



DOI 10.36145/DoC2022.04

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Toward the Mythologisation of Political Power

Received 06 May 2022

Revised 01 July 2022

Accepted 15 July 2022

Available online 27 July 2022

Abstract: The overriding goal of this article is to provide a theoretical overview of the ways political power can be situated within the framework of a myth. It is commonly averred that myth operates in the human mind, however the underlying premise is that myth is structurally hardwired and functionally driven linguistic practice that underlies the construction of political power. This article also touches upon the nature of political power as presidential representation in terms of myth as well as mythically-driven social practice.

It seems natural at this point to raise the question of how power gets mythologised in society. It will be argued that mythologisation of power expresses the process of getting to terms with the world in a schematic and structural way; i.e., by cataloguing it and organising world knowledge that is accessible to man.

Key words: myth, mythologisation of power, structuralism, mythic communication

Introduction

Since time immemorial humankind has lived in the stories of warriors, heroes, hybrids, chimeras, deities, *etc.*, that are characters taken from mythology (Cassirer, 1923/1946, p. 5; Eliade, 1957/1959, p. 95; Schiffrin, 2006, p. 104). These narratives have permeated our lives from the time we got bits of information as part of our education at many stages of our lives. However, does this way of thinking about myths give us a full understanding of what they actually are and what part of our lives as individuals and society they occupy? In other words, there have been questions about how myths use themes which communicate in our lives, how the mythological characters and plots live in us, and in general, how a myth uses its structure, in all the ways, and with all the means, and for all the purposes it was used in ancient times which has been the bedrock of mythical thought. This article also touches upon the nature of political power as a presidential representation in terms of myth. It seems natural at this point to raise the question of how power gets mythologised in society as well as how those who have power can become myths. All these areas of study are of special importance since the latest research on myth hinges on philosophical and anthropological thought that seeks to explain the universality of myths in all of the societies and their dominant motifs (Sapeńko, 2014, p. 37).

On the definition of myth

Before one approaches the scope and scale of myths in culture, it is necessary to work out the controlling environment within which we establish what we mean by myth and mythologisation. Historically, myth has been recognisable as the Greek, Latin or biblical stories about gods who interpenetrate human life providing the answers to the mind-boggling questions swarming in the minds of people who want to live according to the rules of life and society and respect their tradition. This surface structure of understanding myth is crucial in maintaining the perspective of mythological information. All this was replaced by blessed and beatified who are now the heroes, deities, warriors, etc., together with accompanying myths. But for a complete view, the definition of myth needs to be extended and deepened into its role and function as residing and working within the human existence. The immanent approach to the study of myth isolates the cognitive processes of man from the structure of myth itself and orientates the workings of myth into an unconscious human mind, *i.e.*, myths operating in human minds rather than men thinking in myths (Lévi-Strauss, 1964/1975, p. 12). This view of myth is rightly developed by the same researcher who explains how myth has left its footprint in his own personal life. He states the following:

⋮ I don't have the feeling that I write my books. I have the feeling that my
⋮ books get written through me and that once they have got across me, I feel
⋮ empty, and nothing is left. [...] myths get through in man unbeknownst to
⋮ him... my work gets thought in me unbeknown to me. [...] (Lévi-Strauss,
⋮ 1977/1979, p. 3).

What the above implies is an intangible nature of myth in human life, however these myths quite literally manifest themselves in the work of an author. The elusive structure of myth is grounded and observable in the workings of man. Myth takes the form of a structure that exceeds the boundaries of time and space. It is a structure with a built-in capacity and purpose to go out there and evince itself in the unconscious minds of its dwellers.

