Chapter Three
The Mythical Modernist Imagination

In the previous chapter, I discussed some of the most pervasive features of myths. Myths are themes and explanations that are found universally. Myths are usually considered sacred. They perform the task of structuring and directing the cultural, social, and moral imaginations of a community that is bound by—and invested in—these myths. Myths employ language (in the form of narrative), and symbols (shared signs such as gods). They rest on—and naturalize—polarities (dark/light, god/human, sacred/profane, historical/ahistorical, heaven/earth). These polarities are often set in a hierarchical value system: heaven is valued higher than the earth, and light is preferred over darkness. In cultures where ancient myths still direct current thought and imagination, myths are manifested in sacred rituals. In those communities where myths have ceased to be the mainstay of communal imagination, mythic narratives attain more visibility over rituals. However, even in such cultures, mythic narratives are rarely ever employed to invoke only amusement.

Mythic themes concern themselves with existential matters. Illness, epidemics, war, death, destruction of property, and natural calamities are phenomena that myths help their participants to come to terms with. Mythic narratives often revolve around events on a cosmic scale: the creation of the world, humans, society, animals,

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53 This is not to say that myths always give hope. Gods, even the non-anthropomorphic kind, are often depicted as capricious. What I am suggesting is that myths do not offer a way out of existential maladies; they merely offer answers for why matters are the way they are. The dead cannot come back to life because Orpheus failed to keep his word. Sometimes, myths are downright cruel: Sisyphus is punished for going against the will of the gods and helping humans. In other words, myths are not solutions but explanations.
nature, and inanimate objects, and also the destruction of the said components of the
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world. Most importantly, myths create a structure that can be imposed upon the
intrinsic chaos of the world. This feature of myths endears them to every culture
which is experiencing communal or civilizational crisis.

Although most studies of myth suggest that myths are set in anhistorical time,
it does not mean that myths were created in a time before history. Myths are human
creations. However, they are projected as having taken place in a time before history.
In that fluid world of “beginnings,” laws were laid down and the world as we know it
began. In other words, myths—being untouched by history—consolidate a grand or
meta-narrative that engages with all the essential questions and purportedly
 provides an inviolable, sacred story.

However, when one takes into consideration the separation of logos and
mythos, the “truth” value of myths come into question. Logos approaches the world
through science and empiricism, and arrives at results through experiments and
deductions. Mythos is an emotional response to the same problem. Ever since the rise
of logos, mythos has been relegated to a lower dimension of intelligence. If that is the
case, then one must wonder why myths continue to persist in the modern
imagination, and what their appeal is to the rational mind. It is clear that in cultures
where they are active, myths are innate truths. It is in cultures where science,
technology, and rationality have taken over that the presence of myths points to their
deeper significance for the human imagination.

There are several reasons for this pervasiveness of myths in modern times.
One is that myths engage with existential matters. I mentioned in Chapter One that as
the self becomes progressively distinct, the burden of existence increases. That is, the
fear of death is the highest in the mental-egoic worldview. Rationality may appeal to
the intellect, but it does not necessarily assuage emotions like fear, guilt, or despair.
The modern notion of progress does not do away with core questions and existential
dread, or our emotional responses to them. Since such emotions are universal, and
their experience ubiquitous, myths become vital not only because they reflect these
emotions, but also because they connect the individual with the prototype.

Myths also play an important role in the psychology of the individual and of all
humankind. The characters in a myth are usually either gods or divine ancestors. In
those myths where they are symbols of human aspirations, and ideals that must be
emulated, the distance between the gods and humankind increases. On the other
hand, classical Greek myths try to reduce this distance by portraying gods with very
identifiable flaws, including lust, pride, and envy. Psychologically speaking, in both
cases, mythical characters are the expressions of the deepest desires and phobias of
humankind. Universally occurring mythical characters like a superhuman hero, a
dying and reviving god, the trickster, the femme fatale and others appear in all myths,
albeit under different guises. This indicates that such mythical characters are
archetypes. Even certain plots (creation, floods, apocalypse, the connection between
the earth and the underworld) assume the position of mythical archetypes because
they recur in every mythology.

The issue of "complexes" is linked to archetypes. Complexes are connected to
myths since myths are believed to be the first articulations of these complexes. For
Freud, the Oedipus myth is the most essential confirmation of the Oedipus complex
(Adams 111). In other words, the myth is an expression of a deep-seated, unconscious, psychological fear. The connection between the complex (which persists in modern man) and the myth (created in ancient times), has repercussions for the notion of linear history as well. It becomes possible to imagine that the continuation of a neurosis from the very beginning to modern times forces us to consider if there has been any evolutionary move when both the modern and the ancient man experience the same guilt, repression, and sexuality. If Freud is correct, then is history merely a set of recurrences of an archetype? In this light, the myth is a reflection of eternal experience. It gives rise to "the troubling thought that ancient myth may secretly underlie modern experience, particularly when it is sexual or regressive" (Butler, Modernism 45).

There is another important way in which the mythic imagination influences the modern, linear notion of time. Eliade claims that mythic rituals suspend profane time and take the participants back to the sacred, mythic moment in pre-history. This would mean that escape—however temporary—from history is possible. As nature renews itself periodically, and seasons occur in cycles, mythic time suggests that it is possible to exist in history but also step out of it. On the other hand, there are religious myths of apocalypse and deliverance. These essentially project a linear time scale, but the return to the transformed origin is still a part of the mythic imagination.

While all of the above reasons are pertinent to the popularity of myth in modern times, the narrative component of myth is the most crucial reason.

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54 It must be noted that in Freud's schema, the myth is secondary to the complex. That is, the complex came first and the myth is its manifestation. If it were the other way around, the myth of Odysseus and Telemachus or of Daedalus and Icarus would have given rise to very different complexes, and therefore, to very different psychological paradigms.
Irrespective of whether myths are sacred or poetic creations, or both, their narratives lend themselves to literary (and secular) adaptations.\(^{55}\) This is especially so for cultures from which mythic rituals have been absent for a while. Mythic narratives then turn into stories, albeit of profound importance. Stories, like all other literary categories, tend to change, and are often shifted around and adapted to suit different contexts. However, this process does not give rise to a new myth with every retelling. Rather, the structure of myth is elastic to a great extent, and the adaptation(s) are connected to the original in popular imagination. There is an organic growth of the mythic narrative through these slight or major adaptations. A character may alter in name, but will still be a reflection of the prototype of the original myth. The narrative may alter, but the original theme, concern, and reason for the myth to exist remains unaltered. In fiction especially, myth has always played a vital role. Northrop Frye explains:

> The word myth means different things in different fields: in literary criticism it is gradually settling down to mean the formal or constructive principle of literature. Where there is a fiction, the shaping form, to which every detail in the writing has to be assimilated, is the story or plot, which Aristotle called *mythos* and declared to be the

