever lived. *Meluha* begins with this empire of Suryavanshis facing severe perils. Their revered river Saraswati is slowly drying to extinction. Please note that Saraswati is indeed a river that once flowed in the Indus Valley Civilization. It is one of the many historical and geographical facts that the author has used to ground his mythopoeic plot. The Suryavanshis also undergo devastating terrorist attacks from the land of the Chandravanshis in the east and the ostracized and sinister race of deformed humans called Nagas of the south. The only hope for the kingdom is an ancient legend: "When evil reaches epic proportions, when all seems lost, when it appears that your enemies have triumphed, a hero will emerge." The trilogy starts with the arrival of the Tibetan tribal Shiva and the subsequent fulfillment of the markers of this prophecy. Shiva is the chief of the Guna tribe who arrives in Meluha along with his people for refuge. When they reach the city of Srinagar, Ayurvati, the Chief of Medicine, administers the legendary Somras to Shiva and his people as a fever remedy. Shiva on drinking the Somras depicts a queer symptom, his throat turns blue. This according to the prophecy is one of the markers of the coming saviour. The Meluhans hail Shiva as the Neelkanthiv, their fabled saviour.

Hauled suddenly to his destiny, Shiva resolves to help the Meluhans in their war against the Chandravanshis and Nagas. However, in his journey and the resulting fight that ensues, Shiva learns that Chandravanshis are people who also hold dear the legend of the Neelkanth. They are also imploring to him for help. His war against them is therefore futile. His quest leads him to the Nagas. Shiva learns how his discernment of good and evil reflects who he aspires to be. He realizes that his mistakes can lead to dire consequences.

Nagas is the second novel of the Shiva trilogy series. The story begins from where *Meluha*, left off, with Shiva trying to save his wife Sati from a Naga. He is told incessantly that the Nagas are the root of evil and that they must be destroyed. He therefore sets off on a quest to vanquish the Nagas and to avenge the death of his friend Brahaspati for which the Nagas are thought to be the reason. He takes his troop of soldiers and travels farther east to the land of Branga, where he wishes to find a clue to reach the Nagas. He learns that Sati's child from her first marriage, Ganesh, and her twin sister Kali, both who were thought to be still born, are alive. It is revealed that Kali is the Queen of Nagas and Ganesh is their Prince. The secret of Nagas are exposed as the ugly truth that Meluha hides. As a result of consuming Somras for longevity the Meluhan offspring who are born with deformities were banished south. The Nagas are thus the exiled Meluhans who bear the brunt of their greed. Thus his journey results to a vicious circle where tables turn and the quest of evil is yet again deferred.

In *Vayuputras* Shiva who has discovered that Somras is the true evil, declares a holy war on those who seek to continue to use it. The Emperors Daksha and Dilipa, and sage Bhrigu hungry for power opposes Shiva. Shiva then travels to the land of Pariha to consult with the Vayuputras, a legendary tribe, and to procure form them Daiva-astras,

similar to nuclear weapons. By the time he returns, the war has ended with Sati, being murdered by Egyptian assassins meant for him. An enraged Shiva destroys the capital of Meluha with the Daiva-astras and Somras is wiped out of history. The quest for evil thus ends where it started, with good turning out to be evil. Shiva realizes that good and evil are an uroboric concept, that which is good at a particular time turns out to be evil in another time. The story concludes with Shiva and his associates being popularized as Gods for their deeds and accomplishments.

4.3.2 Mithya to Mythopoeia in Shiva Trilogy

Tripathi's mythopoeia is a demythologized and remythologized version of the mithya. Demythologizing involves altering mythical aspects deemed incredible or unnecessary, and remythologizing involves infusing aspects hitherto foreign into the mithya. Tripathi's demythologizing and remythologizing of the mithya reminds one of Rudolf Bultmann's (Segal 24) and Kevin J. Vanhoozer's (26) demythologizing and remythologizing of the God of New Testament. Tripathi demythologizes and remythologizes not only the primary deity— Lord Shiva, but also the secondary deities— Parvathi, Kali, Ganesha and Karthikeya. But as analyses of both primary and secondary deities are beyond the purview of a chapter, I limit myself to the demythologized and remythologized avatar of the deity Lord Shiva.

Demythologizing reduces myth to logical principles or philosophical statements (Berger 139). For the demythologizing author, "To de- or not to de-mythologize: that is the methodological question" (Vanhoozer 26). Tripathi demythologizes the Shiva mithya by retaining the basic mould of the deity, its indispensible symbols and supporting characters while simultaneously erasing features he deems unnecessary. Tripathi introduces Shiva as a Tibetan tribal leader. The informed choice of Tibet as the nativity of Shiva caters to the existing Shaivism in its

related parts (Chitkara 303) and justifies the abode of Lord Shiva in Mount Kailash. The iconographic symbols of the Shiva mithya are also retained although redefined. The Neelkant (blue throat) of Shiva is accounted for as a reaction to Somras (mythically the potion of immortality which here is a portion of longevity). He is a passionate dancer in keeping to his iconographical name Natraj. His prominent marker the third eye is also retained although described as an angry red mark that burns when he is distressed. Other iconographic attributes like the crescent moon, flowing Ganga, damru and trident, are kept as allusions to aspects of his character. The city of Kashi, sacred in Shaivism is established as his haunt. Sati, Ganesh and Karthikeya are given their respective roles but with major alterations.

According to Hindu mithya, Sati is an avatar of Adi Parashakti who is born to King Daksha. She weds Lord Shiva after much tapasya, despite her father's strained relationship with the ascetic. When during a yagna, her husband is insulted, she immolates herself in flames. She is reborn as Parvathi to King Himavan and once again becomes Lord Shiva's consort. The mythopoeic Sati is similarly the daughter of King Daksha. But unlike the mithya, she is a widowed princess, with an unknown son (Ganesh) from her first marriage. She is ostracized as a vikarma and bestowed warrior skills. The mithya which details her incarnation as Parvathi is pruned. Other major alterations occur in the character sketches of Nandi, Ganesh and Kali. In the Shiva mithya, Nandi is a bull who serves as the mount (Vahana) of Lord Shiva. He is the gate-guardian deity of Kailasha. Tripathi depicts Nandi as Shiva's fellow human companion. He is a warrior whose clan symbol was a bull. Such a depiction compromises the zoomorphism in the mithya. Ganesh's animal associations are also negated. Ganesha in Hindu mithya is a much revered deity, easily identified as the god with an elephant's head. *Shiva Purana* and *Matsya Purana* tell of how Parvathi created a boy to guard her while

she was bathing. When the boy inadvertently blocks Lord Shiva's path, the insulted husband beheads him. When Parvathi arrives at the scene, she implores her husband to resurrect the boy. Lord Shiva replaces Ganesha's original head with that of an elephant and thus Ganesh becomes the elephant headed god. The *Shiva Trilogy* does not conform to this mithya. It posits that Ganesha was Sati's son from her late husband who was unfortunately born disfigured. Such abnormal births in the mythopoeia are rampant and account for abnormal characteristics that abound in mithyas. Kali is one such example. The goddess Kali of Hindu mithya is the ferocious goddess with multiple limbs. But here in the trilogy she is redefined as a case of abnormal birth. While Kali in the mithya is the destroyer of evil, and in some places the personified wrath of Parvathi or her alter ego (Kinsley 26), Tripathi's Kali is Sati's twin, abandoned at birth because of her hideous features.

The Ardhanarishvara concept of the Shiva mithya myth has also been turned on its head. Ardhanarishvara refers to the composite androgynous form of the Lord Shiva and his consort Parvati (also known in the mithya as Devi or Shakti). It is depicted as half male and half female, with right side identified as the male Shiva. It represents the "synthesis of masculine and feminine energies of the universe (Purusha and Prakriti) and illustrates how Shakti, the female principle of God, is inseparable from (or is the same as, according to some interpretations) Shiva, the male principle of God. The union of these principles is exalted as the root and womb of all creation. Another view is that Ardhanarishvara is a symbol of Shiva's all-pervasive nature" (Chakravarti 44).

Tripathi's mythopoeic deity forgoes such an intricate version of the Shiva mithya. Shiva's androgynous aspect in the mythopoeia is associated with him being the outcome of the conflict between two opposing drives—the Suryavanshis and Chandravanshis. Suryavanshis, descendents

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of the sun are at constant war with Chandravanshis, descendents of the moon both calling each other evil. Meluha, a single united empire of Suryavanshis is an ideal socialistic nation. The citizens are disciplined, with high regard for morality and simplicity. Their way of life is called "masculine" distinguished by the "code of truth, duty and honour" (*Vayuputras* 276). Their progressive lifestyle is the peak of idealism. The Chandravanshis on the other hand is a confederacy of smaller states. Their extreme liberalistic attitudes are described as "a state of grand chaos". The citizens live a life based on probabilities. Their laws are malleable and change is the only constant thing. They are amorous unlike their neighbor and their societies house both luxury and utter poverty. Their lives are called "feminine" with the codes of "passion, beauty and freedom" (*Nagas* 48). It is after an initial war with the latter that Shiva realizes being different is not being evil. It is out of this conflict of codes that the anomaly of Shiva arises. This binary of the masculine Suryavanshis and the feminine Chandravanshis is said to be balanced in Shiva for he is epitome of both masculinity and femininity.

> Satyam Shivam Sundaram
> Shiva is truth. Shiva is Beauty
> Shiva is the masculine. Shiva is the feminine
> Shiva is a Suryavanshi. Shiva is a Chandravanshi (*Nagas* xi)

More often than not this demythologizing paves way for remythologizing, bringing us back to myth. Remythologizing is a conscious participation in the remaking of the myth (Vanhoozer 27). It is a process of recasting or reinterpreting myth in a way that is compatible with secular scientific thinking or contemporary realities (Berger 139). Tripathi remythologizes to propose a euhemerised version of Lord Shiva. The Introduction of his series state: "What if Lord Shiva was not a figment of a rich imagination, but a person of flesh and blood? Like you and me. A man who rose to become godlike because of his karma."(*Meluha* ii). The

blurb on the jacket of both *Meluha* and *Nagas* proclaim this stance (See Appendix Figure 4. and 5.). It is based on this conjecture that Tripathi remythologizes his Shiva. To begin with, he places the deity across a historically verified axis of Indian history, in 1900 BC, Indus Valley Civilization. The Indus Valley Civilization existed during the Bronze Age in the Indian subcontinent around the riverbed of the now extinct Saraswati and extant Indus (Wright 14). Tripathi by borrowing this time, place and landmark to geographically and temporally place his mythopoeia simultaneously converts the mithya into sacred history. He also supposes it to be the *Ramrajya*—the utopia created by Lord Ram— a remythologizing of yet another mithya. Furthermore, at the outset, he inserts a prophecy marking Shiva's arrival. "When evil reaches epic proportions, when all seems lost, when it appears that your enemies have triumphed, a hero will emerge" (*Meluha* iii). Prophecies are an essential trait of heroic legends. But the mithya of Lord Shiva is not a heroic legend, neither does it contain the subplot of a prophecy. Lord Shiva is not a demiurge or demigod born. He is one of the trinity that existed since the start of time. An introduction of a prophecy of his birth, presupposing a birth, demotes a God to man. In addition to this is Tripathi's plot which is a bildungsroman of Shiva.