Another question to be raised is the purpose of myth. Its ubiquity in the midst of the speakers and texts they produce is by no means accidental and purposeless. One explanation is based on the view that myth is involved in the process of cataloguing reality, describing it in ways that are accessible by man. It is believed that humans process concepts of the world in terms of chunks of information in the form of binary oppositions (Sego, 2000, p. 111). Such a view can reveal how humans make meaning of language, *i.e.*, through putting away, categorising, classifying, structuring the mental concepts, and assembling it within a framework of myth. This could be the reason why myth has the power to enter the thresholds of our mind. The regular pattern of creating concepts in terms of binary oppositions that we are endowed with seems to be compatible with the regularity and predictability of mythical structure. It ought to be pointed out though that as long as the structure is fixed, its components are prone to dynamic changes. These two constructs; the human mind and myth work together to build knowledge that is diachronically/synchronically, reversibly/non-reversibly transferred and further developed (Lévi-Strauss, 1958/1963, p. 211).

Myth can also be recognised as a narrative that tells stories in order to facilitate the process of coming to terms with the world as well as to instruct those who get involved. According to Campbell (1988), the clue of myth is not searching for meaning but looking for an experience of being alive (Campbell, 1988, p. 5). Myths allow a man to understand the experience by incorporating mythical symbolism. Campbell highlights that in order to get the meaning of life one needs to read myths which give rise to the message that transpires through the collection of stories. The difference between the signs and symbols is based on understanding them in terms of facts. The former type of describing the world states directly and arbitrarily the meaning in terms of reference to objects; *the signifying* and *the signified*. The latter on the other hand, is the “[o]pposite of scientific thought and is... the logic of the concrete, that is, the respect for and the use of the data of the senses” (Lévi-Strauss, 1977/1979, p. 13). One of the representations of symbolic systems is the form of an opposition observed in both the heterogeneous and homogeneous nature of symbols (Lévi-Strauss, 1958/1963, p. 153). The symbolic nature of myths

stems from their *symbolic language* which is universal and governed by its own syntax, grammar, and logic. It relates to sensory experiences and chains of events that are the categories of creating a reality of myth (Fromm, 1951, p. 7). Furthermore, the mechanism of understanding the meaning of myths is believed to be similar to that of fairy tales and dreams of which the main determinants are intensity and association (Fromm, 1951, p. 7).

The signification of myth as a semiological system is believed to be hidden in its semiological form (Barthes, 1957/2020, p. 110). Roland Barthes singles out three different contents which can approximate the signification of myth and they comprise the signifier (*meaning/form*), the signified (*concept*), and the sign (*signification*) (Barthes, 1957/2020, p. 110). However, Barthes notices that myth is a “[s]econd-order semiological system” in a sense that it comes from the already existing semiological chain that is reconstructed (Barthes, 1957/2020, p. 113). All myths share the same denominator, that is a language which forms the basis of myth’s existence. It is noteworthy that language as a means of building mythic structure is called *metalanguage* due to the fact that it is the second language that enters the threshold of myth (Barthes, 1957/2020, p. 114). Based on this, myth can be understood as an *inter-semiotic transposition* (Jakobson, 1959, p. 233) of reality aimed at cataloguing reality (understanding, translating, and using world knowledge by means of various codes). The instruments of this translation can be non-abstract mythic images, e.g., angels, demons, heroes, tricksters, etc., abstract mythic elements, e.g., the conceptualisation of world states like war, peace, justice, love, freedom, etc., mental texts, e.g., cognitive/constructivist-based realisations, national symbols and images, e.g., coat of arms, national flag, religious symbols like a cross, but also narrative genres that replicate certain structural features, e.g., myths, fables, fairy tales, legends, sagas, folk tales, and the like. Mythic relations are inter-semiotic relations that are seen and expressed through the eyes of various cultures. The mechanisms and operations of any myth include cultural factors that evince themselves in the mythic realisations. Hence, discourse may be viewed as a way of organizing knowledge through the relationship of nonverbal language and context. In this way, myths become semiotic resources which are realised in specific spatio-temporal contexts that pertain to a particular society at a given time.