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\(^{55}\) Not all anthropologists favor the secular adaptations of myths. For instance, Malinowski believes that myths can be legitimately studied and understood only in primitive societies, and dismisses their use in literature because these "literary" myths are merely stories, without any faith invested in them (and faith is what makes a myth truly mythical) (44). However, Coupe takes a different view. He proposes two different approaches to myths: the realist and the non-realist. The realist approach, such as that of Malinowski, "assumes the perspective of perfection, translating narrative into the terms of truth, *mythos* into *logos*" and "is bound to a hierarchy," while the non-realist approach "sees myth as a matter of permanent possibility, trusting in the ongoing power of *mythos* itself" and "open to a horizon" (100). While both interpret and recast myths, it is the non-realist approach that is more self-conscious of itself as a mythopoeic activity.
“soul” of the fiction. In primitive periods such fictions are myths in the sense of anonymous stories about gods; in later ages they become legends and folk tales, then they gradually become more “realistic”, i.e., adapted to a popular demand for plausibility, though they retain the same structural outlines. Profound or “classic” works of art are frequently, almost regularly, marked by a tendency to revert or allude to the archaic and explicit form of the myth in the god-story. When there is no story, or when a theme (Aristotle’s dianoia) is the centre of the action instead of a mythos, the formal principle is a conceptual myth, a structure of ambiguous and emotionally charged ideas or sense data. Myths in this sense are readily translatable: they are, in fact, the communicable ideogrammatic structures of literature. (234-35)

Hence, in the journey from a sacred myth to a secular adaptation, the protagonist changes from a god, to a hero, and finally to the common man.56 Secondly, a myth is a “constructive principle” or a mold for a plot into which the writer’s contemporaneity can be poured. Myths are useful not just as formal structures (“fabula”) in modern adaptations. Rather, the readers of myths also identify with the characters, themes, and lessons expressed in the original myth. If they bear in mind “the pragmatic impulse which would have occasioned [a myth] in the first place” (Coupe 7), the readers will have a composite vision in which the original and its context of production, co-exist with the adaptation and its context of production. Through this exercise, both the original and the new alter in significance. James Joyce’s idea of

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56 The change from a hero to a common man is clearly reflected in Joyce’s Ulysses (discussed later in the chapter).
"retrospective arrangement" implies precisely that: reading Ulysses alters our perception of Homer's Odyssey (Rabaté 210). In addition, given their flexible structure and frequent recurrence in literature, myths have become a vast body of intertextual connotations and connections. In fact, if modern readers can identify a mythic paradigm, it is only due to a mythic theme's recurrence in literature, and the process of retrospective arrangement.

Having outlined the salient features of myth, and the reasons for its appeal to the modern imagination, I move to the focus of this chapter: modernism. In the following sections, I outline the zeitgeist of modernism, and argue that there is a strand of modernism that naturally tends towards myths, mythic themes, and the mythical imagination. Lévi-Strauss suggests that the omnipresence of mythic archetypes and symbols is a clear indication of the universal tendency of humans to bring order to the world around them (Myth and Meaning 12)—a tendency displayed quite clearly by a subset of the modernist writers. Other factors for these modernists' mythical imagination include their complex relationship with the notion of history, their unprecedented present situation, and their artistic obsession with discovering new representations of reality. Most modernists were deeply dissatisfied with the older artistic "traditions" of Europe such as Romanticism and realism. Moreover,

Footnotes:
57 Myth forms a kind of intertextual link between texts that are influenced by or derive from the same mythic story: for instance, Apocalypse Now, a Francis Ford Coppola film about the Vietnam War, cannot be substantially understood unless we refer back to The Golden Bough, and Eliot's The Waste Land, and the Book of Revelations. In this kind of mythic reading, the deep connection between "mythography" or the interpretation of myth and "mythopoeia," or the making of myths becomes explicit (Coupe 18).
58 For instance, in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Eliot clearly debunks Wordsworth's formula for poetry: the spontaneous overflow of emotions recollected in tranquility. Eliot's poet is not in need of new emotion; instead, he or she must put into poetry ordinary emotions, and express "feelings" which are not emotions at all. Moreover, this expressed emotion need not be familiar to the poet as a person, and therefore, there is no need for recollection. Besides, it is the pressurized, concentrated...
their current academic culture was particularly rich, with the formation of disciplines like psychoanalysis and anthropology—both with close ties to myths. It was in this climate of change that modernist artists were forced to discover newness in the timeless, and truth that lay beyond the parameters of doubt.

The Modernist Times

For several chroniclers, the period roughly between 1909 and 1939 in the highly industrialized nations of Europe, especially England, and also in North America, can only very tenuously be classified under the single rubric of "modernism" because these two decades could just as well be considered to have witnessed a cluster of widely divergent artistic movements merely tied together by the time of


59 Among several others, Eliot openly acknowledges drawing inspiration from anthropology: his sources for the many mythical references in The Waste Land include Frazer, Jane Harrison, and Lévy-Bruhl. Disciplines such as anthropology and psychoanalysis give not only new forms but also new content to literature and art ("Ulysses, Order and Myth" 681).

60 The Modernist period's duration is quite contested, and various critics and historians provide differing years of its beginning and wane: Christopher Butler marks the age from 1909-1939 as a period covering most of the major political and artistic changes (1), but Cyril Connolly (quoted in Bradbury and McFarlane) places the beginning around 1880, with the movement's roots in France, eventually influencing England and finally America. The high season is, by general consensus among critics, between 1910 and 1925. Richard Ellmann and Charles Feidelson also acknowledge that the high point of modernism was the first quarter of the twentieth century, with Eliot, Pound, Joyce, Yeats and Lawrence, and Continental artists like Proust, Valéry, Gide, Mann, Rilke and Kafka in vogue (Bradbury, "The Name and Nature of Modernism" 32). Harry Levin sets 1922 as the beginning of true Modernism, the year Ulysses and The Waste Land, Rilke's Duino Elegies and Sonnets to Orpheus, Brecht's Baal, Lawrence's Aaron's Rod, Woolf's Jacob's Room, Proust's Sodom and Gomorrah, and Eugene O'Neill's Anna Christie were published (33). Virginia Woolf claims that it was December 1910—with the death of King Edward and the first post-Impressionist exhibition—when the world changed forever, when relations between classes and people altered, and so did religion, public and private conduct, politics and literature ("Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" 320, 321).

Modernism is chiefly an Anglo-European phenomenon, and its beginnings lie in European centers like Berlin, Vienna, Scandinavia, Paris, and also Moscow. The Danish critic Georg Brandes used the term "modern" to describe the breakthrough in art in the last decade of the nineteenth century, and when this term caught the attention of several artists and critics in the early twentieth century, it eventually came to serve as a label for an artistic movement (Bradbury, "The Name and Nature of Modernism" 37).
their occurrence. But for others, especially those viewing the first quarter of the twentieth century retrospectively, there is indeed a discernible artistic temperament, a unified phenomenon—however wrought with paradox—that occurred in reaction to contemporary events. Composed of certain common concerns, areas of enquiry, and keywords, this phenomenon called "modernism" is quite opposed to "modernity" and its banes: herein lies the conflict between high rationality (divisive duality, technology, science) and the artistic bend towards mythical imagination (resolutions of existential puzzles, the desire for philosophical and emotional unity, and the reexamination of the notions of time and history).