Tripathi's trilogy is structured as the bildungsroman of the human Shiva which propels him to greatness. The plot begins with Shiva's arrival in Meluha, fulfillment of the said markers of the prophecy and him being hailed as the next *Mahadev*. In spite of the fact that he is hailed as the Neelkanth, Shiva repeatedly denies the pedestal. He is reluctant to take up the mantle thrust upon him. His reluctance stems from his self-doubt which emphasizes him being humane and vulnerable. His greatness lies in his courage to help the needy. He resolves to help the Meluhans in their war against the Chandravanshis and Nagas. He mediates between Suryavanshis and Chandravanshis and resolves their difference. He

liberates the ostracized Nagas from their exile. He discovers that Somras is the root of evil, and declares a holy war on those who continue to use it. He journeys to Pariha, the land of the Vayuputras, to procure the Daiva-Astras. When he returns to Meluha, his wife has been murdered by Egyptian assassins meant for him. The death of Sati although altered in the mythopoeia, remains, in keeping with the mithya, the causal factor of Shiva's fury. We see him holding a lifeless Sati for days, numbed with anguish. His rage and pain becomes a crucible that defines him. He unleashes the dreaded Pashupatiastra and avenges evil. In doing so he becomes Mahadev, the constructive destroyer of the mithya. In the final chapter of the novel, thirty years after this historic war, Shiva is seen as the ascetic he is generally known as. He is said to have retired to his homeland of Tibetan mountains dwelling in the memories of Sati and we have the famed version of the immovable meditating Shiva but with the cause.

This bildungsroman of Shiva is bereft with foreign elements. Suryavanshis, Chandravanshis, Nagas and Vayuputras are purely fiction. His travel to the land of Pariha (as modern day Iran) and introduction of Egyptian assassins are also novel. He merges science with mithya to make a plausible interpretation of Somras and Daiva-astras. Daiva-astras as nuclear weapons is interesting novelty that the mythopoeia imports. Tripathi explains these ancient weapons with allusions to of nuclear fission and fusion. The supposed scientific excellence of an ancient India not only instills awe but also negates the unnatural powers of a mythical god. Instead of a god wielding the trident of destruction, Shiva is a man on a technologically sophisticated mission.

The uroboric concept of good and evil is also something that Triparthi inserts into his mythopoeia from outside the mithya. The fine line between the mythic good and bad, Devas and Asuras is erased. He

chooses to not create an evil deity but defines evil as a good that no more serves its initial purpose. He demonstrates Somras as a good which turned evil in time. In terms of the definite categories of Devas and Asuras, he contends that Zoroastrian Persians refer to their gods as 'ahuras' and demons as 'daevas,' the opposite of the Indian pantheon. This may very well have critical buttress. Namita Gokhale in *Book of Shiva* also notes that "the divine ahuras of Persia and Asia minor became the asuras of Hindu mythology, just as the devatas of Indian subcontinent transmuted by reversal into demonic beings" (45). But Tripathi's uses this fact to reify the uroboric nature of good and evil and posit that it was Shiva's understanding of the uroboric nature of good and evil that made him great. Tripathi portrays the greatness of Shiva which later makes him a God, in this anagnorisis. Such a concept of the evil as uroboros is something that Tripathi introduces from outside the mithya. While the mithya does not purport the Somras as evil in anyway, Tripathi does so purposefully, inducing evil as a stagnated cause. Unlike Tolkien who segregates good and evil as constants, Tripathi chooses to merge it as two side of a coin.

Tripathi's demythologizing and remythologizing results in a euhemerized avatar of Lord Shiva. "Euhemerism presupposes a deification of humans, an ascent of men and women to the realm of gods and goddesses through the mythographic imaginaries of the community" (Bulfinch 137). Tripathi's demythologizing and remythologizing is based on the premise that Shiva was deified as god. His bildungsroman plot is the background of the euhemerism. His erasure of incredible aspects of the deity leads to a deliberate construction of Shiva as man. His alterations of predominant characteristics of the deity strips its philosophical dimensions. His redefinition of major mythic allusions serves to redefine Shiva as a contemporary man. He constructs Shiva in such a way that his every act and every thought can resound with the modern man. He constructs him as a relatable character who speaks like someone of the

21st century. Zara Khan in *The Hindu* notes, a typical Indian mithya retold in English would tend to have a lot of "thees" and "thous" but *Shiva Trilogy* uses modern day jargons and expressions. Sati offers Shiva a glass of milk with a "here you go"; while one of Shiva's favorite phrases seems to be "give them hell" (n.pag.). The human Shiva is a rational thinker, passionate dancer, kind lover and ferocious warrior. He is seen as smoking chillum abandoning social garbs. He resolves the conflicts of each nation, learning, understanding and accepting their varied ways. His Shiva is an unbeliever of prophecies and superstitions. He is repeatedly seen as being uncomfortable in the face of devotion and respect. He constantly believes he is not a Mahadev and random chances rather than destiny resulted in his current status. A similar formula of a redeemer is seen in other works that also deal with the model of an ordinary individual who is prophesized to be a saviour. An example would be Harry Potter who is told that, "perhaps those who are best suited to power are those who have never sought it" (Rowling 165). Thomas Anderson or Neo of *The Matrix* is also a similar saviour who is unwilling to save humanity or take up the role as 'the One'. Reluctance seems to the prominent aspect of the modern day saviour. Tripathi's Shiva does not fail to impress.

Tripathi's Shiva is a man who ponders over the philosophical questions. He is one who realizes or overcomes the ideological bondage brought about by the herd morality and sets out to break free from it. He abolishes the age old system of vikarma liberating the widowed princess Sati and many others from curbing societal norms. He marries Sati, adopts her son Ganesha from her first marriage, and remains unmarried after Sati's death. He dismisses class politics. He argues that being different need not entail being evil. He consorts with the deformed Nagas in the open and brings an end to their discrimination. He destroys the Somras, declares war against producing and consuming it and bans its use in the whole of India, effectively ending its age of addiction. He brings Meluha,

Swadeep and Panchwati under a single umbrella of India although the notion of an India, non-existent then is infused by the author as a conscious attempt (See Appendix Figure 6.). He questions the concept of the divine. He purports the possibility of every deity being men who were mistakenly elevated to divinity over time. He holds that Mahadev and Vishnu were titles given to great men. Lord Rudra could have supposedly taken up the title of Mahadev before Lord Shiva. He thus resonates Tripathi's stance of euhemerism, validating the agenda of Tripathi's of euhemerism.

Tripathi's mythopoeia thus euhemerizes the deity Lord Shiva. It is this alternate avatar that makes Tripathi's trilogy mythopoeic. The entire plot of Tripathi's mythopoeia creates a mythopoeia that makes Lord Shiva a man. It demotes myth to legend which automatically makes the god human. Shiva's messianic growth, both in self awareness and power, and his eventual bringing of salvation to humanity is what according to Tripathi, propelled Shiva as a deity. Shiva's journey starting from Tibet to his expedition over Meluha, Swadeep and Panchwati, shows him not only overcoming physical obstacles but also intellectual puzzles. He is seen triumphing over his inner demons. He is the Mahadev in name long before he accepts that he is in actuality. In other words, he learns to live up to the title he wears. In a sense, Shiva also convinces himself into believing that he is the Mahadev, and thus becomes it. He submits to the idea before fully believing it. He realizes the uroboric nature of good and evil. He tips the balance of good over evil. He shepherds a nation onto the right path. It would be fitting to say that the trilogy of Shiva's bildungsroman makes Shiva a man. In such a modus operandi, after having faced numerous trials testing his limits, the said individual redefines himself and his society. His followers inspired by him gradually worship him as a god. The man therefore becomes the myth.

According to Christina Hughes and Malcolm Tight, "myths can be very powerful for developing alternative visions". Tripathi's mythopoeia is an alternate vision of the mithya. Mythology can be rendered in other credible ways as well and this is exactly what Tripathi endeavors to do in his fiction. But in such a demythologizing and remythologizing, Tripathi seems to have overlooked the fact that the end product, Shiva, no longer remains a god but a man. Allan Dahlquist in *Megasthenes and Indian Religion: A Study in Motives and Types* notes: "We have no Dravidian evidence of a god who began as a man and was deified during his lifetime" (244). Although "[a]ncestor- worship is a theme constantly recurring in the *RigVeda* [with] frequent mention [] made of *pitri-yajna*, sacrifice to the spirits of the ancestors" and "a number of minor deities seem to have passed through this course of development in later ages" (Ibid.) but euhemerism per se, according to Dahlquist, has had no correspondence with Dravidian or Aryan ideas. Therefore Tripathi's use of euhemerism to deconstruct Lord Shiva is a foreign technique introduced into the Indian mithya. Such a transcription makes the mythopoeic rendition theologically erroneous.

In addition to this, the tools of demythologizing and remythologizing are indicative of the period when Christian scripture underwent an acquiesced status as Christian mythology primarily in academic circles. Peter Berger insists that demythologizing and remythologizing secularizes myth. He claims that this strategy is theologically bankrupt and will ultimately lead to a denial of the existence of any supernatural realm (139). In other words, these tools strip the theological or supernatural attribution of mithya making it myth. The fact that Tripathi resorts to these measures to reproduce a mithya are not what is problematic. The fact that a demythologized and remythologized mythopoeic version of a mithya interprets a polytheistic religion as euhemerism is what is problematic. A euhemerized version of a

triumvirate is consumed and the implication of such consumption is what is problematic.

4.4 Euhemerism in Mythopoeic Deity

Euhemerizing Gods is not a novel trend in world history. Euhemerus by whose name, the concept was coined, was a fourth century BCE Greek mythographer. His argued that mythology reflected a kind of divinized account of true, but inadequately remembered history. According to him, the "gods" had probably once been ordinary human beings, albeit ones who accomplished great deeds. Over time, their sucessors told and retold the legends of their exploits, rendering them more and more god-like with each generation— in essence mythologizing them. Euhemerus claimed that Zeus of the Greek mythology was once a great man who was buried at Crete (Spyridakis 338). But Euhemerus' euhemerism was seen as blasphemy in his times. Callimachus his contemporary penalised his claim as fabrication. Epimenides' outrage about it became the immortal statement: "All Cretans are liars." (Roubekas 15) Alexander the Great also indulged in euhemerism. In a letter to his mother he wrote: "Even the higher gods, Jupiter, Juno and Saturn and the other gods, were men, the secret was divulged by Leo, the high priest of Egyptian sacred things". But he required the letter be burnt after reading (Garnier 15). Euhemerism during those times was frowned upon because Greek mythology was then mythos. But with the passage of time the Greek Gods became myth and euhemerism came to be accepted. In 1609, Thomas Heywood depicted the Olympian Gods as made by Homer. Angus Vine states that Heywood was transmitting a widespread belief about classical myths: that the gods were originally mortal men and historical persons who were only later elevated to their divine status (112). Both Heywood and Vine state that such a treatment of the mythology was popular with the audience. In fact, the populist nature of Heywood's

works sanctioned and encouraged revisions. He wrote in the prefatory epistle to the 1600 edition:

> I have fixt these few lines... neither to approue it, as tastfull to euery palat, not to disgrace it, as able to relish none, onely to commit it freely to the general Readers, as it hath already past the approbation of Auditors. (39)

This is similar to the resounding disclaimers of authorial freedom as purported by Anant Pai, Ashok Banker and Ashwin Sanghi. Heywood's treatment of Greek gods corresponds to Tripathi's euhemerising of Shiva. The popular consumption of euhemerised deities by both target audience are also congruent. The only but major difference in Heywood and his Indian counterparts is that the former was construing myth while the latter is construing mithya.

When Heywood euhermised the Olympian gods, he was not met with any opposition because he construed myth not mithya. When **Callimachus** and **Epimenides** opposed Euhemerus, it implied the prevalent religious sentimentality, that the Olympian Gods were mythos. When Alexander stipulated the burning of the letter, it indicated the delicacy of euhemerising gods. If Tripathi's mythopoeic Shiva is consumed in popular demand, then based on the above transitive relations, it implies that Hindu mithya is being treated as myth not mithya. This implication is what the chapter deems problematic.