Mythologisation of political power

Taking myth as a starting point of the discussion on the mythologisation of power, there are some considerations to be taken when one attempts to explain how myth becomes apparent in the life of man. What is interesting in this connection is that the process of defining mythologisation can be discussed at various levels of understanding and analysis. One of the most inveterate ideas about the concept of mythologisation in contemporary times has been the idea of making something a myth. Such a view is not logically invalid, however, there are certainly some more factors that have come to play a great role in what is implied by the term mythologisation. The preliminary quest for this definition is based on the following views: (1) mythologisation is the process of incorporating the structure and its elements (the form and content) into a non-mythical element, (2) mythologisation can make a non-mythic element a part of mythical culture due to its adoption of mythical elements. This implies the agentive function of a non-mythic element that is performed through functional language, *i.e.*, texts, (3) mythologisation has operational value and provides a link to a particular society (Lévi-Strauss, 1958/1963, p. 209; Campbell, 1988, p. 27). Mythologisation can take place at a universal, natural level as well as the sociological level. Even though myth has a universal structure, every mythology has grown up in a certain society (Campbell, 1988, p. 29).

One could try to comprehend how the process of mythologisation is recognised and realised in the domain of **political power**. There has been a renewed interest in the various applications of myths in the contemporary world of politics. In a context such as this the word power usually connotes strength, dominance, control, authority, *etc.* Another slightly different use of the term power is also found in the works of a British mathematician, philosopher and a political activist Bertrand Russell (1938), who defines political power in one of his most important works *Power. A New Social Analysis* (1938) written at the brink of World War II. He expounds his political philosophy by laying down the three ground themes relating to power. The first theme is that the lust for power is part of human nature (Russell, 1938, p. 16).

Second, there is a significant division between the power of organisations¹ (appointed by institutions) and the power of individuals (acquired through hereditariness). These are two different ways of acquiring power. The former type of power requires the politician to have the qualities of character² which predispose him to be a competent and trustworthy candidate for a successful politician but also, he needs to possess qualities that adjust to the character of the times (Russell, 1938, p. 47). The third type of power of individuals is the power behind the scenes (Russell, 1938, p. 48). It is encountered in every large organisation and recognised as the most self-interested and cunning way of acquiring influence over the leaders using personal methods. This type of power comprises a repertoire of wire-pullers, spies, intriguers, party bosses and courtiers. These less prominent men in the organisation are driven by the pure lust for power and glory and they remain socially timid at the backstage of politics (Russell, 1938, p. 48).

The context of political power proves to be relevant in the context of mythologisation as it presents the above-mentioned themes as explaining the

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- 1 Russell mentions that organisation and the individuals they choose are interrelated and states that “[d]ifferent types organization bring different types of individuals to the top, and so do different states of the society. An age appears in history through its prominent individuals, and derives its apparent character from the character of these men. As the qualities required for achieving prominence change, so the prominent men change” (Russell, 1938, p. 42).
 - 2 Russell provides a list of features that a powerful individual in an organization ought to possess. He gives reference to the executive; as he is called in America; a man who “[i]mpresses others as a man of rapid decisions, quick insight into character, and iron; he must have a firm jaw tightly closed lips, and a habit of brief and incisive speech. He must be able to inspire respect in equals, and confidence in subordinates who are by no means nonentities. He must combine the qualities of a great general and a great diplomatist, ruthless in battle, but a capacity for skilful concession in negotiation. It is by such qualities that men acquire control of important economic organizations” (Russell, 1938, p. 46).

features and mechanisms of myth in individuals and society. Having as our starting point an assumption that the lust for power is inherently human, it can be observed that the process of mythologisation of power facilitates the acquisition of mythic features by non-mythic elements, i.e., power. This process turns out to be a personal experience that utilises a great number of cognitive processes for regulating the vision of a power in establishing its mythical components. The biological premise of power to be a part of every individual is strong enough to believe that through the process of mythologisation of power we explain, control and predict this aspect of life through myth which is the “[p]rototypal, fundamental, integrative mind tool. It tries to integrate a variety of events in a temporal and causal framework. It is entirely a modelling device, whose primary level of representation is thematic” (Donald, 1991, p. 215). Thus, it can be noted that the structure of myth takes the forms of cognitive structures that are universally shared and organise the world (Czeremski, 2015, p. 29).