Apart from rapidly changing economic systems, another compelling force was the intellectual tradition in which the modernists were embedded: Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle, Einstein's theory of relativity, Marxism, Darwinism, the philosophies of Nietzsche and Bergson, and Freudian and Jungian psychoanalysis are some of the streams of thought that defined the modernist ethos. However, even with this intellectual novelty, industrialization and machinery were reinforcing a "repetitive sameness of experience" (Quinones 63). In addition, there were great

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61 Bradbury argues that modernism "is less a style than a search for a style in a highly individualistic sense" ("Name and Nature of Modernism" 29). That is, the visible paradox of Symbolism and Surrealism, the co-existence of the ironic and humanist, and the ambivalent attitude towards technology suggest that modernism is not so much a unified style as an attitude resting on paradoxes which caused several artistic movements such as Naturalism, Futurism, Symbolism, Surrealism, Impressionism, Imagism, Expressionism, and Cubism to rise and sometimes end in quick succession (44). These artistic movements had little in common except for the fact that they all arose around the same time.

62 Modernity is present only in those cultures whose national past included the formative stage of a Renaissance (or a Reformation), and which had witnessed the effects of rationalism, and its fallout—industrialization (Quinones 5-6). Christopher Butler concurs, and suggests that the condition of modernity was witnessed in countries deeply affected by a loss of faith in religion, a great burst of technology, the expansion of markets and mass production, advertising, capitalism, and changing gender equations (including the suffrage movement, and feminist voices demanding equal status in education, marriage, and society) (Modernism 1-2).
political upheavals that shaped not only the modernists but everyone in their wake as well. World War I single-handedly destroyed several social institutions, and shook belief in both rationalism and religion in a way that necessitated new forms of structure and reassurance. This anguish is ably captured in Yeats' "The Second Coming": the center must hold, but it cannot.

"Modernism" is the aesthetic temperament that underlies the artistic movements of the first quarter of the twentieth century. One of the most definitive features of modernism was its rejection of nineteenth century realism. Modernist art turned towards more sophisticated, introverted, anti-realist, anti-representational, and complicated forms, and towards narrative stylings that betrayed skepticism of the established ideas about art and literature. Along with the newness, there is also the constant sense of impending doom. As Peter Childs puts it, modernism "tends to associate notions of the artist's freedom from realism, materialism, traditional genre and form, with notions of cultural apocalypse and disaster" (2).

Most modernist art movements were not interested in new reality as much as in finding new ways to portray that reality. In their desire to break away from nineteenth century realism, the modernists aimed at rearranging the components of the world in unfamiliar ways. David Lodge explains that realism in literature is "readerly" and metonymic; it grants the narrator an omnipresent and omniscient view of the world and complete access into the minds of characters. Modernist metaphoric, "writerly" texts—on the other hand—present the world of fiction and its characters through the openly ideological, culturally shaped, prismatic narrator (66, 75-76). For instance, in a literary technique like stream of consciousness, the
portrayal of characters' thoughts purports to reflect the operations of the unconscious: such texts abound in free association and in symbols, and create a new, psychologically insightful literary perspective. In "Modern Fiction," Virginia Woolf outlines the project of modernist fiction—and more specifically, stream of consciousness writing—and suggests that modernist fiction should fill out the details of the "unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible" (106).

Similarly, Cubism in painting and Imagism in poetry also alter the representation of reality through radically new means. Therefore, the object of representation is undermined while representation gains precedence.

These new modes of representation (in literary writing especially) also discourage a continuous and sympathetic identification with fictional characters. Modernists make conscious efforts to create a distance between the character and the reader via irony (Butler, Modernism 32). The dissociation with the reader is also evident in the clashing tones of high-brow, encyclopedic bits juxtaposed with street language, resulting in the breakdown of the familiar distinctions of language. The focus also shifts from a communal narrative or the author-centric view to an individual's subjective perception of the world. Each modernist writer, in his or her own way, opposed Edwardian complacencies in the post-War era, and figures such as Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Henry James, D. H. Lawrence, Joseph Conrad, James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein, Rainer Maria Rilke, E. M. Forster (in his later years), Ernest Hemmingway (in his early years), Ford Maddox Ford, and others created an astonishing array of works identified as high modernist: The Turn of the Screw

While there are several epithets and adjectives attributed to modernism, David Lodge's description of modernist fiction appears to be the most comprehensive:

Modernist fiction, then, is experimental or innovatory in form, displaying marked deviations from preexisting modes of discourse, literary and non-literary. Modernist fiction is concerned with consciousness, and also with the subconscious and unconscious workings of the human mind. Hence the structure of external 'objective' events essential to traditional narrative art is diminished in scope and scale, or presented very selectively and obliquely, or is almost completely dissolved, in order to make room for introspection, analysis, reflection and reverie. A modernist novel has no real 'beginning', since it plunges us into a flowing stream of experience with which we gradually familiarize ourselves by a process of inference and association; and its ending is usually 'open' or ambiguous, leaving the reader in doubt as to the final destiny of the characters. To compensate

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63 Other descriptions of modernist art include: "experimental, formally complex, elliptical, contains elements of decreation as well as creation" (Childs 1-2); a movement "towards sophistication and mannerism, towards introversion, technical display, internal self-scepticism" (Bradbury, "The Name and Nature of Modernism" 25). In its high phase, modernism tended towards paradoxes such as being both futuristic and nihilistic, revolutionary and conservative, Romantic and Classical. Modernists celebrated and condemned technology, feared war but also exhilarated over the end of old regimes (46).
for the diminution of narrative structure and unity, alternative methods of aesthetic ordering become more prominent, such as allusion to or imitation of literary models or mythical archetypes, and the repletion-with-variation of motifs, images, symbols—a technique variously described as 'rhythm', 'Leitmotif' and 'spatial form'. Modernist fiction eschews the straight chronological ordering of its material, and the use of a reliable, omniscient and intrusive narrator. It employs, instead, either a single, limited point of view, or a method of multiple points of view, all more or less limited and fallible; and it tends towards a fluid or complex handling of time, involving much cross-reference backwards and forwards across the chronological span of the action. (45-46)

From among these many points that Lodge makes, the diminution of traditional narrative structure and its replacement with the mythic structure is of special importance here.

A Modernist Sense of Tradition

Modernism viewed its reality as displaying great disorder and anarchy. Kermode suggests that this moment of "crisis" and the constant "sense of an ending" is a defining characteristic of modernism (93, 98).64 This sense has strong implications for history, because it led the modernists to try and impose order and design on the past and present, and to direct the future. The modernists' present was

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64 Kermode also points out that the sense of crisis or the foreboding of the end is not unique to modernism (104).
filled with unprecedented technological advancements (including the phonograph, airplanes, the Ford Model T automobile, cinema) and science, but also with war and oppressive political propaganda, and increasing undermining of the confident and masculine imperialism and nationalism of the Victorian age. The desire to escape or transcend history was a significant part of the modernist ethos. That is amply evident when Stephen declares that history is a “nightmare” from which he is trying to wake up (Joyce 34). This “nightmare” is echoed in Oswald Spengler’s *The Decline of the West* (1918), Yeats’s “The Second Coming” (1920), and Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922). This sense of an impending apocalypse led to an overwhelming belief that the West was at the end of a temporal cycle. This idea is reflected in the very notion of apocalypse. An apocalypse does not end time; rather, it carries within it the germ of the new. Kermode also suggests that the true nature of the modern dread may be best described as “transition,” wherein the death of the old and the birth of the new coexist (100-01).