Vine points out that when audiences saw Heywood's *The Golden Age* at the Red Bull[13], they are unlikely to have recognised that play's euhemerism, let alone have had the terminology to articulate this. But that is nonetheless what they were seeing (113). In the case of Indian audience also, Vine observation may stand true. The Indian audience may be consuming mythopoeic versions of mithya without understanding the

implications of such consumption. But the consumption of mythopoeia conscious or unconscious will affect the mithya. A euhemerized deity may become an accepted avatar of the mithya. The extant deity of the mithya may become an incredible myth. It is imperative therefore that mythopoeic rendition be looked into.

It is curious how critics like Rajiv Malhotra who inveighed Wendy Doniger's interpretation of Hinduism as unorthodox have disregarded Tripathi. The lawsuit which was filed against Penguin in 2010 claimed *The Hindus: An Alternative History* contained "heresies and factual inaccuracies" and criticised Doniger for having a selective approach to writing about Hinduism (Buncombe n.pag.). Tripathi engages in a similar heresy, factual inaccuracies and selective writing. But despite its unorthodoxy the books are validated as an interpretation. His alternate version is authenticated amidst much brouhaha. The authentication is attributed to first, his Hindu Pundit identity and two, his proclamation that the books are a revelation by Lord Shiva and a tribute to the God (Anuradha n.pag.). Such a religious position seemingly absolves the author of any criticism. Does this mean that if the alternate interpretation of a Hindu mithya if produced by a Hindu home-grown author, and marketed in a respectful manner, it is taken with a pinch of salt? If that is the case then Rajiv Malhotra may have to first address the unorthodox interpretations of mithya in his home country.

Mythopoeic productions of mithya deities have been noted in other critical studies of Indian popular fiction. Vikram Singh in his article "Representation of God as 'Superhero': A critical analysis of selected graphic novels" opines that Hindu mythology at present is under strain from broader debates about religion and politics in India. According to him there seems to be a didactic extreme and an experimental extreme in present approaches to the tales of the gods. The didactic tendency views

mythology as a litany of facts about history and geography. The gods are depicted like pop culture superhero figures while a pedantic voice lists facts about them. The experimental tendency, on the other hand, sees mythology as open to virtually any sort of reinterpretation without regard to virtue or intent. Some artists and intellectuals espouse this view, and end up assuming that any imputation of sanctity to mythology is inherently fundamentalist (Singh 279). If this didactic and experimental tendency, does indeed as Singh argues, make mithya plausible and unsanctimonious, is it still mithya?

Karline McLain in her article "Gods, Kings and local Telugu guys: Competing visions of the heroic in Indian comic books" demonstrates the differences between *Amar Chitra Katha*'s depiction of Indian gods and kings in their comic books, and *Vivalok*'s versions of the same. She demonstrates how the former indigenizes the American superhero from the Golden Age (1930s-1950s), while the latter challenges dominant formulas producing varied and sometimes contradictory tellings. But despite such disparate "visions of Indianness" (170) McLain holds that both series approach comic books "not as mere entertainment but as a tool for patriotic socio-cultural transformation" (171). Here too, homogenized or heterogenized versions of gods as kings, or kings as gods, are not what are problematic. The fact that "the prevailing modern and postmodern usage of myth as fictitious in contradistinction to myth's former role as the expression of truth and reality" (Heller 213) is compromised and that this compromise is ignored is problematic. This ignorance permits the production and consumption of mythopoeic versions of mithya. This compromise facilitates a shift from mythic deity to a mythopoeic one.

Conclusion

The chapter discussed mithya as living myth and myth as absence of a living myth to justify the adoption of the term mithya to discuss myth in

Hinduism. Hindu mithya is mythology cum religion and is therefore rightly living myth. Its vast body of mythological literature which includes its translations, interpretations, adaptations and revisions, would permit certain liberations in its reproductions. But although there are differing and contradicting translations and versions of every Hindu mythology, the prevalent ones are those that conform to popular religious ideologies. The literary interpretations that deviate from rampant notions, even if popular in critical and academic circles, are shunned by common public. Popular fiction because it needs to be mindful of popular sentimentalities would have to conform rather than be deviant. But curiously, it is popular fiction which has demonstrated a more confident stance in its engagement with myth. Rather than indulging in myth interpretation and adaptation, popular fiction has come produce more of myth revision crossing over to mythopoeia.

Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* is an example of this trend. Tripathi in his series demythologizes the Shiva mithya retaining some mythical and iconographical symbols and removing incredible or supernatural elements he deems unnecessary. He remythologizes Lord Shiva into a tribal chief who revolutionised the country. He claims that Shiva was once a man of the Indus valley civilization who was elevated to divinity over time. Such a mythopoeic deliverance demotes a God of the Hindu triumvirate into man. It interprets a polytheistic deity as euhemerism. But in spite of such radical and deviant mythopoeic version of the mithya, it is consumed in popular demand. This unorthodox mythopoeic version of the mithya is consumed in popular demand.

What are the implications of consuming a polytheistic deity as euhemerism? Chapter 2 predicated that if mythopoeia is consumed in popular demand, it may be internalized, thereby transitioning into mythos, or mithya in the Indian scenario. If Lord Shiva is internalized as having

been a man at one point of time, how will the mythopoeic avatar affect the extant deity? The next chapter takes up this question in a detailed discussion of the implications of consuming unorthodox mythopoeic deity rendition. Chapter 5 extends this argument and also compares the trajectory of both case studies, in order to illustrate the symmetry of opposed motives.

Notes

[1] Lord Rama is regarded as the seventh incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Lord Vishnu is one among the Hindu holy trinity— Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the preserver) and Shiva (the destroyer). Lord Rama is the central figure of the epic Ramayana

[2] *Vedas* are oral compositions in Vedic Sanskrit and one of the oldest scriptures of Hinduism. They are revelations as seen by ancient sages after intense meditation. They are classified into four— the *Rigveda*, the *Yajurveda*, the *Samaveda* and the *Atharvaveda* (Ghose 2011, n.pag.).

[3] *Puranas* are encyclopaedic ancient literature that includes diverse topics such as cosmogony, cosmology, genealogies of gods, goddesses, kings, heroes, sages, and demigods, folk tales, pilgrimages, temples, medicine, astronomy, grammar, mineralogy, humour, love stories, as well as theology and philosophy. They are divided into 18 Maha Puranas (Great Puranas) and 18 Upa Puranas (Minor Puranas) (Bailey 2001, 437-439).

[4] Kali is a Hindu goddess known as the destroyer of evil. She is depicted as is black, gaunt with sunken eyes, and wearing a tiger skin and a garland of human heads. She is known for having slayed demons especially the demon Raktabija by drinking his blood and eating his clones (Kinsley 1986, 116).

[5] *Devī Māhātmya* is a Hindu religious text describing the Goddess as the supreme power and creator of the universe (McDaniel 2004, 216).

[6] Valmiki is known as the harbinger poet of Sanskrit literature. The epic *Ramayana,* dated variously from 5th century BCE to first century BCE is attributed to him, based on the attribution in the text itself (Goldman 1984, 14-15).

[7] The word *koti* in Sanskrit is generally translated as million. But there has been opposing ideas that claim koti means 'divine', and therefore Hinduism has 33 main deities (Chandra 2007, 340)

[8] Lord Rudra meaning 'the roarer' is a Rigvedic deity. He is known as the euphemistic theonym of Lord Shiva (Zimmer 1972, 181)

[9] Mahadev is theonym used to address Lord Shiva

[10] Lord Vishnu is one among the Hindu holy trinity— Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the preserver) and Shiva (the destroyer).

[11] Devi s the Sanskrit word for "goddess", the masculine form being Deva. (Kinsley 42)

[12] Adi Parashakti or Adishakti is the Supreme Being goddess in the Shaktism sect of Hinduism. She is also popularly referred to as Parama Shakti, Maha Shakti, Mahadevi, Parvati, or even simply as Shakti. (Kinsley 41)

[13] The Red Bull was a playhouse in London during the 17th century. It burned in the Great Fire of London, and was among the last of the Renaissance theatres to fall.

Chapter 5

Mythopoeia to Mythos/Mithya: Comparing and Predicating the Effects of Tolkien's and Tripathi's Mythopoeic Deities.

"Man is, and always has been, a maker of gods. It has been the most serious and significant occupation of his sojourn in the world."(John Burroughs)

The case study chapters were organized to conform loosely to analysis of the mythopoeic deity. Chapter 3 deconstructed the godhead that Tolkien constructs in his mythopoeia. Tolkien's *The Silmarillion*, splits the godhead between a creator God and a pantheon of gods and goddesses. Both Tolkien and Christopher Tolkien and scholars such as Joseph Pearce John G. West Jr., Stratford Caldecott, Peter J. Kreeft, Ralph C. Wood, and Nils Ivar Agøy hold that the Valar were angels in their conception. The split of godhead is negated and the mythopoeic deity acclaimed as the biblical God and his angels, is upheld as a Christian allegory. The chapter established that Tolkien's insistence that his mythopoeic deity is monotheistic is misleading. The power of sub-creation conferred upon the Ainur, the hierarchy of Iluvatar and Valar, the deity like qualities of the Valar and the subsequent absence of Iluvatar in the plot, effectively refutes the semblance of a monotheistic Christian model. Monotheism does not permit secondary gods. Polytheism on the other hand often features an abstract creator God who creates a polytheistic

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pantheon. Tolkien's model which features a Creator deity and a pantheon of created deities falls under the second category. The chapter inferred that Tolkien packages a polytheistic deity model as monotheism. The second case study deconstructed the godhead of Tripathi's mythopoeic deity. Chapter 4 showed how Tripathi demythologizes and remythologizes Lord Shiva of Hinduism and produced a euhemerized avatar of the deity. His mythopoeic deity is founded on the premise that Lord Shiva was once a man who in the course of history was deified. The chapter posits that a euhemeristic deliverance of the polytheistic deity Lord Shiva is unorthodox. Allan Dahlquist posits that there is no evidence of euhemerism in the major deities of Aryan and Dravidian Hinduism. Tripathi's mythopoeic deity by altering and transcribing a Hindu triumvirate as euhemerism deviates from the existing conception of Lord Shiva. But despite the deviancy in the mythopoeic deity, *Shiva Trilogy* is consumed in popular demand. The chapter problematized the consumption of a euhemeristic version of a polytheistic deity amidst the extant mithya and urged the need for further enquiry.

This chapter is a comparative study of the mythopoeic deities of both Tolkien and Tripathi. It compares the context and relates the factors conducive to their mythopoeic deity construction. It analyses the reactions or lack thereof in of their respective audience response and draws the implications of the consumption of the respective mythopoeic deities. This comparativist and cross cultural exploration predicates that Tolkien's mythopoeic deity may affect the perception of monotheism and polytheism, and Tripathi's mythopoeic deity may become an avatar of polytheism.

5.1 The context that produced their mythopoeic deity

What is of interest beyond the somewhat neat fit of these literary mythopoeias into the extant mythos (in the case of Tolkien), and mithya

(in the case of Tripathi), is the symmetry of opposed motives between Tolkien's mythopoeic deity and Tripathi's mythopoeic deity. Tolkien's deity is a polytheistic model sold as monotheism. Tripathi's deity is euhemeristic model sold as polytheism. Both mythopoeic deity constructions are different yet similar in various ways. Each man lived and lives in a time that perceives myth, mythos and mithya as incredible. Both seek to establish their version of mythopoeia to reawaken an interest in mythos/myth/mithya. Tolkien perfuses a lacking English mythology and Tripathi refurbishes an incredible Indian mithya. This section compares the contexts that produced each man's mythopoeic deity.