This view locates a centre of gravity of myth in a simplified form of a story that is also an organisation of the presented reality (*mythos*) which can be explained by means of different literary genres (Frye, 1984, p. 3) or simply a narrative structure (Polishchuk, 2014, p. 57). In other words, myth takes the form of characters, action, and plot and projects a certain whole or structure that organises a sequence of events; it is the plot of culture (the whole story of society). The idyllic view of a powerful individual, e.g., a President, conjures up certain thematic features which directly relate to the institution of power. The mythical vision of power can reflect on the features of mythical heroes which indicate specific attributes such as bravery, wisdom, youth, strength, control, and the like. Hence, this facet of mythologisation of power illustrates a psychological approach to creating archetypes (Jung, 1941/1969, p. 73) which may correspond to a personal motivation to become one of such protagonists of mythology.

A short reference to the power behind the scenes that refers to the infamous group of tricksters is highly appropriate in the context of power and myth, since it presents political power through the lens of deceit and intrigue. The mythic figure of a **trickster** has been a very popular character worldwide and presents a symbolic idea in the sense of symbols that are a part of

a system of values (Kłoskowska, 1941/1969, p. 30). There is, for example, a fire theft, a trickster animal, or a bird which steals fire, passes it along to others so that the team of animals get burnt by the flames as they pass the fire along. Another idea of a trickster is a Serpent in the Garden of Life, or other figures which take on the role of tricksters from the American Indian Mythology such as Coyote, Raven, Rabbit, Blue Jay, or Fox. Trickster, in anthropological terms is a destroyer and a disruptor of social programmes. This universal concept can be applied to many types of mythologies which attribute particular features of a swindler to different animals. Such a model that is made up of a classification of the six trickster features that belong to the figure of the trickster has been established by William J. Hynes (1993) in his article *Mapping the Characteristics of Mythic Tricksters: A Heuristic Guide*. The characteristics of mythical heroes belonging to the trickster category which fit into the Hynes model have been widely discussed (Dominas, 2020, p. 207; Scheub, 2012; Doty, 1993). They all indicate the universality of attributes of a trickster which can be applied to other mythological figures (Dominas, 2020, p. 207; Szyjewski, 2020). If one considers the mythic figure of a trickster as an element of myth, it becomes clear that members of politics, considered as powerful individuals, can also operate within the political system as tricksters in various forms of their performance. This metaphorical figure opens up a medley of possibilities of political behaviour that is manifested by means of attributes of the trickster type adopted in a given culture. This practical characterisation of the trickster explains how mythic elements are incorporated into a non-mythic element.

Mythic communication

Mythology can also be regarded as a form of communication (Aristotle [348–322 B.C.], 1983), a narrative which can rightly be presented as a text in which the structural elements are always embedded within the situational, social, and cultural three-dimensional reality such as plot [*mýthos*] or a set of events (which refers to the concept of plot structure, imitative performance of action [*práksis*], characters [*éthe*], actors [*diánoia*], spectacle [*kósmos ópseos*],

words [*léksis*], beliefs, values, status, etc. Poetic structure, as distinguished in *Poetics* by Aristotle, also transpires to show how a communication system and its framework emerges and develops to serve the function of myth. The established three-dimensional interpretation of myth structure is characterised by the three different time continuums: (a) progressive and continuative, (b) genealogical (Lévi-Strauss, 1958/1963, p. 74), and (c) I call it reciprocal or circular which is no longer a time continuum but a time-space continuum since in order to conceive of the system of one myth an individual builds the organisation of elements on the basis of the second individual and the third one. The whole process of emerging myth implies a cyclical, historical structure which repeats to some extent the preceding one. Most of all, the levels of the process of emerging and developing myths is based on the system of polar oppositions (Lévi-Strauss, 1958/1963, p. 74). All the structural components of myth integrate in the three-dimensional time system. Therefore, a poem can serve as mythic blueprint for understanding the universality of myths. If mythic muses as inspirers are timeless then one can understand every text as a poem, a strategy and a structure which communicates through the adventures, archetypes, acts which “[c]onnote something transcendent of the action [...] so that you always feel in accord with the universal being” (Campbell, 1988, p. 65). The framework of poetic structure that presents elements which go beyond time and space and “[g]et through in man unbeknownst to him” (Lévi-Strauss, 1977/1979, p. 3) is integral with all the three preliminary considerations of mythologisation that I have put forward.