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65 The end of temporal epochs has also been articulated by Giambattista Vico through the cycle of the three ages of gods, heroes, and men. Vico believes this cycle of the ages to be pertinent to human civilization, and inevitable in the creation of a nation. These three ages correspond to the psychological, political, and social development of the mind, respectively. Similar to the model of the evolution of consciousness, Vico outlines that the first stage is the creation of gods who are projections of man’s own fears and doubts. In the heroic age, human nobility is assigned divine powers, and the hero replaces god. These two stages are marked by imagination, creativity, and memory. Vico suggests that if this is true, then mankind in its infancy is poetic because it responds to sense-experiences, feelings, wonders, and fears. By extension, nations in their formative stages are poetic as well. That is, the earliest systems and institutions are not based on proof from external sources but on internal, intuitive ideas. In this sense, nations’ “origin and course can be discovered by recreating or remembering the ‘poetic’ or ‘metaphysical truth’ which underlies them” (Costelloe). This poetic truth is available in fables, superstitions, and myths. With the age of man, imagination is replaced by reason. Society now rests on ratiocination and man desires to discover cause and effect that seemingly permeates the world. Reflection, rather than creation, becomes the dominant mode of functioning. However, reason always proves to be insufficient, and this stage eventually breaks under the pressure of its own dominant mode, until the cycle begins afresh. Of course, the beginning of the new cycle of history is from a higher starting point because the past has been transcended.
One response to this desire to confront history was to turn it into a study or a catalogue, and treat it like a finished and complete entity suitable for display in a museum but not as a part of living reality. The high investment in preserving, anthropomorphizing, and exhibiting history turned the past into a commodity for the common public. "In turn, this commodification of the past made it possible," in Eric Hobsbawn's formulation, "to invent tradition" (Fernald 157). "Invented traditions" stand for histories that are constructed and formally instituted in recent times but give the effect of being ancient. A recursive set of rituals and symbols establish this tradition's importance, and invented traditions are especially visible in projects of nation-building or radical political movements. Invented traditions are usually a conscious response to unprecedented situations, and they "take the form of reference to old situations" or "establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition" (Hobsbawn 2). Traditions are invented more frequently when "a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which 'old' traditions had been designed" (4). One positive outcome of invented traditions is that history is viewed as a "choice of inheritance" and artists have greater freedom to choose from a "vaster and more diverse array of fragments from the past" (Fernald 158). Just as a museum provides context for an alien artifact, the modernist had license to transform, imaginatively and critically, the fragment of the past in a modernist text without feeling the burden of false appropriation.66 The modernist

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66 Childs finds a trenchant analogy for this process of "creating" the past in Eliot's The Waste Land. The poem's relation to history and art is that of a treasure-house; it stores/shores an immense heap of valuable materials torn from their original setting and displays them for the interested individual to contemplate and to contrast with modern discourses, heard in the pub or the music hall, on the gramophone or the tram" (184).
text, therefore, simultaneously derived from history and a repetition of ancient themes, yet it also distanced itself from this history by creating "new" traditions.

The modernists had a complex relation to the idea of history, and its relevance to art. Initially, there was an emphatic move to break away from history, and a tendency for "historical discontinuity, either a liberation from inherited patterns or, at another extreme, deprivation and disinheritance" (Ellmann vi). Modernism went through three main phases in its relationship with history: the first phase derived its primary mood from negativity towards the past. This negativity rested on distrusting and disturbing the previous order, a prerequisite for newness. The main emotion of this phase is mirrored in Futurism, and its proponents such as the poet Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, and the artist Umberto Boccioni, as well as in English Vorticism and its proponents—Pound, Wyndham Lewis, Jacob Epstein, and the theorist T. E. Hulme. The next phase was one of transformation. Though artistic beliefs from the previous phase continued, there was also a move from dwelling upon the past to affirming the present's own stylistic and aesthetic beliefs. There was a greater consciousness of social, religious, and ethical aspects of modern existence. Finally came the culmination of this mood, in which phase Quinones sees the most marked shift from the Renaissance's sense of linear time to the cyclical mythic and mythopoeic literary styles. In this phase, there is a "recovery of some sense of the self in relation to the past and to the individual's own inner being" (11).67 This was the mood in which artists sought to reexamine the mode of history in order to transcend, rather than reject it.

67 An additional "post" high-modern phase, in the 1930s and early 40s, appears to be a pullback of sorts, expressing "a revived sense of the reality of history, of the event and of time itself" (Quinones 11).
Making It New: Pound and Tradition

Looking at the three phases outlined above, it is quite evident that the preoccupation with history forms the crux of the modernist temperament. The aesthetics of modernism revolved around two extreme binaries: (a) a completely futuristic vision; and (b) a vision that cuts through history and canons to the deep past of primeval origins. On the one hand was a fascination with new technology, and on the other, with the archaic depths of the psyche. This paradox of an obsession with the future and the problem of history leads Perry Meisel to define modernism as "writing that sees itself as belated, as coming at the end of history and as thus attempting to originate itself." However, this self-origination takes the form of "a recovery of origins in the primitive, in antiquity, in some privileged moment of the past, a retrospective movement that historicizes itself" (Spurr 267).

Of course, many modernists took sides in this debate, and the notion of history was itself quite extensively debated. Neo-Romantics like the Dadaists and Surrealists advocated radical individual creativity, and a complete break from past movements in art. Novelists like Arnold Bennett and John Galsworthy were famously decried by Woolf as "materialists," who were writing in the outdated nineteenth century realist and naturalist styles ("Modern Fiction" 104). But most artists, including "radicals" like Picasso, Matisse, and Eliot were highly engaged with the past (Butler, Modernism

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66 Woolf also refers to Wells, Bennett and Galsworthy as "Edwardians" (Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown" 320).
67 Alan Wall argues that if today we can dismiss Frazer's "mistaken" notions about myth being inferior to science, it is only because of the modernist appropriation of myth. For instance, Picasso not only claimed that "the forms of modernity might need to borrow the forms of the primitive for their own purposes" (Wall 62), but also remarked upon viewing some Paleolithic cave art at Lascaux that nothing new had been invented since (63). Matthew Price quotes Picasso as having commented that "we have
14-15), even if some were more ironic than others about its sacrosanctity. The modernists were convinced that history may not be worth celebrating, but their own modern "traditions" could only be created by keeping the past and the present simultaneously in view. In such an engagement with tradition, the artist needs to be fully aware of the past. That is, the idea of tradition is based on retrieving elements from the past, but also on building upon them, working with them, and expanding these new relations in directions hitherto uncharted. This creation of tradition implies that one needs to be highly conscious of history. According to Igor Stravinsky, tradition is unlike a habit that persists without being us being aware of it:

A real tradition is not the relic of a past that is irretrievably gone; it is a living force that animates and informs the present. Far from implying the repetition of what has been, tradition presupposes the reality of what endures. It appears as an heirloom, a heritage that one receives on condition of making it bear fruit before passing it on to one's descendants. (57)

Tradition, then, is essential for moving forward, and is the ground upon which creation can continue. That is, the artist must be steeped in tradition but also distanced from it. A true artist cannot survive by either totally rejecting or blindly emulating the past; instead, he or she must critically select those elements from history that can be revived to suit modernist interests, thereby creating a new tradition. It is this feature of the modernists that leads Richard Ellmann to call them "classicists, custodians of language, communicators, traditionalists . . ." (vii).

