COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MYTH FROM A HISTORICAL, FOLKLORIC AND PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: *This paper aims to clarify the concept of myth within a specific framework, distinguishing it from its classical interpretations in folklore and philosophy. While myths in the sense of Mircea Eliade or Joseph Campbell represent ancestral narratives deeply embedded in cultural traditions, the myths discussed here align more closely with the understanding proposed by Roland Barthes in Mythologies. Barthes defines myth as a form of speech conditioned by history, one that transforms complex socio-historical realities into naturalized, simplified truths.*

Keywords: myth, mythology, historical construct, re-mythologizing

1. Introductin: The myth as a Social and Historical Construct

Myths, as Barthes suggests, do not emerge organically but are deliberately constructed and maintained through mechanisms such as media, education, and political discourse. They function as depoliticized narratives that mask historical contingencies as natural and eternal truths. This transformation, which strips events and figures of their original complexities, serves ideological functions by reinforcing established social structures and collective beliefs.

It is not only a novel effort to question a series of commonplaces that we take for granted, culturally speaking, but also to explore and collect a whole series of sources that sustain these commonplaces, privileging those that belong to visual culture, in order to enhance them under the methodical description of myths or expressions of cultural ideology. which survive today, in school textbooks, paintings, photographs, illustrated newspapers, poems, films, literary texts and, in general, in the most varied devices of social interaction.

2. The Role of Myth in National Narratives

The definition of the myth from the author's point of view

It is not so much about that marvellous and ancestral conception of which Mircea Eliade or Joseph Campbell speak and which is widespread in the folklore of cultures, although the national epic tends to present itself in this form as a secular religion. It is not the myth of Homer or the Bible, nor the myth of Plato in The Republic, although it retains the philosophical effort of standing on the side of error and starting a path towards truth. It is rather the myth included in "the meaning that designates something fictitious that is usually accepted as true, either partially or completely".

It is myth as conceived by Roland Barthes in his famous book Mythologies, where it is stated that myth is speech, but not just any speech, since "language needs particular conditions to become a myth"; the same thing happens with images. This, insofar as it is not a question of a concept or a concrete idea, but rather of a message, "it is a matter of a mode of signification, of a form." It is about the social, historical use of certain ideas or images over time and that endure thanks to effective mechanisms of production, mediatization, promotion and repetition.

The national epic often embodies mythological structures, presenting historical figures like Simón Bolívar and La Pola not as complex historical agents but as sacralized symbols of idealized patriotism. These figures are repeatedly re-mythologized through artistic and media portrayals that emphasize their heroism while omitting the socio-political nuances of their time. This process results in a history that appears self-evident, eliminating contradictions and dialectical tensions.

3. The Function of Myth in Historical Interpretation

By transforming historical struggles into moralistic tales of heroism and sacrifice, myths establish an illusion of continuity between past and present. As Barthes notes, myth provides a clarity that is not explanatory but confirmatory—it does not question but rather affirms a pre-established meaning. This mechanism simplifies complex historical developments and renders them accessible to broad audiences, ensuring their continued influence in shaping national consciousness.

Conclusion

This study highlights the necessity of deconstructing myths to reveal the underlying social and political forces that shape collective memory. By denaturalizing historical myths, we can foster a more critical and nuanced understanding of national identity and its ideological underpinnings. This approach challenges the assumption that myths merely reflect history; instead, it reveals them as active instruments in the construction and perpetuation of social imaginaries.

The author's conception of myth, from a historical, folkloric and philosophical perspective, can be consulted extensively in his work Seven Myths about the Independence of the New Granada. (1810-1819)", which will be translated and published this year, at the Publishing House of the Romania of Tomorrow Foundation.

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