Going back to the structuralist approach to myth as a narrative it is noteworthy to consider the concept of imitation which Aristotle calls *mímesis*. The analogy that the author finds with reference to the form of imitation presented by Aristotle in his *Poetics* rests on three parallels. The first dimension is mimesis as a means of presenting reality, the second, mimesis as a creative *act* of making a potential reality an objective view of the world, and the third, an *analogy* of *mímesis* to the surrounding world (in terms of a second reality which is constructed on the basis of the current reality we live in) (Fleischer, 1994, p. 7). The three attributes of *mimesis* are a bit alike in that they all concentrate on the creative process of producing texts. This

includes first the act of creating mental texts and then making their tangible realisations in a spoken or written form. Considering *mimesis* as a *presented reality* in the form of a text, it looks like a recipe template which can be filled in with various ingredients (elements of context that form combinations acceptable for readers/hearers), tools that enable a given structure to become the desired form (written forms or spoken means) and finally the ways in which the final dish can become apparent through *e.g.*, cooking, baking, roasting, *etc.* (its “applicability” and usefulness in a given culture). *Mimesis* understood as a presented reality can also be understood as a *status* of a given text. Thus, it is not a property of it but rather the potentiality or *spiritus movens* that evinces itself through the patterning process (the imitative potential of every text). Following this line of reasoning, one could presume that all of the texts (including myths) are mimetic in two ways: (1) all textual realisations are vehicles of patterned imitation that result in the creation of discourse(s) and (2) they exhibit the structural and cognitive potential to present any reality. The mimetic character of myths allows to situate them in various contexts as long as they serve a particular purpose designated by society.

When considering power as a non-mythic element, one cannot help noticing that it is possible to encounter certain patterns of mythic elements that are incorporated into the structure of power concept. These regularities include characters such as mythic heroes, heroines, deities, hybrids, chimeras and the like, mythic plots, and ancient interest in rhetoric. Mythic elements are not only a formulation of ancient thought, but they also draw from other mythologies such as American Indian mythologies (Erdoes, 1984), the mythologies of tribes of Northern America (Thompson, 1946; Wiget, 2000), Aztec mythology (Leon-Portilla, 1963/1990), Egyptian mythology (Spence, 1925) and many more associated with a given community. Despite the multitude of mythologies, there exists a list of the main motives which are universal for all the myths.

Power is commonly believed to be derived from relations of asymmetrical value. Equal power relations do exist; however, they do not build oppositions. The first effort at rethinking mythologisation in relation to power is that the mythic elements are distributed according to the binary structure of oppositions to relationships since they come in pairs (Lévi-Strauss, 1958/1963, p. 161).

The meaning of power created in the minds of speakers cannot be conceptualised unless we first notice how it is of a different nature to something else. For example, people do not know peace if they have not experienced the hardships of war, there is no good without evil, no lightness without darkness, no male without female, *etc.* In fact, it is through the selection of binary oppositions that we get the understanding of power through myth. Western culture civilisations rely heavily on Latin and Greek mythology so the inferences we make in telling stories or listening to them disclose our vision and images present in these respective myths. The binary oppositions can include mythic elements that are found in the following pairs: Icarus and Daedalus (failure vs. success), *chronos* and *kairos* (chronological/sequential time vs. the opportune moment), Arachne and Athena/Prometheus and Zeus (a protagonist and an antagonist), or cultural archetypes consisting of abstract concepts or symbols with some recognisable character types, *e.g.*, sinner-saint or trickster-hero.