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learned nothing in twelve thousand years." Jonathan Jones sees the influence of "primitivism" in many of Picasso's paintings, especially Les Demoiselles d'Avignon (1907).
Even Pound, who created manifestos for avant-gardism and coined the term “Vorticism,” partakes of this very same blend of the new and the old. Even his slogan that appears to be an absolute rejection of the old—“make it new”—is really a deep investment in history. Michael North argues that Pound’s slogan has not only been misinterpreted, but has also been mistakenly applied to the acme of modernism.\textsuperscript{70}

Pound came across the Chinese version of the slogan in \textit{T'ung-Chien Kang-Mu}, a classic digest, and in the \textit{Da Xue (Ta Hio)}, the first of the four books of Confucius’s moral philosophy. In his translation of the latter, Pound worded the slogan as “Renovate, do not forget, renovate.” In the footnote, though, Pound rewords “renovate” as “renew” and again as “make it new, and again new, make it new” (North 4). Additionally, the original Chinese includes the reflexive “yourself” which would then mean that this slogan is an exhortation to renew oneself. The reflexive is dropped in the translation. If Pound had retained “renew” and the reflexive pronoun, rather than reword it as “make (it) new,” it would have become clear that what Pound really meant was “renewal” or “a return rather than a completely new beginning” (North 6, emphasis added). That is, Pound desired a transcendence of history, not its obliteration.\textsuperscript{71}

\textsuperscript{70} Michael North argues that “make it new” was almost obscure until 1934, when Eliot edited Pound’s essays and these were published by Faber. Further, it was only in 1950 that Hugh Kenner isolated these words, although he did link it to the idea of “historical recurrence” that the phrase refers to in the \textit{Cantos} (North 11). In 1956, Philip Rahv, for the first time, used the slogan to mean radical novelty. By this time, modernity’s break with tradition was over, and its own tradition had been established. North argues that this slogan was wrongly attributed as the point of origin of modernism. In fact, this slogan is a feature of the endgame of modernism: “It comes to prominence as modernism starts to feel its age, and it was part of the rear-guard defense of that movement against what has come to be known as the neo-avant-garde: Pop, conceptual art, and minimalism” (3).

\textsuperscript{71} The idea of renewal is further strengthened when we consider that the phrase “make it new” appears twice in the Bible: once in Isaiah 61.4—“They’ll start over on the ruined cities, take the rubble left behind and make it new;” and again in Revelations 21.5—“Behold, I make all things new.” In
Pound's newness is an "organic" newness (8). His intentions regarding the organic renewal of pre-existing elements of tradition become clear in his choice of the words "Make It New" for his collection of essays on topics that were anything but new: Greek translations, Elizabethan Classicists, and French Troubadours. The title certainly reflects his efforts to cull fragments of history and recombine them into a new idiosyncratic "tradition." These essays focus on "the central notion of what each writer, or writers, accomplished that was unique to his . . . historical moment and why such a development remains useful to a Modernist sensibility" (Bettridge 190). Pound saw himself (and all other modernists) as perched at that historical moment when these unique historical movements needed to be collected, arranged, and formulated in order to create a tradition apposite to the modernist moment. To make it new, therefore, is to remake one's historical moment vis-à-vis other historical moments. Bettridge argues that it is the "it" in the slogan that needs to be focused on: the "it" is the now, the present, that Pound wanted new, or renewed. This implied "rejecting the mistakes (Pound's sense of them at least) of both the past and the present, regardless of one's particular historical moment" (190-91). Pound was so deeply entrenched in this project of history, and of the search for the new from within the timeless that was housed in history, that Bradbury regards him as modernism's "full expression, the revealer of its deepest forms and principles, the distiller of its spirit and its contradictions" (Modern World 6).

The idea that Pound is the "reveler" of the "deepest forms and principles" again brings us to the notion of the mythic imagination as the basis of modernist art. 

theological terms, "new" does not mean the absolutely original; rather, it implies the term "neos" as a form of redemption or return to a pristine stage (North 7).
It implies that Pound was a discoverer, an archaeologist more than an architect. The deepest forms and principles allude to mythic truths and archetypes. These forms also imply the notion of permanence. Most importantly, in such a light, history is no longer stretched along a strictly "linear" scale. Indeed, this alters the very notion of history, and brings us back to the notion of (mythic) cyclical.

Eliot and the Nature of Literary Tradition

The main idea underlying the modernist manifesto(s) and history was that the modernists soon realized that any representation, however new, was also, automatically, a part of a history of representations. That is, the process of history is contiguous with the present. This sentiment drives Eliot's engagement with the idea of history and tradition. Like Stravinsky, Eliot also asserts that tradition is not a dead entity that is closed, static, or handed down. It does not require reverence through imitation either. Rather, the creation of tradition is itself a modernist activity. In such a creation, already existing elements are adjusted in proportion and value, and recast in an "ideal order" (Eliot "Tradition and Individual Talent" 15). This notion of an ideal, "systematic order, of an organic unity of literature" is now seen as an essential aspect of modernism, and also found in the work of Joyce and Pound (Rabaté 210, emphasis added).

Another important aspect of tradition is that it depends largely on the individual artist. For the artist, a past age or master must be conceived of as alive and as directing the present, as much as his or her present work directs the past. This two-way traffic rests on a similar "historical sense." Eliot recognizes that history is
communal, but it is the individual artist's sense of tradition that binds him or her to a
more absolute sense of culture (213, 221). This sense of history is—

...a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence;
the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own
generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the
literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the
literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and
composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense
of the timeless as well as the temporal and of the timeless and of the
temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the
same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in
time, of his own contemporaneity. (Eliot, "Tradition" 14)

In other words, in order to be utterly modern and contemporaneous, the artist must
be utterly traditional. Also, the artist needs a holistic vision so as to be able to
conceive of all ages and cultures as simultaneous. History, therefore, is both timeless
and temporal. In Four Quartets, Eliot remarks that "history is a pattern/Of timeless
moments" (Complete Poems and Plays 197), thereby affirming the mythic sense of
cyclical time. On the other hand, in The Waste Land, the burden of history catches up
with the poet, and the sense of an impending apocalypse becomes clear.

Dwelling in tradition implies that every work of art alters, and is altered, by
the existing works of art; however, this is a process of change and not of
improvement. An artist can be truly evaluated only against the fabric of this history.
Eliot remarks that a poet's difference from his or her predecessors, especially the
immediate ones, is to be praised, but usually what is most remarkable in the poet's work, and what is most individual, is paradoxically that "in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously" ("Tradition" 14).

Eliot's notion of tradition implies that tradition is not merely the canon of one's own inheritance but is of a pan-European nature (and subsequently includes the cultural heritage of other societies as well). The burden of history necessitates an individual creation of tradition, built upon the most salvageable elements of history. The sustenance of tradition requires not imitation but novelty. Novelty arises in newer ways of viewing reality through language. The modernists rejected the artistic techniques of the preceding century, and were keener on discovering the most durable aspects of art throughout history. History is also inherently unconscious, while tradition is arrived at only by being conscious of it (16).