Helen Lasseter's opening argument of *Fate, Providence, and Free Will: Clashing Perspectives of World Order in J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth* best introduces the context that produced Tolkien's mythopoeic deities:

> Amid the ruins of the First World War lay the nineteenth-century's promise of Progressivism. Science and rationalism had replaced religious faith in providence for defining the course of world history; yet, in the wake of the War's devastation, Progressivism faltered and a more ancient and perennial understanding of fate controlling human life re-emerged in England. Most writers and thinkers came to believe that human efforts were ultimately meaningless and human beings inescapably subject to chaotic or mechanistic forces within a purposeless universe. The Christian concept of providence was not only something most nineteenth and twentieth century English writers and poets had already dismissed, but something that seemed absurd in the face of the War's horrors. Yet amidst this growing resignation to fate within the artistic culture of England, J.R.R. Tolkien created a fictional world at the heat of which is a gracious deity with a providential design for the world (1).

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The likening of Tolkien's Iluvatar as Providence was negated in Chapter 4. But the description of the nineteenth century with its devastation of World Wars and uncertain Progressivism and faltering Faith, best describes the context in which Tolkien was writing. Scott Freer called this period the twilight of "intellectual uncertainty in which the human struggles to come to terms with the death of God and to let go of a God-language" (3). This post religious indeterminism characterised as grappling with keeping or abandoning the idea of God can be illustrated in Tolkien's mythopoeic deities. The post religious indeterminism can be identified in his affinity towards polytheism, dissatisfaction towards Christian mythos, yet packaging polytheism as Christian allegory in his later years.

Tolkien, as we know from his *Letters* was concerned with establishing a mythology for England. He was enamoured with "Greek, and Celtic, and Romance, Germanic, Scandinavian, and Finish" (*Silmarillion* xi) mythology and bewailed the absence of "mythology for England" (Carpenter 145). He was perturbed by the fact that countries such as "Greece, Italy, Iceland, and Norway" all possessed "a religious pantheon of the gods attached to a creational act of genesis that functioned as an expression of origin and identity" (Chance 1). England on the other hand could not claim any such mythical heritage. Tolkien wished to redress this gap. He therefore created a pantheon of gods similar to the aforementioned mythologies. The Valar, as discussed in Chapter 3, resemble polytheistic deities. But Tolkien was also not fully satisfied with the neighbouring gods as they were polytheistic by default. In a 1966 transatlantic telephone interview, Tolkien stated "Mostly mythology moves me" though it "also upsets me because most mythology is distasteful to people." Tolkien's agenda was to produce a mythology that would not be distasteful; something that would not conflict with the Christian mythos.

This brings us to the second factor that contributed to Tolkien's mythopoeic deity construction, the Christian mythos. Tolkien did not believe that the Christian mythos could fulfil his desire for a British mythology. He was of the opinion that even the Arthurian legends "does not replace what I felt to be missing", as it is "too lavish, and fantastical, incoherent and repetitive", and "another and more important thing: it is involved in, and explicitly contains the Christian religion" (*Silmarillion* xi). The Christian mythos, according to Tolkien, did not meet his idea of mythology. First, it did not belong to England alone. Secondly, it was monotheistic and therefore did not have the variety of a pantheon. Moreover it was a mythos and therefore could not be handled with disregard. The Christian mythos was thus not a malleable raw material a mythopoeic author could imaginatively use, nor something the English could solely take pride in. Make no doubt, Tolkien was a good Christian. His catholic upbringing is clearly emphasised by Humphrey Carpenter in *Tolkien: A Biography*. His Christian affiliation is reinstated, and reinstated repeatedly in his numerous critiques. But it was his professional love for mythology that sparked his mythopoeic endeavour.

It is due to these factors that his mythopoeic deity is not a Christian one. Chapter 3 established that Tolkien's mythopoeic deity is polytheistic in nature. It is modelled upon the formula of creator deity and created deities. Tolkien's mythopoeic deity is a result of a perceived lack of polytheistic mythology and dissatisfaction with the Christian mythos. But Tolkien cleverly packages this formula under a Christian guise. His creation myth is explicitly reminiscent of Genesis, although the resemblance ends there. As the Christian conception of the Genesis is mythos rather than myth, an alternative creation story would be hard to replace in the social psyche. He therefore chose to retain the background of Genesis but incorporated a two tier deity keeping with polytheistic mythology. Chapter 3 elaborated how Iluvatar and Valar are essentially

polytheistic in nature but are disguised as biblical. It is these factors that contribute to Tolkien's monotheistic packaging of polytheistic two-tier deity.

The context that produced Tripathi's mythopoeic deity is a mythical resurgence. This mythical resurgence can be identified with namely three aspects. First, mithya, by default, as detailed in the Chapter 4 has always been in a state of flux. The Hindu mithya with its numerous deities have been repeatedly incarnated in popular culture. Right from the days of B R Chopra's television serial *Mahabharata* and Shyam Benegal's 1981 film *Kalyug*, to recent movies like *Raavan*, and the more inane renderings in children's entertainment like *Chhota Bheem*[1] and *My Friend Ganesha*[2] (Viswanath 21), we have had mythopoeic renderings of our deities. But today, more than ever, there seems to be a surge in Indian mythopoeic fiction, film and graphic novels that analyse episodes and epics of Hindu mithya, reading it from a contemporary perspective, and deriving from it meaning that was previously unexplored. Artist Moyna Chitrakar and author Samhita Arni explore *Ramayana* from Rama's abandoned queen's perspective in their graphic novel, *Sita's Ramayana*, while Sujoy Ghosh's *Ahalya*[3] turns the story of Sage Gautama's wife on its head, weaving in strains of sexuality and feminism. Abraham of Hachette says, "Mytho-history is currently a hot genre. Krishna Udayasankar's *Govinda* sold over 25,000 copies. We've seen a slew of books in the genre…" (Harikrishnan n.pag.). These and several other instances of creative reinterpretation of Hindu mithya are supplemented by an increase in dialogue and critical analyses by readers, thinkers and academics themselves. *The Economist* states that the contemporary audience is a "generation [that] folds myth into modernity". *The Economist* credits them with "being the first to go where we imagined angels had feared to tread-into the minds and hearts of the gods" (n.pag.). With such a modern undertaking of mithya, we have gods wearing goggles

and jeans, goddesses with machine guns (Pattanaik n.pag.), plots that are exciting and dialogues that have less of thee and thou (Daftuar n.pag.). These revamped and reinvented mythopoeic versions of mithya, au courante in popular fiction, therefore come as no surprise. They are in fact a proof of the mythic brand having sustained itself. Authors such as Tripathi, Ashwin Sanghi and Ashok Banker are the leading figures in this trend.

The second aspect particular to the current mythical milieu is its transition from the realms of religion to entertainment. Swati Daftuar opines that both our approach and the way we consume mithya has changed. Indian mithya reproductions have transitioned from being rigidly religious to being a form of entertainment and infotainment. The vast bulk of readers turn to these renderings for excitement and distraction rather than religious instruction. "[I]t seems that the stories we grew up with can be dissected and analysed, and are not, indeed, sacrosanct" (Daftuar n.pag.). The authors too admit to having exercised creative liberties with the sacred texts. As Sanghi says "I have always maintained that my primary goal is to entertain, not educate or enlighten. If the latter two objectives happen along the way, that's a bonus." Chapter 4 pointed out similar ideologies amongst authors such as Anant Pai, and Ashok Banker, who have admitted to having exercised an uninhibited authorial freedom. For all their deep rootedness in the native soil, Indian 'myth-fuelled bestsellers' fit snugly into a global entertainment market that is often driven by story-cycles such as *LOTR* or *Game of Thrones*. Sarkar notes that the Indian popular fiction now looks more and more like mass-market fiction of U.K and U.S.A.

The third aspect of this mythical transition is the political context that attempts nation building through a homogenized Hindu identity. One particular paradigm of Hindu mithya has never been the norm. But

Tripathi, as we saw in Chapter 4, demythologizes Lord Shiva erasing the varied and intricate aspects of the deity. *India Today* points out that "Tripathi is earnest but wrong when he talks about a monolithic traditional Indian way" (Harikrishnan n.pag.). Christoph Senft, a specialist in modern Indian literature who teaches at Pune University argues that a "search for internal homogeneity" has become "the flipside of India's rapid push towards the global marketplace". Unlike *Three Hundred Ramayanas*, these popular fictions impose a certain homogeneity that effectively subsumes the extremely variegated contexts and the widely different political sites that each mithya proceeds from. Such an infused homogeneity according to Senft is threatens the mosaic and multifaceted nature of what are. Arshia Sattar notes that this homogeneity in resurgent mythic fiction results in a removal of any specific religious identity. The gods or heroes are all "muscled and battle-ready... women [] feisty but not threatening, we [] speak of country but we must imply nation ('India')" (n.pag.). *The Economist* notes that some observers link such mythological revivals to the new assertiveness about Indian tradition that characterises the so-called "Hindutva"[4] politics associated with the ruling BJP party. *India Today*'s Harikrishnan point out:

> ...he [Tripathi] is eventually swearing by what faux archaeologist George Hancock and Vedic astrologer David Frawley, who was incidentally given the Padma Bhushan by the Narendra Modi government, have been crowing from right-wing rooftops: that an unbroken Vedic/ Saraswati civilisation lasted more than 7,000 years. Tripathi says he is against the "extreme left-winger who says ancient Indians were barbarians" as well as "the extreme right-winger who says only India had a glorious past and everyone else were barbarians". Yet, his bestselling books-where Brihaspati and Brahma become scientists, where doctors perform cosmetic surgery and whose pages are marked with the symbols of

Harappan seals-tie neatly with some kooky Hindutva theories. (n.pag.)

Westland's CEO Gautam Padmanabhan credits the rise of nation building mythic fiction to the redefined pride in being Indian. "The opening up of the Indian economy in the 1990s and the resulting economic success has led to a sense of pride in being Indian and celebrating all things Indian. The perception of India has also dramatically changed the world over. It is now routine to read glowing reviews of films like *Baahubali* in *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*" (n.pag.). But does this resurgent interest in Hindu mythology, whether in fictionalising it or in interpreting it, really account for an increasing pride in Indian heritage? These mythic fictions may confirm the Hindu nationalists' wish to tell India's history as a history of Hinduism. What about other minorities? Considering that almost all of popular culture's mythological source is Hindu, this particular issue treads a thin line between our religious identity and a national one.

Tolkien's milieu of post-religious indeterminism and Tripathi's milieu of mythical resurgence are similar in their motives. Each perceives the mythic deities as incredible. Each seeks to revamp them into palatable versions of their earlier models. Tolkien's two tier deities mollify the conflict of monotheism and polytheism. The target audience which consumes his deity is entertained by polytheism under a misleading but redeeming guise of Christian allegory. Tripathi's deity is a modern man in the guise of a deity. Tripathi's Shiva who is "a marijuana-smoking Tibetan immigrant" (Pandey n.pag.) who uses contemporary phrases like— "give them hell" is far cry from "the kings thirty feet high and reigns thirty thousand years long, and geography made of seas of treacle and seas of butter" (Macaulay 7). Tripathi's euhemerised Shiva is far more relatable that the original deity and redeems the incredibility associated with it,

thereby facilitating its foray into non-Hindu or non-Indian or overseas audience.