Another function that is crucial when discussing the concept of power is that myths educate and explain (Tudor, 1972, p. 122). They are the stories about the wisdom of life (Campbell, 1988, p. 35). Myths themselves being the stories about the wisdom of life function as signposts which convey knowledge of the world. They explain the surrounding reality and help to get to terms with this reality. These are the reason why people so willingly rely on them. The themes and characters of myth are, according to Mircea Eliade (1976/1978), a manifestation of the experience of the sacred and imply the notions of “[b]eing, of meaning and of truth” (Eliade, 1976/1978, p. xiii). He also observes that our consciousness requires the tangible recognition of a real and meaningful world consisting of impulses and experiences (Eliade, 1976/1978, p. xiii). He further continues that consciousness is willing to find its own ways of understanding the sacred which manifests in myths, rites, beliefs, *etc.* Eliade puts an accent to a man who, although is at the service of myth, makes his own ways in understanding the myth, in the ways that work for him. The same refers to societies because mythologisation can also be a collective process of shared knowledge and experience. It is by means of and through communities that myth can actually become manifested. Myth pertains to a given culture and thus creates a message by means of elements known to a specific culture.

My understanding of myth in this context is that it provides a structure, however the constellation of elements and their meaning is scattered among the speakers and society. It seems that mythologisation is a bilateral process. Myth permeates society by means of a structure while society completes the structure with the unique elements that develop the myth which becomes “[m]ankind’s great story” (Campbell, 1988, p. 64). This implies the universality of the action or performance that is always performed when creating myth. Although the plots may differ from culture to culture, communication itself allows for the imitation of mythic elements which is the onset of any plot.

It can be concluded that myth is a form of social communication, a system of communication in particular and a message (Barthes, 1957/2020, p. 107). Its core constitutes a realisation of a message in the form of linguistic stories (books about mythology), stories passed down by word of mouth as well as extralinguistic means of communication (speaker’s knowledge, mental states, consciousness). Myth serves a highly communicative function bearing in mind the definition of communication as a “[t]he process which entails selection, production, and transmission of signs in such a way as to allow the hearer to get the similar meaning to the one which is in the mind of the speaker” [trans. M. S.]³. In the light of the above, one can observe a similar function of myth to that of a process of communication. It is essential to point out a specific nature of mythological thought which is only an approximation of the thought itself. After Lévi-Strauss, mythological thought “[c]oincides with its object by forming a homologous image of it but never succeeds in blending with it. [...] Mythological thought never develops any theme to completion: there is always something left unfinished. Myths, like rites, are in-terminable...” (Lévi-Strauss, 1964/1975, p. 6). By means of the above Lévi-Strauss highlights the dynamic and adaptive nature of myths which operate with themes in a way that is concealed to men but also allowing them to form an infinite number

3 [P]roces obejmujący selekcję, produkcję i przekaz znaków w taki sposób, aby umożliwić odbiorcy odebranie podobnego znaczenia do tego, które jest w umyśle mówiącego (Fortheringham, 1966, p. 254; Chruszczewski, 2011, p. 228).

of contextual possibilities. Additionally, a story told by myth always includes a predominant historical theme which is a thread in the fabric and nexus of all the different imaginative aspects that are created in *mythos* (Frye, 1984, p. 8).