Another vital consequence of the evolving sense of tradition and newness involves breaking through established boundaries between histories, nations, and cultures, and adopting instead an encyclopedic approach, with an often idiosyncratic plethora of allusions to ancient names and events juxtaposed with contemporary elements of mass culture like advertisements, "women's" magazines, and popular music. As Childs explains of The Waste Land, the model of this mode of modernism:

Everything, from East and West, past and present, the world of the war and its aftermath, becomes fused in the poem's linguistic eclecticism, its teasing quotations, snatches of song, snippets of conversation, multiple

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72 The inclusion of elements from around the world into one artistic tradition is similar to Pound's ideal artist, who would be as well versed with European masters like Dante and Homer, as with Chinese ideograms and the Japanese haiku.
languages, half-thoughts, nursery rhymes, monologues and myths.…

the narrative ends with fragments and ruins, but of course the poem itself remains whole. The form of the verse aims to piece together or reconcile the jigsaw of the myriad references, half-lines, *non sequiturs* and quotations; and all kinds of peripheral machinery is put in place around the poem as though to try to hold in the chaos… (183)

The encyclopedic breadth of *The Waste Land* in particular, and other modernist creations in general, is one aspect of the new in modernism. It must be kept in mind that this encyclopedic collage is not made of new bits of information but ancient and common ones. That is, the arrangement of these in one unified work of art is new, the connections between them are new, but the elements themselves are well-known. It is on similar lines that the modernists make use of myths. In their modernist adaptations, myths are not copied but reworked into the new material: this comprises one aspect of modernism’s mythical imagination.

**Myth: Its Appeal to the Modernist Imagination**

I have discussed earlier in the chapter the various reasons for why myth and the mythical imagination appealed to the modern mind. For the modernist artist, there was another very important reason. The Enlightenment age put rationality on a pedestal, and aimed at freeing the human mind from myth, superstition, and belief in supernatural and mysterious powers of nature through critical reasoning. Coupe argues that while reason assumed dictatorial powers in manipulating perspective, the Enlightenment was perpetuating its own myth: the myth of mythlessness.
Modernists, finding reason and rationality insufficient, turned towards a pre-
Enlightenment, pre-Renaissance culture for artistic inspiration. However, their return
to myth is not escapist or naïve; rather, myth provides them with a way to engage
with history. For the modernists, the use of myth compensated “for the dissatisfying
fragmentation of the modern world.” It also created “a controlling narrative that
could be mapped onto . . . the rapid social changes in modernity” (Childs 198).

The modernists make use of myth in different ways. Direct references and
allusions to established myths can be seen in several works. Certain modernists, like
Yeats, created an entire system of mythic codes and symbols. There are instances
where the mythical worldview, comprising such features as cyclical time, the theme
of apocalypse, the notion of polarities, and ideas of nation building, comes into focus.
All of these aspects always appear conjoined with a high awareness of reality and the
crisis of modernity. Myths appear to provide metaphysical answers to existential
questions in some works of art. In others, they provide formal unity to the chaos of
reality.73

Modernism is replete with paradoxes in the attitudes of its artistic movements.
Myth and modernity continue this paradox: the co-existence, at any moment, of the
eternal and the historical, the transcendent and the limited, the timeless and the

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73 The use of myth in literature is not restricted to the modernists. Even in current European and
American literature, myth and mythology continue to play a vital role. A. S. Byatt’s *The End of the Gods:
The Myth of Ragnarök* (2011) which retells the stories from Norse mythology against the backdrop of
World War I, Margaret Atwood’s *Penelopiad* (2005) which counters the predominantly male version of
tales in *The Odyssey*, Anne Stevenson’s “The Myth of Medea” (a part of her poetry collection titled *Stone
Milk*, published in 2007) that accuses Euripides’ *Medea* of a patriarchal bias, Sarah Kane’s play
*Phaedra’s Love* (1996), and the boom in retelling Biblical myths after Dan Brown’s immensely
successful *The Da Vinci Code* are cases in point. My argument for the modernist use of myth is based
not only on the crisis the modernists were facing but also on how this crisis precipitated the use of
myth as a new way of reconstructing realism.
temporal. That is, the modernist notion of history can simultaneously be encompassed, analyzed, and interpreted, yet also escaped, using myth. History can be explained as myth-making, and myth as the foundation of one kind of history. Quinones claims that "myth is like history in being a two-way street; in enduring and appealing patterns it shows the present in the past and the past in the present. It historicizes the eternal and brings permanence as well as texture to history and immediate events" (208). In addition, myths also create a connection between the unconscious and its expression. Myth expresses a "continual interaction between the chaotic unconscious and the controlling conscious mind straining together and finally united in a stylized yet flexible symbolic structure" (Feder 344, emphasis added). As a methodology, myth reveals unconscious thought processes as well as essential themes, symbols and techniques. Modernists, Feder suggests, tend to use myth not for allegorical purposes but for "a general awareness of the psychological implications of mythical tales" (25).

That myth and literature have a close connection is obvious. Some of the earliest literary works known to us (the Epic of Gilgamesh, Homer’s Iliad and Odyssey, Ovid’s Metamorphoses) were mythical in their overall function: showing the interaction of supernatural beings with humans, resolving moral and cultural dilemmas, laying out the story of micro- or macro-creations, and providing answers to questions on nature and the world. However, modernism’s employment of myths

74 In spite of this close connection between mythic and literary narratives, a fine distinction can be drawn between the two kinds of consumption of myths: the pre-literary myth which is taken at face value, is considered indubitably true, sacred, and therefore unalterable; and the literary myth which is open to interpretation, analysis and allegory. These two kinds of consumption are not historically bound; rather, they are dependent on the purpose with which a myth or a mythic archetype is approached.
was not only very varied, but also very different from the usual "basic structure"-
"content" relation that archetypes and mythic paradigms suggest. It is evident that if
modernity (of the rational bent) tended towards demythologization and replaced
myths with science, modernism (of the political, social, and artistic kind) was in favor
of the process of (re)mythologization (using ancient myths and creating new ones).

There are several remarkable uses of myths by modernists writers. Ted
Hughes rewrote Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and produced Euripides's *Alcestis* and
Seneca's *Oedipus*; Yeats produced his own versions of the Oedipus play and also
created an entire symbolic system in his poetry, inspired by both Celtic and Greco-
Roman mythologies; Pound began his *Cantos* with a section from Homer; Eliot
created a complex structure of mythical and religious references in *The Waste Land*;
Joyce borrowed heavily from *The Odyssey* in *Ulysses*; Woolf's *Mrs. Ramsay* and Lily
Briscoe play out the mythical mother-daughter archetype (mirrored in Demeter and
Persephone) in *To the Lighthouse*; Rilke adapted portions from the *Epic of Gilgamesh*;
Mann retold the Biblical myth of Joseph in *Joseph and his Brothers*; D. H. Lawrence's
*Women in Love* is apocalyptic in tone; and Picasso drew illustrations for a new edition
of *Metamorphoses*. Yeats's purpose in using myth is to express the horrors of decay,
disease, and death, and man's heroic but tragic struggle against these. He also uses
myth to fashion a heroic ideal, and uses the mythic narrative as a guide into
knowledge. If Yeats uses myth to underscore the heroic, Eliot uses myth just as it was
in the mythic structure of consciousness: to exert control and establish order over the
chaos that surrounds him (echoed in his use of the Sanskrit term "Damyata" meaning
control in *The Waste Land*). In all of these examples, the element of
"defamiliarization," is evident: identifiable plots and characters are subjected to a new treatment, a new kind of language, and contemporary insights. "By seeing something from a radically different angle, we see aspects to it which convention had made previously invisible" (Wall 61). The conventional use of myths permits only certain meanings. The modernists insert contemporary concerns into an ancient myth, and thus alter the myth. On the other hand, the use of myths also alters contemporary concerns. Through the use of myth, the sense of reality is also altered.