5.2 How mythopoeic deities could affect mythos/mithya

Chapter 2 predicated that mythopoeia may progress into mythos provided the mythopoeic version is internalized by the collective unconscious. It argued that if produced and consumed in popular demand, mythopoeia may replace an extant mythos/myth/mithya or may become an acceptable avatar of the mythos/myth/mithya. By this logic, Tolkien's and Tripathi's mythopoeic deity, being popular fiction by default may, at some point in time, affect their respective counterparts. The mythopoeic deities may become more palatable than their mythic counterparts. The mythopoeic deities may alter the extant ones. This section explores the implication of such a progression.

Tolkien's mythopoeic deity is a polytheistic model of creator deity and created deities that is packaged as the biblical model of Yahweh and his angels. If one were to entertain the possibility of angels being mistaken as gods, the idea, first, disparages polytheism as incorrect, and secondly, accommodates a subordinate godhead under monotheism. Both cases essentially are unorthodox. If one were to consume this unorthodox supposition, what are the implications of such a consumption? In the first case, Tolkien's resolution of the 'pagan' gods, by positing them as evolved version of angels, does injustice to both biblical angels and polytheistic gods. Biblical angels are not bestowed godheads in the Christian doctrine. Polytheistic gods are not angelic beings who evolved. But if one were to consume Tolkien's mythopoeic deity, the subsequent perception of monotheism and polytheism stands to change. Monotheism may be perceived and not necessarily 'mono', and polytheism may be perceived as a subset of monotheism. Tolkien's highfalutin about a polytheistic model having evolved from monotheism misleads an

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unassuming audience. Tolkienian fans and critics, by accepting and upholding the mythopoeic deity as a Christian allegory, invariably consume polytheism. They not only do not perceive the misconception for what it is but also internalize this theologically erroneous position. Such internalization can alter their very perception of monotheism and polytheism.

Although it is widely acknowledged that foundation of Tolkien's mythopoeia is shared by not only biblical references but also by Norse legends, Icelandic saga, Germanic heroism and Celtic myths, the latter is wilfully ignored by many. Tolkien's characters, narratives, scenes and symbolism have been proved as unequivocally pagan by Tom Shippey's "Tolkien and the Appeal of the Pagan: Edda and Kalevala", Majorie Burns' *Perilous Realms: Celtic and Norse in Tolkien's Middle-earth* and Bradley Birzer's "The Last Battle as Johannine Ragnarok: Tolkien and the Universal". Commentators have also noted similarities between Tolkien's trilogy and Wagner's *Ring Cycle*, which put Europe's pagan heritage in the service of Tolkien's myth-making (Mooney 172). But there is still a considerable section who argues that Tolkien's Roman Catholicism predominantly informed his creative work. In an early reading of *LOTR*, a Catholic priest observed a sacramental awareness in Middle-earth, while noting that Galadriel was reminiscent of the Virgin Mary. Another reader detected Eucharistic symbolism in the Elvish lembas bread. This tendency has also been observed in informed critiques on Tolkien. In "Why Tolkien Says 'The Lord of the Rings' Is Catholic," Joseph Pearce points out the Catholic themes in the text. However, Pearce neglects to mention the many explicitly pre-Christian themes in the series, and the article implies that the books are purely Catholic. The article was published in the niche journal *National Catholic Register*. It is of note that Pearce has also published several books, two specifically on Tolkien. Critics such as Pearce simply omit any discussion of his works' non-Christian elements.

In "Light-elves, Dark-elves, and Others: Tolkien's Elvish Problem," Shippey discusses the role Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda* may have had in inspiring Tolkien's elves (133-145). While Shippey notes Snorri's position as a thirteenth-century Christian writing about his pre-Christian ancestors' beliefs, he does not elaborate on how that might have affected Tolkien's work given the *LOTR*'s universally acknowledged Catholic dimension. Tolkien's Christian champions argue that he breathed his own devout sensibility into the pagan tales and archetypes, thus creating what Birzer calls a "Christ-inspired and God centered mythology" (Mooney 172). These commentators and scholars emphasise the Catholic resonances in Tolkien's Middle-earth, arguing that Tolkien's mythopoeia is thoroughly Christian.

Tolkien mythopoeic deity is therefore already being consumed as monotheism. Iluvatar is gladly consumed as Yahweh-like. The Valar are wilfully perceived as evolved angels. Such a perception can be ingratiating for a Christian mindset. The position allows an indulgence in polytheism without the need to accept it for what it is. It is this position that critics such as Joseph Pearce John G. West Jr., Stratford Caldecott, Peter J. Kreeft, Ralph C. Wood, and Nils Ivar Agøy entertain when they deny the polytheism of Tolkien's mythopoeia. Such a denial stems from a biased consumption of Tolkien's work and his claims. They too like Tolkien indulge in the idea of a pantheon of gods, but a provision of their mistaken godhead, absolves any conflict that comes with their Christian identity. This denial is further fanned by a need to indulge in the possibilities of mythological motifs without admitting an affinity to their sources which are by default polytheistic.

If Tolkien's mythopoeia is thus internalized as essentially Christian, and his mythopoeic deity is accepted as Christian allegory, then a creator god and created gods may become a 'misunderstood' version of

monotheism. A two tier god head may become the norm of a monotheistic model.

The case of Tripathi's mythopoeic deity is also similar to Tolkien. Tripathi's euhemeristic deliverance of Lord Shiva is also unorthodox. What we have in Lord Shiva is a major god having a position of clear supremacy in a great part of India. Tripathi's euhemeristic deliverance reduces this major deity to just another man. His insertion of prophecy to foretell the coming of the saviour is reminiscent of a euhemeristic Christianity. His bildungsroman plot mimics established euhemeristic models of Buddhism (Almond 61) and Jainism (Clark157). His position of Brahma and Vishnu being mere titles given to great men of history obliterates the creation act of the Hindu trinity. Tripathi also hints that all gods of Hinduism are humans elevated to divinity. Tripathi's second instalment *Ram Chandra Series* also boats of a man named Ram. But the review in the *New Indian Express* calls "this humanising of epic heroes [] quite captivating and refreshing" (n.pag.). Despite such a unorthodox model, Tripathi reigns as a popular author. The *Shiva Trilogy* has become the fastest selling book series in the history of Indian publishing, with 2.5 million copies in print and over ₹60 crore (US$9.4 million) in sales (Sarkar n.pag.). It has been translated into a number of regional languages. *Ram Chandra Series* has also had a similar reception. The first volume, *Scion of Ikshvaku*, was paid an advance of $1 million by Westland Books. The second book of the series was inaugurated by Smriti Irani, a Union Minister of India. What is often ignored amidst the hullabaloo of the mythopoeia is that the inculcation of foreign formulas alters the mythic deity. Devdutt Pattanaik finds,

> ...many Indian mythologies [are] being approached using Western heroic structures... [It]... indicates how we have become so westernised that we don't realise what we consider universal is actually rooted in Greek and Abrahamic myths, which is why we

seek heroes and villains and martyrs even in Hindu stories that follow a very different non-linear cyclical structure. (n.pag.)

Pattanaik's observation holds true when we look at Tripathi resorting to euhemerising a deity. Euhemerism is essentially foreign to polytheism. But as Tripathi's mythopoeic deity is consumed in popular demand, the euhemeristic avatar of Lord Shiva may be acclimatized into the mithya. If Tripathi's Shiva is internalised as an avatar of Lord Shiva, the euhemeristic model may become normative of polytheism. Such a situation according to Ashis Nandy heralds a crisis. Nandy expresses sincere concern about the "present state of health" of the gods and goddesses (155-256). He remarks that deities of South Asia are dying.

> They die not of illness or accidents but out of forgetfulness or deliberate erasure. These diseases are not uniquely South Asian; they are becoming epidemic the world over. Iconoclasm has killed fewer gods than have erasures or reconfigurations of memory (153).

Euhemerising of Lord Shiva is one such wilful (on the part of the author) or uninformed (on the part of the target audience) reconfiguration of memory. If the next generation were to forget the mythical deity and uphold Tripathi's version as *the* version, what occurs is what Nandy calls death of the mithya deity. Anway Mukhopadhyay believes that such a state of affairs alters the theological structure of polytheism. "Renaissance of Indian mythology ... is rather a conservative cultural project that presents as pagan the myths of Hinduism and then looks at (or looks down on?) those myths from a putatively extra-pagan perspective. This leads to diminishing of the theological solidity of the gods and goddesses in polytheism" (138-139). Tripathi by demythologizing and remythologizing the mithya deity has essentially pulled the deity down from the pedestal it earlier occupied into the realms of mankind. The deity stripped of its identifying markers is reduced to being no longer a deity but a man.

If the euhemeristic version of Shiva is appropriated as an avatar of Lord Shiva, the mithya stands to change. Mithya is living myth because it is credible and dynamic. Its credibility ensures its relevance. Its dynamicity ensures its survival. But with the presence of popular mythopoeia, where only certain selected paradigms are internalised, the dynamic and multifaceted aspect of the mithya obliterated. George Williams reminds us that a Hindu does not have to "believe in" all the details of the mithya. These details are open to variation. In fact, there are often many versions of the same story, and one version may contradict the details of another.

> As opposed to macroscopic or larger view of Hindu mythology, there are microscopic versions of Hindu mythology: hundreds of millions of Hindus have their own understandings and live their own appropriations… every Hindu is the authority about her own appropriation of Hindu mythology and what each believes is just that—what is true for her (and that is the micro level of mythology). (3)

Mithya is therefore full of surprises, since every Hindu potentially may appropriate Hindu mythology in her own way. Mythopoeia can be one such surprising appropriation into the mithya. But when a mythopoeia is as popular as Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*, there occurs the danger that the varied versions may become subsumed in favour of the more credible and palatable version. Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* may become the macroscopic views that may negate the varied microscopic ones.

Pattanaik claims that willful alterations of Indian mithya are the result of a postmodern approach.

> Thus Ram, they claim, becomes God only because it was an imposition of patriarchal Brahmanical hegemony. They challenge

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the divinity of Krishna and say that the Bhagavad Gita with its line 'focus on tasks not results' is a creation of the ruling class to keep people oppressed. They argue one can read the Ramayana with Ravan as a hero and the Mahabharata with the Pandavas as the villains. It is just a point of view. And this leads artists to imagine Shiva with goggles and Ganesha with jeans and the Goddess holding a machine gun. ("We did start the fire" n.pag.)

Pattanaik holds that in this post-modern world, nothing is sacred, everything can be profane. It is just about the chosen discourse. One can twist and turn things at will. Mix and match becomes the name of the game. Indian mithya is thus turned into "a shape-shifting quilt of convenience, where nothing matters" (Ibid.)

Pattnaiak's observation may indeed be true. Dominant mithya is being challenged and replaced. The recent (29/09/2017) issue concerning Dusshera reported in *The Hindu* can be cited as an example of this situation. Dusshera is a major Hindu festival celebrating Goddess Durga's slaying of Mahishasur. The story glorifying Durga has been the prevailing mithya, but recently with Dalit literature coming to the forefront, Mahishasur has been given a voice. For the Dalit advocates, Mahishasur's side of the story is the mithya. Commonly portrayed as a demon in Hindu mythology, Mahishasur today, is at the heart of a growing, country-wide movement of marginalised people defying tradition. The extant mithya of Durga is being challenged with the mithya of Mahishasur (Vijetha n.pag.). For the Durga advocates, Mahishasur's version is myth and vice versa. Mithya today may become myth tomorrow, and mythopoeia today may become mithya tomorrow. If then, popular mythopoeic renditions such as Tripathi's euhemerised Shiva may become the accepted avatar of the deity. Though an animated, ensouled nature is just one aspect of living myth, what is relevant here is that the "status of nature" (Heller 5) of

mithya is irreversibly changed such that a new mode or logic of being-in-the-world is initiated.