The unconscious myth

One is to note that myth, similarly to communication, is a process for which it is difficult to determine its beginning and end. It is rather a continuum of themes that can be infinitely multiplied, developed, and unexpectedly knitted together again. It is a specific form of social communication. Myth requires a high degree of interpretation on the part of the receiver due to the ambiguity of mythic thought. From this point of view, the reception of myth seems to have its basis in communication with one's self. The text produced in the mind of a speaker takes the form of myth which interacts with the speaker's knowledge. Such a mental text; myth is a *phonic text* (that is of secondary importance to *graphic texts*) and a form of language behaviour that inherently serves a communicative function within a society (Grabias, 2003/2019, p. 42). This view is also supported by Roland Barthes (1957/2020) who refers to the notion of myth as language (Barthes, 1957/2020, p. 10). Interestingly, myth enters the unconscious mind to form a conscious text during the cognitive communicative process of organising a speaker's knowledge and experience. Such a perspective views myth as a highly effective means of social communication in which the dynamic internal processes of mental text formation are actively interacting with the process of social life including multiple actions with individuals, groups, and communities. Claude Lévi-Strauss also rightly observes that "[m]ythology reflects the social structure and the social relations" (Lévi-Strauss, 1958/1963, p. 207). Having said this, one can clearly observe that the mythic motif of a country's emblem is not just a graphic element but is transformed into a fully meaningful relation recognised by the society. However, such a mythic motif of a country emblem is even more than that. According to Mircea Eliade, it "[b]elongs to the sphere of the sacred and therefore participates in being" (Eliade, 1957/1959, p. 95).

It acquires this status through its involvement in the creative activity of gods, heroes, and ancestors (Eliade, 1957/1959, p. 96). On the other hand, everything that humans do without regard to a mythic model is profane (Eliade, 1957/1959, p. 96). He goes even further and states that “[o]ne becomes truly a man only by conforming to the teaching of the myths, that is, by imitating the gods, [...] the culture heroes, or the mythic ancestors” (Eliade, 1957/1959, p. 100). In other words, the destiny of every man is to become a *religious man* that he *becomes* or *makes* himself by following the divine models. However, it is not the characters that play a central role in myth but a course of action. First and foremost, myth is a type of speech (Barthes, 1957/2020, p. 107). It transgresses the boundaries of its mythic objects which can be multiplied and variously conceptualised. Myth as a form of speech is rather a representation of the world that is manifested through *the way* it communicates reality.

One more observation that has emerged in relation to the view of myth as a text is that myth exhibits **intertextual relations**. Intertextuality as a language-user oriented concept presents the perspective that focuses on “[t]he ways in which the production and reception of a given text depend upon the participants’ knowledge of other texts” (de Beaugrande, & Dressler, 1972/1981, p. 14). Such a view is in accord with the idea of myth that enters the human mind and develops the themes by means of conceptualisations (Duranti, 1997, p. 29; Fauconnier, 1984/1994, p. xviii). Furthermore, both relations operate within horizontal and vertical dimensions (Fairclough, 1992, p. 271). One last feature that unifies both relations is coherence. They seem to share the same degree of chaos and indeterminacy in terms of distribution of concepts (in myth) and texts (when mentioning intertextuality). While mythic thought is noted to be scattered and entangled in various mythic themes, the constellations of intertextual connections of texts ultimately depend on the coherence and acceptance assumed by different interpreters (Fairclough, 1992, p. 291). The difference though between mythic relations and intertextual relations lies in the unconscious action of mythic thought without our being aware of the fact. To conclude, both relations exhibit the communicative property of texts they create which have the potential of obtaining specific communicative goals.

One way of looking at myth is that it is a structure comprising universal elements (themes) which approach the unconscious mind. Another consideration is a perspective of myth as a meaningful, culture-specific text which is operational when the cultural components within the structure of myth are familiar and specific to a given society/community. One can refer here to the role of the a real recipient of text, *i.e.*, **a text decryptor** that ought to consider the socio-historical embedding of the text producer (Mayenowa, 1974, p. 456). A case in point is a historical decryptor who, by no means, cannot know what mythic text means but at least tries to incorporate it into his own system of values and beliefs. This can be made clear through an example of the American politician who refers to a sequence of past events that led to an outbreak of World War II. On the other hand, when the Polish historian presents the same historical event, the story is not only a series of past happenings but a set of patterns that can be transferred in the contemporary Polish social structure. Such a phenomenon accounts for the fact that one may differentiate a mythology and mythologies. Campbell notes that “[t]he main motifs of the myths are the same. If you want to find your own mythology, they key is with what society do you associate? Every mythology has grown up in a certain society in abounded field” (Campbell, 1988, p. 27). This leads to understanding of myth twofold; as a blueprint for cultural transfer; “[t]he study mankind’s one great story” (Campbell, 1988, p. 64) as well as a specific type of story which pertains to communities that share the same cultural knowledge and patterns of thought. This also implies that myths as reservoirs of culture rejuvenate mythic texts through myths’ decryptors who allow them to stand the test of time and live on in the minds of speakers.