Modernism's "Mythical Method"(s)

In his essay "Ulysses, Order, and Myth," Eliot famously heralds the use of myth in Joyce's *Ulysses* as being "the most important expression" of the present age, and akin to a "scientific discovery" (679, 681). Eliot announces that the "mythical method" may now replace the "narrative method" (681) as the former will make the modern world possible for art. He offers his interpretation for Joyce's choice of method: an unconscious dissatisfaction with what the genre of the novel had to offer in modern times. Hence, the use of myth is "simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history." The modernist uses an ancient myth but in a modern context, thereby supplying unity and imposing form (in the form of "fabula") on the chaos of modernity. Besides, this method enables "manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity" (681).
Eliot's own "mythical method" was informed by new forms of knowledge like psychology and anthropology,75 which, according to him, provide not only new material, but also new forms for art. The insight into, and encounter with, the primitive imagination was a fertile factor for modernist art. Eliot was also deeply interested in mysticism, the origins of primitive rituals, epistemology, and the symbolic systems of Western and non-Western cultures. Even as a student, he was already involved with "a characteristically modernist project: searching for a mythic origin, identifying it as a repressed element of modern consciousness, and acknowledging the difficulty of recovering this origin" (Spurr 270). His desire to return to the "mentalité primitive"76 led to him to conclude that poetry is like primitive music. It is "a savage beating a drum in a jungle and it [poetry] retains that essential of percussion and rhythm." Through this connection, the poet is projected as being much "older than other human beings." Moreover, the function of poetry is not to recollect emotion but to "make us from time to time a little more aware of the

75 The findings of anthropologists were frequently appropriated by artists, as is evident in Surrealism, Cubism, and in modernist fiction and poetry. This appropriation often took the form of a confrontation or an encounter with the primitive. Nineteenth-century exploration narratives, an early source of anthropological data, had dramatized the European encounter with the native other as part of the ideology of imperial expansion. As Edward Said, Christopher Miller, and others show, twentieth-century writers from Joseph Conrad to Louis-Ferdinand Céline continually rewrote this mythic moment as part of their aesthetic projects. The encounter with the racial, cultural, or psychological other became an occasion for modernist writers to "remythologize" both the modern world and their roles within it (Spurr 271).

76 Lévy-Bruhl uses this term to explain how the primitive mind dwell in a mystical and non-contradictory (rather than irrational) state that is also communally participatory. This primitive state exists outside of distinctions between the real and imaginary, past, present and future, animate and inanimate and so on. (Spurr 268). That is, in the primitive worldview, the object and its mystical properties form a harmonious whole. In this, they are not precursors to the Western logical mind but operational in a wholly distinct paradigm. Lévy-Bruhl is of the opinion that the human mind varies from civilization to civilization in terms of modes of thought and mental operations. Eventually though, he comes to the conclusion that the participatory and distinction-based mentalities co-exist, and are to be found in all civilizations in differing proportions. Thus, non-Western cultures are not inferior to, but are simply different from, the Western one. Interestingly, while Mauss is interested in ritual as a manifestation of myth, Lévy-Bruhl is more interested in the interpretation of minds using myth (Spurr 269).
deeper, unnamed feelings which form the substratum of our being, to which we rarely penetrate” (Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism 155).

However, Eliot’s enthusiasm for anthropological findings and similes was not shared by Joyce, and this is the first difference in their mythical methods. Although Joyce used the discipline for his own purposes, it did not escape his notice that anthropology was an inherently imperialist and oppressive project carried on by the West, concerned only with romanticizing and objectifying the “Other” (Spurr 267). While Yeats revives myth due to nostalgia, Joyce does the same with a sense of irony: his embodiment of the romanticizing Westerner in Ulysses is Haines—an Englishman who has developed an interest in Irish folklore, and is an indifferent and supercilious colonialist for whom Ireland and the Irish are quaint and exotic objects. Like a typical imperialist, he refuses to accept any responsibility on England’s part for the unrest in Ireland.

Besides, where Eliot envisions myth as an escape from history, Joyce is in the process of “demythologizing” history itself. In asserting that literary productions are merely “overdetermined representations of life” (Spurr 266-67) and cannot be external to contemporary history, Joyce engages in historicizing mythology (rather than in mythologizing history). In the end though, he powerfully collapses both myth and history into a radically new language, and thereby creates infinitely new connections between the two. If for Eliot there is always a limit to what language can

77 Joyce was clearly influenced by Lévy-Bruhl’s notion of primitive and unifying consciousness, and the realm of signification that brings together myth and history, dream and reality, conscious and unconscious, present and past, in ways denied by a rationalist, materialist age. In Ulysses and especially Finnegans Wake, one witnesses the disappearance of causality, the merging of subject and object, the multiple presences of single beings, the unhinging of time from space, and the elaboration of an unlimited field of mythic representation that exceeds any counterpart in objective reality (Spurr 274).
express of the true extent of mystical knowledge, Joyce "refuses this limit, and he expands the universe of his language beyond any boundary yet defined" (278).

Another distinction between the two is that while for Eliot myths are sacred, for Joyce myths and archetypes are literary scaffoldings that can be reconstructed using irony.

**Mythification in Modernist Texts**

Although this dissertation is concerned solely with fiction, it would be remiss to gloss over a highly representative text of modernism: *The Waste Land*. As a reflection of the modernist mood, the poem "records an emotional aspect of a Western crisis, characterised by despair, hopelessness, paralysis, angst and a sense of meaninglessness shown on a spiritual, cultural and personal level" (Childs 185). It begins with a shift of setting from the mythical polis of Babylonia in the throes of civilizational chaos (from the Book of Revelations) to modern day London. The opening quote is from Petronius's *Satyricon*, also a poem about a culture in decline. *The Waste Land*’s title derives from Jane Harrison’s work on the fertility paradigm; the poem itself is a synthesis of different speech styles, is filled with references and quotes from canonical works of literature from all over Europe, borrows terminology from Hindu and Buddhist religious texts, and echoes Biblical myths. However, it is not simply an impressive album of literary snapshots. Along with its parodic representation of the styles of Shakespeare and Swinburne, the poem also brings together the past and the present with the use of mythic characters such as Tiresias and the Fisher King in close juxtaposition with urban London slang, pub talk and drawing room conversation. Although it is a poem symbolizing post-war Europe, Eliot
suppresses direct historical references, and turns to myth instead as a way of commenting on history. In *The Waste Land*, history cannot be altered or amended, and all "social change only takes place within a mythological framework" (185).