Keeping in mind how Tripathi chooses to retell the mithya of Lord Shiva and how he weaves the narrative, the larger question is not why authors like him are retelling it but why are they retelling them now, in English and for a largely urban readership. *India Today* ventures that "more and more of us have lost touch with our languages, our traditional storytellers, our so-called roots and, therefore, our sense of self" (n.pag.). This may not be a crisis but rather than a somewhat natural if accelerated mythical transition as detailed in Chapter 2. We will need to reproduce mithya, but in ways that resonate with the realities of our times and in the idiom, both linguistic and political, of our world. While authors like Salman Rushdie, Amitav Gosh and Vikram Seth have won international acclaim, their style of literary fiction is largely incomprehensible to the majority of Indian readers. Book sales today demonstrate that urban Indians no longer read Agatha Christie and PG Wodehouse but 'amateur reader-turned-writers' like Chetan Bhagat, Amish Tripathi and Ashwin Sanghi (*Literophile* n.pag.). Vamsee Juluri, the author of *Rearming Hinduism*, says Tripathi's popularity shows how young Indians are hankering for religion.

> By reimagining the familiar tales of the gods in the form of a historic adventure story, Tripathi has triggered a cultural storm. There is a new generation of young readers who are passionate about knowing who they are. It's also a generational change. The parents of today's young India grew up in a staunchly secular, socialist Nehru-Indira India. They were not very big on religion. This has created a void of sorts for the young today. So in a way, religion is coming back after being denied or undervalued by one whole generation. (122)

It is this young, aspiring middle class population that consumes mythopoeia like that of Tripathi. It is a stratum that may not have firsthand knowledge of the Sanskrit versions, who is susceptible to secular version of myths, and who chooses to believe in their own truths. They may identify better with the mythopoeic versions rather than the mithya. For them the mythopoeia may amount to be the mithya.

Conclusion

With such agendas of creating deities and demoting a deity, Tolkien and Tripathi go about their respective construction of the deity in their mythopoeia. Both the authors' task is not just demythologizing and remythologizing but mythopoesis as "re-mythologizing" (a word coined by theologian Sallie McFague) (32). Whether it takes the form of searching for a new myth or the shape of telling new stories to express the old ideas, both Tolkien's and Tripathi's mythopoeic deity alter the perception of the extant ones. Every myth that retains its force, every myth that does not become a set of broken symbols, goes through a similar continuing process of interpretation and recovery through mythopoeia. The fact that the underlying myths can and do live on through the ages, however, bring up a final point: interpretation and recovery may become replacement. Mythopoeic deities built on a "willing suspension of disbelief", may initially fall short of mythical ones who had or still have a faith system. But there is only fine line between mythopoeia and mythos. Both the authors mould their deities striking a precarious balance between mythos and mythopoeia. But if the popularity were to tip in favour of the mythopoeia, the mythopoeia may replace the mythos in the social psyche.

The evidence from one genre—popular fiction— especially because it is popular fiction, may not substantiate the argument in terms of

the larger mythos/myth/mithya. The fact that popular fiction, generally and particularly, is not given its due importance in the academic cannon may also belittle the implications of this trend in mythic fiction. But Vine holds that "Learned and unlearned, scholarly and popular representations of myth and legend... [are] inextricably linked" (Vine 117). The links of the learned and unscholarly with the popular or unlearned circles cannot be avoided. If a quality of myth and legend is found in the learned or literary circles, its origin and culmination would have been in the unlearned or popular circles. And these links legitimize, perhaps even necessitate, the study of mythopoeia in popular fiction as a determining factor of mythos/myth/mithya.

Notes

[1] *Chhota Bheem* (meaning Little Bheem) is an Indian animated television series of a young boy living in an unspecified period in medieval India. The character has the strength and attributes of Bhima from *Mahabharata.*

[2] *My Friend Ganesha* is a 2007 Bollywood film that featured an animated Lord Ganesha in the titular role.

[3] *Ahalya* is a 2015 Bengali short film that takes elements from the mythological story of Ahalya from *Ramayana* and turns it on its head.

[4] Hindutva is a term popularised by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar ih his book *Hindutva: Who Is a Hindu?* in 1923. The Bharatiya Janata Party adopted it as its official ideology in 1989. It is championed by the Hindu nationalist volunteer organisation Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its affiliate organisations.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

The dissertation established that mythopoeia is the next generation of myth-making. It demonstrated how J.R.R.Tolkien and Amish Tripathi construct their mythopoeic deities, one packaging polytheism as monotheism, and the other conflating polytheism with euhemerism. It argued that these mythopoeic renditions, especially being popular fiction, if produced and consumed in popular demand, may alter the extant mythos/myth/mithya. Such an implication makes it imperative that the genre of mythopoeia be scrutinized and critiqued and mythopoeic fiction be examined with a yardstick of its own. This dissertation has been one such endeavor to identify and explore the construction and implication of mythopoeia is popular fiction.

This conclusion chapter provides a summary of the preceding chapters and sums up the dissertation. It discusses the limits and scope of mythopoeia in popular fiction. It predicates that mythopoeia is the integral phase of every mythical tradition and urges that it should therefore be analyzed through a critical lens.

6.1 Overview of Chapters

The introductory chapter began with a short history of myth making. It looked at how man began with at mythos, regressed into myth and has now arrived at mythopoeia, standing yet again at the threshold of myth-making. It explored the final category of mythopoeia which has been called an answer to the contemporary impasse in the mythical tradition. It initiated the discussion of mythopoeia, especially in popular fiction. As the

secondary focus of the thesis is mythopoeia in popular fiction, particularly the mythopoeic construction of two popular authors— Tolkien and Tripathi— a substantial portion of the introductory chapter was devoted to introducing their respective arenas of popular fiction. The latter half of the introductory chapter explored myth-making in British popular fiction. It noted the predecessors of Tolkien and their respective formulas of myth making. It introduced Tolkien as a mythopoeic author and summarized the existing critiques on Tolkien. It laid the groundwork for Chapter 3 which studied Tolkien's construction of the mythopoeic deity in detail. The chapter further introduced Indian popular fiction, specifically Indian English popular fiction. It highlighted the nuances of this newborn field and the contemporary shift in term of production and consumption. It looked at how myth-making in Indian popular fiction is a proliferating offshoot, and Tripathi is one such author who has succeeded in the venture.

As this dissertation endeavored to first define and deconstruct the concept of mythopoeia, Chapter 2 began with an exploration of mythopoeia as the answer to the contemporary impasse in the mythical tradition of mythos to myth to mythopoeia. It argued the necessity to define mythopoeia as a category and explored the available critiques that attempt to do so. It identified the gap in the studies on mythopoeia in namely two aspects: First, what is myth in mythopoeia? Second, what is mythopoeia in the mythical tradition? The chapter answered these questions by analyzing myth in mythopoeia as delineated by Tolkien, and by proposing the prospects of mythopoeia as plausible mythos. The chapter established mythopoeia's augmentation from myth and predicated its transition into mythos. It argued that mythopoeia is a part of a cyclical process of mythos to myth to mythopoeia and back again. This primary critique on the nature of mythopoeia was followed by an analysis of two mythopoeias— Tolkien's *The Silmarillion* and Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*.

As a study of all the components of the two mythopoeias were beyond the purview of a chapter each, the dissertation limited the study to the construction of the mythopoeic deity.

Chapter 3 showed how Tolkien's mythopoeic deity was polytheistic in nature. It posited that Iluvatar and Valar imitates the polytheistic model of creator deity and created deity. The chapter negated the Christian allusions to Tolkien's mythopoeic deity. It refuted the Christian parallels associated with Iluvatar as Yahweh and Valar as angels. It argued that this formula of primary god and secondary gods conforms to polytheism and not monotheism, unlike what the author and some critics believe. The sub-creation of Ainur, the hierarchy of Iluvatar and Valar, the deity like qualities of the Valar and the subsequent absence of Iluvatar in the plot, effectively refutes the semblance of a monotheistic Christian model. The chapter inferred that Tolkien's two-tier godhead, firstly, invalidates the norm of monotheism, and secondly, conforms to creator deity and created deity structure of polytheism. It established that Tolkien's packaging of polytheism as monotheism is misleading.

Chapter 4 analyzed Tripathi's construction of his mythopoeic deity. In order to facilitate this enquiry, it was imperative that the peculiarity of myth in India be first established. The chapter introduced the term mithya as apt for Hindu myth/mythology/religion because none of these can account for the 'living myths' of Hinduism. The chapter substantiated the adoption of the term mithya, introduced the precarious nature of Hindu mithya and highlighted the ideology of popular fiction authors who reproduce and reconstruct it. It then moved on to Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy* which is a mythopoeia based on the Shiva mithya. The chapter showed how Tripathi demythologizes and remythologizes Lord Shiva of Hinduism and produces a euhemerized avatar of the deity. His mythopoeic deity is founded on the premise that Lord Shiva was once a

man who in the course of history was deified. A euhemeristic deliverance of a polytheistic deity is a foreign formula. It alters the very nature of the mithya. This unorthodox euhemeristic construction transcribes polytheistic deity as apotheosis. But despite the deviancy in the mythopoeic deity, *Shiva Trilogy* is consumed in popular demand. The chapter problematized the consumption of a polytheistic deity as apotheosis and urged the need for further enquiry.

The dissertation further compared both authors and their mythopoeic constructions. Chapter 5 understood their varied augmentation from mythos/myth/mithya and explored their potential progression into mythos (as in the case of Tolkien) or mithya (as in the case of Tripathi). It engaged in a comparative study of the construction of both mythopoeic deities. It compared the milieu of mythos/myth/mithya of both authors and related the factors conducive to their mythopoeic deity construction. It analyzed the reactions or lack thereof in their respective audience response and drew the implications of such a consumption of the mythopoeic deity. This comparativist and cross cultural exploration predicated that Tolkien's mythopoeic deity may affect the perception of monotheism and polytheism, and Tripathi's mythopoeic deity may become an avatar of polytheism. Both authors fall back on familiar as well as foreign myth and mythos to make mythopoeia. One showcases mythos/myth to mythopoeia transition and the other mithya to mythopoeia transition. Both mythopoeias invariably diverge from extant mythos/myth/mithya. But despite their deviancy they are popular popular fictions. Such a popular production and consumption of a mythopoeia may result in the latter becoming an acclimatized avatar of the extant mythos/myth/mithya. The chapter argues that it is imperative that such mythopoeic renditions be brought under scrutiny.

The dissertation thus establishes that it is imperative that mythopoeia especially in popular fiction be critically studied. It establishes that mythopoeia can progress into mythos. By showcasing two case studies of popular mythopoeias, it demonstrates how two diverse popular fiction authors construct unorthodox mythopoeic deities but is still consumed in popular demand. The dissertation argues that as mythopoeia can progress into mythos these mythopoeic renditions can alter the extant mythos/myth/mithya. It is such an implication that necessitates that the genre of mythopoeia be scrutinized and critiqued. This dissertation has been one such endeavour to situate mythopoeia and explore mythopoeic constructions and its implications with popular fiction.

6.2 Limitations of Study

This dissertation is one of the few inroads into mythopoeia. Considering the chasm of (no) knowledge in regard to mythopoeia and mythopoeic renditions in popular fiction, film and ludology, this dissertation is only a single link in the chain. It has been limited to only situating mythopoeia and exploring two authorial constructions of mythopoeic deities. In such select analysis, there have been certain omissions and limitations that could not be helped taking into account the purview of a dissertation.