Conclusions

The objective of this article has been to provide a theoretical view concerning the notion of mythologisation of political power. The present paper has provided evidence that mythologisation of power can be explained twofold. The predominant view of a myth adopted in the discussion is espoused

by Claude Lévi-Strauss in his book [*Anthropologie Structurale*] *Structural Anthropology* (1958/1963). This view on the one hand hinges on the unpredictability of a myth in terms of its conceptualisation but on the other hand, its structural regularity. Another platform for understanding how myths operate has been understanding mythologisation of power as the acquisition of mythic features by a non-mythic element. Such a process becomes apparent on a psycho-biological level of attribution of certain mythic features such as relying on archetypes. The mythic elements get incorporated into the cognitive processes regulating the perception of power. Mythologisation of power viewed as such expresses the process of getting to terms with the world by cataloguing it in ways that are accessible by man.

The mythologisation of political power was also studied with a brief reference to a significant mythic figure of a trickster which is part of one of the power themes in the model presented by Bertrand Russell (1938). The characteristics of a trickster indicate the existence of certain realistic sets of attributes across cultures which are universally shared. This is a crucial finding as it indicates that a myth is entirely culture-specific, and its structural elements can bear similar characteristics in various societies. In other words, the idea of a myth can be funnelled into the concept of a narrative that not only surpasses the diachronic boundaries but also finds points of intersection in synchronic cultures. With reference to the above, the mythologisation of power makes a nonmythic element of power a part of mythic culture through the distribution and adoption of universally shared archetypes and mythic forms in various societies.

The concept of myth can also be comprehended as a form of communication which creates intertextual relations. By the same token, it has been pointed out that myth is a narrative, a text that helps to organise knowledge of individuals and societies. Here, one encounters mythologised power as a part of mythic discourse consisting of mythic texts. The textual realisations of mythic discourse deal with mythic elements of power which are contextual, *i.e.*, situational (here, in what type of co-myths the myth is situated), social (here, what type of speakers and within what society myth is directed to) and cultural (here, what is the knowledge and competence of the speakers

who receive a myth). For these reasons, the process of mythologising power is dynamic and multi-layered; it is a construction of patterns, regularities, motives, and characteristics of mythic elements which diachronically and synchronically convey meaning about the world. We are of the opinion that the process of mythologisation has strong cultural foundations and its elements are created in the social mind. However, speakers also naturally lean towards myth due to our need of cataloguing the world. The non-mythic elements of power naturally integrate with the mythological system.

With respect to the mythologisation of power, we are dealing with a political representation of it. The concept of myth, in capsule, is primarily a schematic structure with the same configurations of contextual elements situated in the milieu of the global political situation. Importantly, they encompass topics dictated by the goals, motivations, attitudes, and opinions of the participants. It is therefore the communicative purpose of texts which is a valid measure of the mythic aspects that truly define culture. With this idea in mind they become strategic tools for determining the features of a given society that dictate communicative goals which become discursive purpose (in the form of activated participants' roles and the topic of the discourse). In this way, myth remains at the service of communities and their creativity in realising communicative intentions. Its function is to recognise and establish the cultural purpose of a given society. At the same time, this view sees myths as a symbolic construal which is socially enforced to strategically achieve political goals. By saying this, it has been consistently shown that myths dictate the anthropolinguistic world order in a sense that they, as regular and patterned structures (genres), reflect culture that is mythically translated and demystified.

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