*The Waste Land* is an excellent example of the paradox of unity and disunity, past and present, high and low, the aristocracy and the bourgeois, all held in a tense bind within a single work of art. For instance, Mrs. Porter, the new age Diana or the goddess of fertility in the poem, is surrounded by banal sounds of motors and horns and yellow fog rather than by hunting companions and verdant forests. The poem is fragmentary in form, and so are its allusions, gathered from divergent sources and put together into one narrative, reflecting the dispersed psychological state of modern man and the motley collection of a museum. While this feature of the poem discourages a "readerly" interpretation, the unity comes from two underlying strands: the dying and reviving god of the fertility archetype, and the quest for the Holy Grail. The poem is a typical example of apocalypse literature: it features the horror of modernity but also hope for revival through the fertility myth. Additionally, the use of ancient Greek mythic characters (Adonis, Tiresias), Egyptian gods (Attis and Osiris), and Eastern myths together is a poetic attempt to create a universalized mythology, a new tradition, and a holistic, "idealized mythic identity" (Spurr 272).²⁹

²⁸ Fragments are a regular motif in modernist writing, especially with stream of consciousness writing wherein the only reality depicted is through an individual's consciousness. In Woolf's *Jacob's Room*, for instance, this is the central problem: each of the narrators has only a partial understanding of Jacob's life. The characters and the readers must puzzle over the ways to piece Jacob's life together from these fragments into a whole. This is also a theme in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* in which Thomas Sutpen is known to those around him only in fragments.

²⁹ Although by the time Eliot was composing his verse, Malinowski's fieldwork approach and his insistence on particular contexts was already undermining Frazer's comparativist approach, Eliot still supported the "essence" rather than manifestation of culture. Frazer's "unifying pattern," the global myth with a "collective legacy" appealed greatly to Eliot (Coupe 31).
Joyce's purpose in using myth is quite different, if equally extensive. Bradbury observes that Joyce was not being nostalgic for an old order or offering an exit route for the future; in dismantling, undermining, and reconstructing old forms, Joyce was essentially only expressing modernist reality (Modern World 7). In Joyce's case, myth helps to both articulate reality and also create an artistic distance between reality and the artist, thereby allowing the latter to represent the former without getting lost in its vortex. Joyce also argues that reason is "not adequate to comprehend reality; non-reason or a kind of faith is needed in addition to reason, not necessarily excluding it" (Palencia-Roth 162). This compels him to employ religious ideas (however non-sectarian), mysticism, and myths in order to portray reality. He also states that myths need to be approached through the imagination rather than through reason if the artist wishes to recover the true origins of form and history.

Joyce's mythical allusions are plentiful and easy to spot: Christian myths of hell and heaven (especially in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man); characters with classical Greek names like Daedalus; Dublin as the arena for the journey of the protagonists; Irish political heads turned into mythical heroes; father-son references that go beyond the Freudian Oedipal archetype to the author-father (Dante and Shakespeare) and the artistic creation-child (Divine Comedy and Hamlet), God and the world, the wandering Odysseus and his son Telemachus, and Daedalus and Icarus. All these create unprecedented parallels between the vision of human endeavor in the past and in the present. Joyce portrays a definite sense of failure of the modern man,  

Palencia-Roth states that one can trace an organic growth from the modestly ambitious use of myth in Dubliners to Finnegans Wake, where myth overwhelms reality to the point that actual reality disappears into mythic reality (158).
but does not use myth to restore order. In fact, he offers a gentle reminder of the
comic uselessness of the very endeavor of heroism, and highlights the follies and
foibles of humans as they struggle to come to terms with the rising complexities of
national identities, capitalism, and human relations.

Ulysses, a modern day mythical story, is “an epic of two races (Israelite-Irish)
and at the same time the cycle of the human body as well as a little story of a day
(life)” created with the intention to “transpose the myth sub specie temporis nostri.”
That is, each “adventure (that is, every hour, every organ, every art being
interconnected and interrelated in the structural scheme of the whole) should not
only condition but even create its own technique” (Joyce qtd. in Palencia-Roth 189).
Even common acts of waking up or making breakfast become imbued with a deeper
significance. Thus, the myth provides an almost sacrosanct prop for the mundane,
much like Eliade’s notion of participation in a myth that takes the participant back to
the sacred, original moment. Of course, in Joyce, the participant never gets to forget
his or her real, historical circumstances.

In Ulysses, we witness what is called “mythification” in art: the process by
which an ancient myth is recast in a modern perspective, or when a (mortal)
character with limitations is conjoined with a timeless story. Since the timeless
story happens to be a myth, this would be deemed “mythifying” the new story and
“remythifying” the original myth. Through this duality, what is ordinary is typical,
what is typical is mythical. In *Ulysses*, it is Joyce's language that (re)creates or "remythifies" *The Odyssey*:

First, he transplanted the mythic story from classical Greece to twentieth-century Dublin. Second, he altered the external details of the story itself to fit the eccentricities of his protagonists. Third, he internalized the epic adventures of Odysseus and Telemachus by concentrating on the mental adventures of Bloom and Stephen. And fourth, he transcended his sources in several important respects.

(Palencia-Roth 190)

In the process of mythification, the borrowed myth provides not only structure (fabula) but also archetypal characters and mythical events. Here, the source of the original myth is not important. Rather, it is the features of the mythic imagination that make the writing mythical. For instance, the image of circularity plays out at several levels in Joyce's fiction. Sentences chase each other and tie into each other. *Finnegan's Wake* begins and ends with two halves of the same sentence. Apart from that, the mythical cycle of ages (inspired from Vico) and the renewal of the world through seasons also features in Joyce's work. *The Odyssey* is an example of Campbell's "monomyth," constituted of a circular pattern of stages: departure, adventure, and return. This pattern is repeated in *Ulysses*, but over the span of one day.

A significant part of Joyce's mythic method is his heroes, through whom he creates a set of parallels across time but also within various modern cultural paradigms. The use of myth enables writers to articulate larger patterns and designs that enhance an individual life, and raise it to the level of the archetype. In addition,
this also translates the apparently accidental into what is actually characteristic of human experience. With the "hero" archetype, Joyce does precisely that: recover the individual being swept away by the collective forces of science, technology, war, and capitalism (modernity's willful gods), and through him, give voice to the concerns of a generation. The individual is also an everyman. And therefore, the everyman is a mythical hero.

Of course, Joyce ironizes the very notion of mythic heroism. For instance, Odysseus is truly heroic in Homer's epic, but Leopold Bloom is comically turned out, sidelined, and obviously flawed in Ulysses. Through the character of Bloom, Joyce shows how his hero can fulfill a mythic role and also exist alongside in a new, contemporary identity. Given his mythic parallel, Bloom is doomed to follow archetypes and archetypal patterns such as embarking on an arduous journey, encountering beguiling women, and finding a son who is also seeking him. In the original myth, Penelope remains faithful to Odysseus even in his absence, whereas Bloom encourages Molly to be promiscuous by keeping himself absent. In this way, he is simultaneously accepting the archetypal pattern of the wandering hero but also the common tale of cuckolded husband, and thereby altering the former. Bloom's life is mythical in Joyce's configuration of it, but Bloom is also "democratically undignified and droll" (Coupe 46). He is an ordinary man who does ordinary things. However, in his limited journey of one day, he is following the same pattern as the mythical hero. He is, therefore, the modern mythical hero.

Another mythical feature of Joyce's work is the highlighting of polarities, which will eventually set the scene for "totality" or "summa." This totality will be
achieved in, and through, language. In Joyce's work, the mix of ancient myth and modern concerns, the past with the present, stream of consciousness and third person narrative, vulgar humor and spiritual epiphanies, creates an inevitable "intellectual miscegenation," leading to the creation of a new language of fiction (Wall 61).

Through such literary instances, it becomes clear that the modernists' imagination was indeed mythical. Their chaotic present, sense of impending apocalypse, and despair over a civilizational crisis are factors responsible for the significance of myth in their writings.