Chapter 2 was limited to situating mythopoeia in the larger tradition of mythos and myth. I have not detailed a comprehensive survey of mythopoeia in twentieth-century Britain, America or around the globe as my primary concern was to define and contain the concept of mythopoeia. I have omitted to mention those that I deemed irrelevant to my examination of the phenomenon of mythopoesis. For instance, I offer no discussion on William Blake, T. S. Eliot, Robert Graves or J.G. Frazer, though all three were undoubtedly significant advocates and writers engaging in mythopoeia in carrying degrees. I have left out the neo-

romantic poets of the New Apocalypse group, even though their variety of mythopoesis deserves attention. Also I do not offer an extended discussion of the opponents of mythopoesis, who certainly did exist. By the middle of the century arguments on the value of myth had become so prevalent that an extensive debate had emerged between the advocates and critics of myth. Perhaps the most vociferous of the critics was the Marxist intellectual Philip Rahv, who denounced mythic thinkers as mythomaniacs who irresponsibly retreated from history. I pass over them not because they are unimportant but because there are numerous excellent discussions of the role of myth in their works and because the points I wish to make about mythopoeia and myth led me in a different direction. The motivation behind the chapter was to highlight particularly salient and revealing theories of mythopoeia. While the twentieth-century debates about the value of myth making can provide rich material to the cultural historian, the study of such debates at this point in time is secondary to the task of first identifying and describing texts that attempt mythopoeia itself—and it is to that task I turned.

The case study chapters were a select study of two popular authors. In addition to these two authors there are a number of cases where a deliberate making of myth has characterized literary and popular culture. As stated in the Introduction chapter, the mythopoeia in popular fiction, film and ludology, both Indian and global, is yet to be explored as mythopoeia. There have been no methodical attempts to explore preoccupations with myth making as being part of a larger cultural pattern. There has been little effort to see, for example, how outwardly disparate figures like Stephen King and Neil Gaiman might have connections that indicate a common allure to myth making. Examining mythopoeia as a genre allows us to begin to excavate those connections and reveal obscured structures of any culture where there is deliberate use of myth. Once the phenomenon of mythopoeia is given its due attention, we are

then equipped to examine it wherever it surfaces and to describe the role it plays in any culture. The case study chapters were an attempt to identify and illustrate mythopoeic construction of Tolkien and Tripathi. The illustration was also limited to the mythopoeic deity. Both Tolkien's and Tripathi's mythopoeias have mythopoeic geographies, histories, races and a lot more that could not be engaged with for the want of space. The following section briefly delves into some of these aspects in reference to scope for future study.

6.3 Scope for Future Study

Mythopoeia in popular fiction, not only British or Indian, has had a proliferating growth. The dissertation has mentioned numerous authors who attempt varying degrees of mythopoesis. But despite an overwhelming presence of myth-making in popular fiction, the genre is yet to be identified or isolated as individualistic. Many mythopoeia have been suppressed under the larger category of speculative fiction or under the smaller categories of science fiction and fantasy. Its pervasive presence in films and ludology has also gone unreckoned.

It is this gap in the study of mythopoeia that motivated this dissertation. But there is a long way to go to fill this gap. The dissertation stressed the need to define mythopoeia. It explored mythopoeia's augmentation from myth and predicated its progress into mythos. But this may not be the only dimension to this intriguing concept. Mythopoeia can also be explored in terms of mythography, hierohistory, historiographic anamnesis. I will briefly initiate a discussion with each to demonstrate the scope of this novel concept.

Mythopoeia can be likened to the term mythography. George Williamson understands mythography as an applied version of mythopoesis in "public sphere, the development of national [(here

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German)] identity, the professionalization of academic disciplines", and so on (24). Lawrence Coupe speculates that mythography is a selective appreciation of myth in the dimension of cultural and literary experience (4). He further points out that "mythographers are fond of privileging one particular example as the paradigm of one kind of myth, and more importantly, one particular kind as the paradigm of myth generally" (Coupe 5). He cites the example of Sir James Frazer, who advocates fertility myth as the archetype of all mythologies and Mircea Eliade who vouches for the creation myth. It can be seen if mythopoeia like mythography also caters to only selected myths or upholds one as its general paradigm.

Hierohistory is another term that can be studied in conjunction with mythopoeia. Hierohistory is "sacred story that belongs to myth but not to history or science" (Panikkar 373). It is a concept developed by Henry Corbin to refer to the gnostic glimpse of an imagined history totally different to that of the exterior world (Wasserstrom 159). It is "the individual record of [religious] revelations… in our common mythological heritage" (Versluis 307). It has come to my notice that Tolkien, in his construction of mythopoeia employs this concept liberally. The author constructs time periods with chronology, elaborate maps of geospatial existence, devises genealogies, nomenclature and epistolary techniques. But he establishes the verity of mythopoeic aspect with hierohistory. The following passage in the prologue of *LOTR* substantiates this contention.

> Those days, the Third Age of Middle-earth, are now long past, and the shape of all lands has been changed; but the regions in which the Hobbits then lived were doubtless the same as those in which they still linger: the North-West of the Old World, east of the Sea (*The Hobbit* vi)

This passage, according to Morten Brøsted Christiansen, is a stroke of genius that rarifies Tolkien's narrative style (n.pag.). I share the same thought but for the reason that it evidences the infusion of hierohistory in mythopoeia. It is Tolkien's testimony that "Hobbits still live hidden amongst us, and that the author of the book lives in modern times" (Christiansen n.pag.). The author himself is being a witness to the historicity of authenticity of Middle-earth. He claims to narrate the story through prehistoric documents he supposedly found. He states in the prologue that *LOTR* and *The Hobbit* are actually parts of the 'Red Book of Westmarch', penned by Bilbo and Frodo Baggins themselves. With these sleights-of-hand Tolkien vouches for the historicity of the trilogy and thus endows it with hierohistory. Tolkien abstracts the book from our world with the following quote: "As for any inner meaning or 'message', it has in the intention of the author none. It is neither allegorical nor topical" (*The Hobbit* ix)". In other words, he is insisting its factuality as opposed to fictiveness. The latter portion of the quote situates the mythopoeia on a geospatial point- North-West of the Old World, east of the Sea. If one looks at the map of Middle-earth it seems strikingly familiar. The geography and environment resembles that of Europe, and thus reifies (in addition to Tolkien's claim) that this is the mythical history of a European country. This country is in the "North-West of the Old World" which clearly posits Britain, and it being on the "east of the Sea" underlines its position (See Appendix Figure 3.). Tolkien establishes the hitherto undiscovered mythical history in his mythopoeia through hierohistory. The mythopoeia then becomes a critique and rediscovery of this imagined mythical history.

Mythopoeia can also be studied in as a type of or as attempting a historiographic anamnesis or revelation of an exotic mythical past. Mircea Eliade in *Myth and Reality*, modified the concept of anamnesis in terms of myth, history and historiography. According to him popular culture ever

since the Middle Ages and especially since the Renaissance and the nineteenth century onwards has been "making a prodigious effort of historiographic anamnesis" (297). Historiographic anamnesis seeks to discover, "awaken", and repossess the pasts of the "most exotic and the most peripheral societies... to primitive cultures on the verge of extinction. The goal is no less than to revive the entire past of humanity" (136).

Tripathi's mythopoeia can be studied as one such historiographic anamnesis. His mythopoeia is a historiographic anamnesis of the Indus valley civilization which he posits to be Indian mythical history. Tripathi presupposes such a past which his mythopoeia attempts to unveil. His *Shiva Trilogy* hints at the concept of Ramrajya. His *Ram Chandra Series* delves into the idea in great detail. The mythopoeic construction of a mythical history, with the mythopoeic attempting historiographic anamnesis, can be explored in varied ways. Although Eliade in 1963 may or may not have been familiar with mythopoeia, his premonition of the future of historiographic anamnesis can be easily related to mythopoeia in Indian popular fiction. According to Eliade the historiographic anamnesis of the world is only beginning. Its cultural repercussions can be gauged after several generations. Eliade states that "a true historiographic anamnesis opens to a primordial Time, the Time in which men established their cultural behavior patterns, even though believing that they were revealed to them by Supernatural Beings" (138). If that is the case then mythopoeia like Tripathi's, would qualify as true historiographic anamnesis in the tradition of mythopoesis.

These are but few dimensions that be explored in relation to mythopoeia. Tolkien's and Tripathi's mythopoeias can also be studied under various lenses. This dissertation was limited to the study of the mythopoeic deities. But the mythopoeic deity is but one aspect of Tolkien's and Tripathi's mythopoeia. Their mythopoeias teem with

mythical, historical, fantastical, utopian, contemporary and futuristic aspects. One could further analyse the etiology of these worlds. Creation, Fall and Apocalypse stories have been reproduced in great detail. One could also study the tapestry of interconnected mythopoeic subplots. The incest myth of Túrin mirrors *Oedipus Rex* with a sister replacing the mother and a dragon replacing the sphinx. The myth of Atlantis is also recapitulated through the Akallabeth which recounts the rise and fall of the island kingdom of Númenor. The hobbit can also be looked at as a deliberate anomaly in Tolkien's creation of races. The hobbit is an invention by Tolkien, unlike the rest who are borrowed from fairy-tales and myths. The hobbit is also omitted from the creation stories in *The Silmarillion*. In *The Hobbit*, Tolkien claims that they are relatives of men, hinting at an evolutionary status. This aspect of the hobbit has much scope for future study.

Tolkien's mythopoeia have had many critical inroads into Middle-earth, but the resplendent production of Tolkien's lifetime provides much space for critical enquiry. Tripathi's mythopoeia, in comparison, is still virgin soil. Dissertation repositories such as Shodganga, Jawaharlal Nehru University catalogue and Indcat show no result on Indian mythic fiction, let alone any of popular fiction authors including Tripathi. Tripathi's mythopoeia has many unexplored dimensions. The *Shiva Trilogy* is replete with cross cultural references. It not only borrows mythical allusions from all over the country but also ventures into Iranian and Egyptian aspects to fortify the plot. The Vayuputras are inserted as Iranians, assassination of Sati is lent an Egyptian flavor. In terms of the black and white categories of Devas and Asuras, he contends that Zoroastrian Persians refer to their gods as 'ahuras' and demons as 'daevas,' the opposite of the Indian pantheon. Such linguistic arguments need to be critiqued under an academic lens. The redefinition of mythical motifs such as animism and godly traits is also prominent in Tripathi's mythopoeia. His redefining of

Nandi, Ganesha, Kali etc. can be brought under scrutiny. The depiction of women characters in unorthodox moulds can also be read with a feminist lens. With the release of the ongoing *Ram Chandra Series*, the critical possibilities of Tripathi's mythopoeia have increased two fold.

With numerous inroads into popular fiction and speculative fiction both on global and local spheres, it would be interesting to study mythopoeias that are popularized and internalized. A comparative study of mythopoeias can also be rewarding. Mythologists up until now have engaged in comparative study of myths around the world. A comparative study of mythopoeia may prove insightful. The need for such mythopoeic aspirations may further the arguments of mythologists such a Campbell and Pattanaik. It may shed new light on the nuances of myth, mythos and mithya. It may also instigate an informed purview into this next generation of myth making.
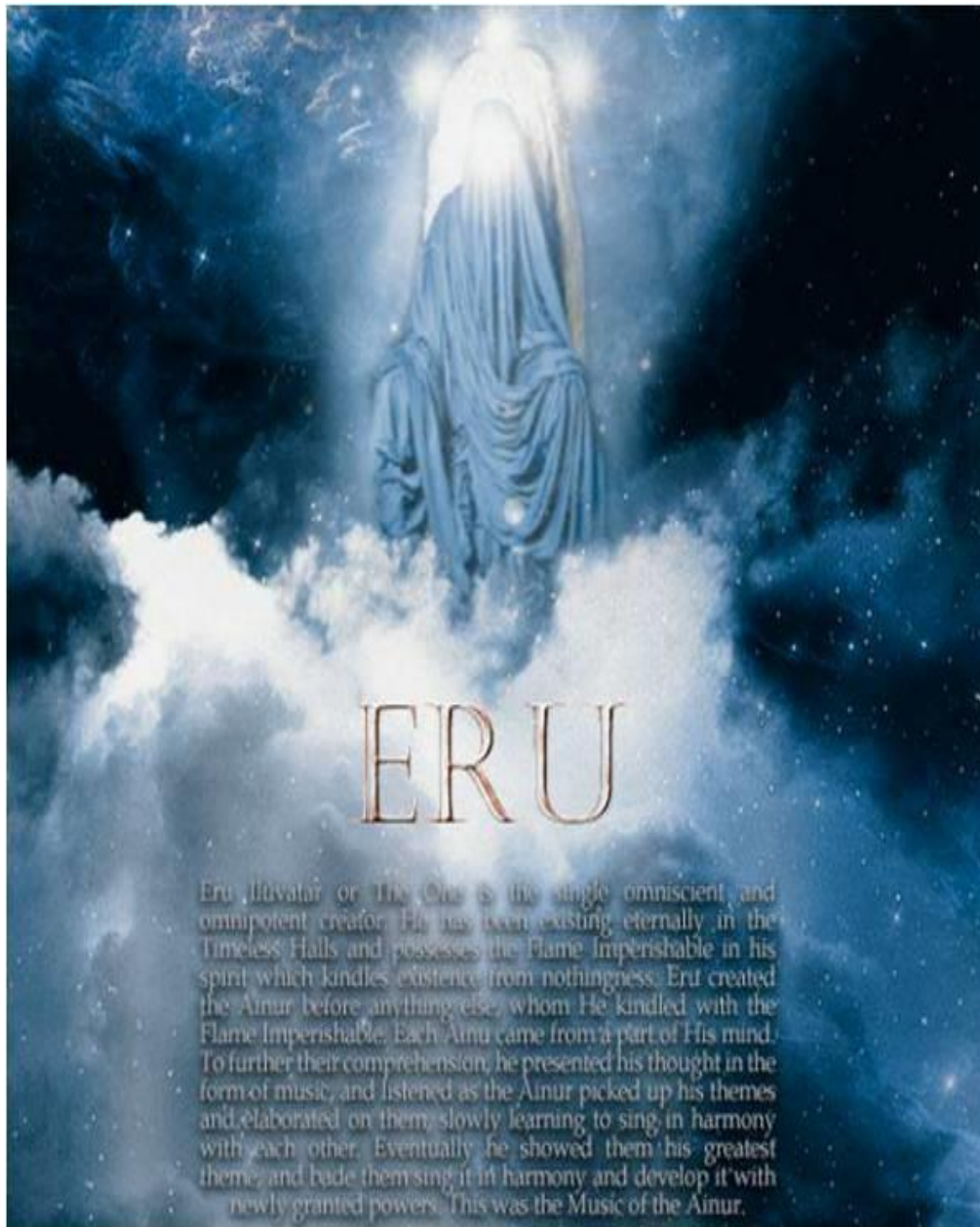
APPENDIX

Figure 1. **Eru/Iluvatar** by Marcin Witkowski 2017 retrieved from
https://twitter.com/mwitkowski5/status/893082558833065984

178

Figure 2. **The Valar** by Kenneth Anthony 2017 retrieved from
https://in.pinterest.com/pin/12807180165774462/?autologin=true

179

Figure 3. **Map of Middle Earth** retrieved from *History of Middle Earth*

'Amish is … the Paulo Coelho of the east.'
– *Business World*

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WHOM LEGEND TURNED INTO A GOD.

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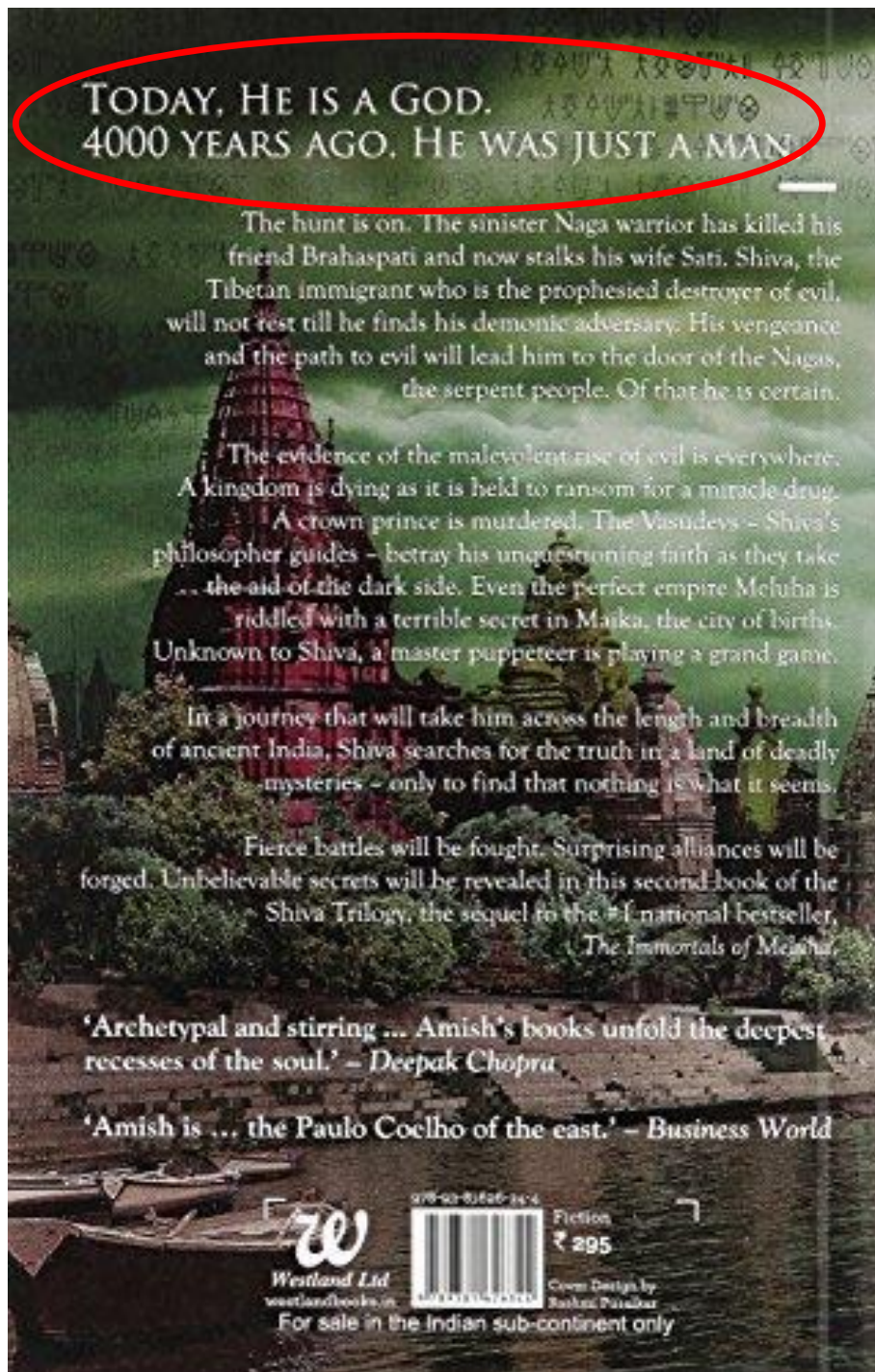Figure 4: **Blurb on Jacket** *The Immortals of Meluha* retrieved

from http://www.authoramish.com/shiva-trilogy-triseries/

Figure 5: **Blurb on Jacket** *The Secret of the Nagas* retrieved from

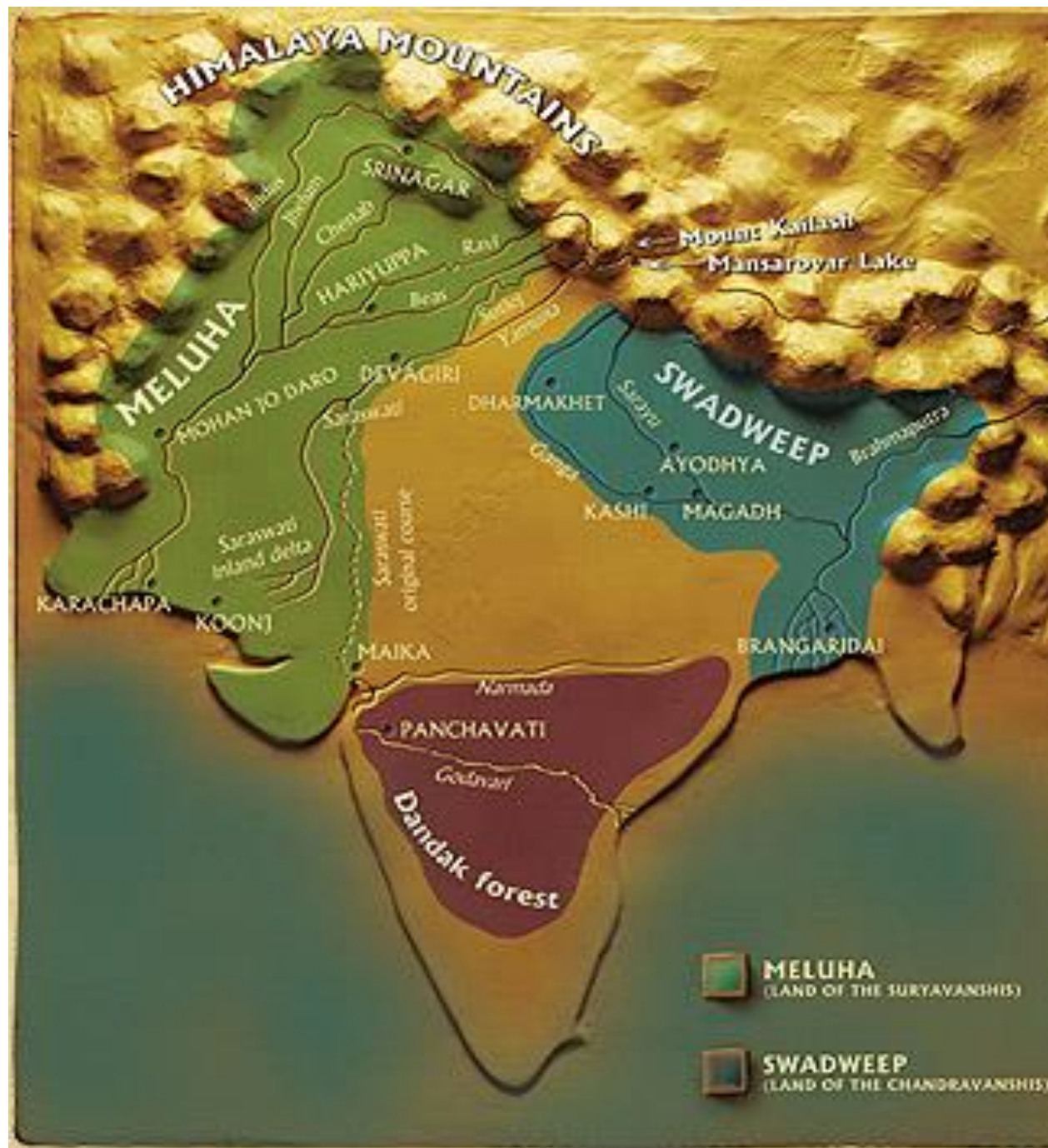http://www.authoramish.com/shiva-trilogy-triseries/

Figure 6. **Map of Meluha, Swadeep and Panchwati** retrieved

from *Meluha*

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