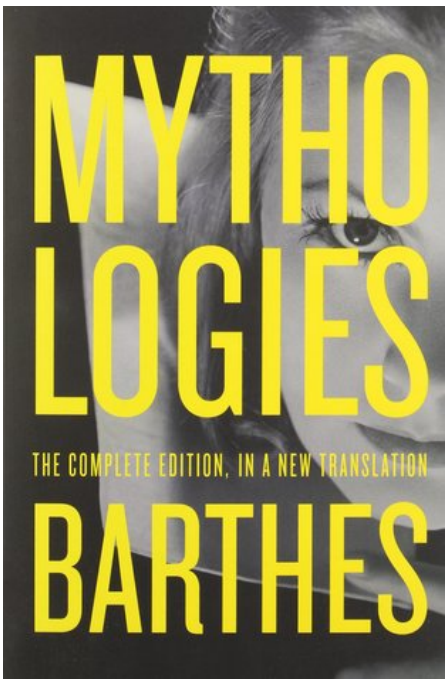

Mythologies

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"No denunciation without its proper instrument of close analysis," Roland Barthes wrote in his preface to *Mythologies*. There is no more proper instrument of analysis of our contemporary myths than this book—one of the most significant works in French theory, and one that has transformed the way readers and philosophers view the world around them.

Our age is a triumph of codification. We own devices that bring the world to the command of our fingertips. We have access to boundless information and prodigious quantities of stuff. We decide to like or not, to believe or not, to buy or not. We pick and choose. We think we are free. Yet all around us, in pop culture, politics, mainstream media, and advertising, there are codes and symbols that govern our choices. They are the fabrications of consumer society. They express myths of success, well-being, or happiness. As Barthes sees it, these myths must be carefully deciphered, and debunked.

What Barthes discerned in mass media, the fashion of plastic, and the politics of postcolonial France applies with equal force to today's social networks, the iPhone, and the images of 9/11. This new edition of *Mythologies*, complete and beautifully rendered by the Pulitzer Prize–winning poet, critic, and translator Richard Howard, is a consecration of Barthes's classic—a lesson in clairvoyance that is more relevant now than ever.

Mythologies Details

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From Reader Review Mythologies for online ebook

Bryant says

My advice is to read this book backwards. Some of the short essays, including "Wine and Milk," "Steak and Chips," "The Blue Guide," and "The Lost Continent," are exemplary demonstrations of the ideas laid out in the long essay, "Myth Today," that concludes the book. There Barthes argues for a dense handful of concepts related to the signifier and the signified, noting especially the extent to which mythology tries to depict things properly categorized as "historical" in a manner that we might call "natural." For instance, the image of Uncle Sam, signifying an appeal to patriotic fealty firmly rooted in history, adopts the trope of "uncle" to make the historical enterprise in question--the US government--appear as natural as a family relation.

I was reading the final essay in an airport, and the thought occurred to me that the Dept. of Homeland Security employs another aspect of Barthes' mythology in its use of "Threat Level ORANGE" or "Threat Level YELLOW." A historical thing that ultimately defies metrics--the threat posed to our country by terrorists--is nevertheless rendered "natural" by assigning it a color from nature. Further examples abound, and as the two above examples show, Barthes' final essay in this volume makes for stimulating reading when mapped onto political landscapes. Yet the lack of specificity and the abundance of abstraction in the final essay recommend its being read first, before the short essays that precede it in the volume. They supplement, fill out, and exemplify the abstractions set forth in the final essay.

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flannery says

I wonder sometimes what it must be like to have been born *before* the simulacrum became a matter of fact, instead of 1985. What was it like to read Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, or Guy Debord before Ronald Reagan became president, Arnold Schwarzenegger became governor and the world was recreated in a manmade archipelago off the coast of Dubai? I have no idea. Roland Barthes is a tremendous writer but this book feels too precious, too quaint; serious conversations about the petite bourgeoise just feel so antiquated in the 21st century. I read it and think "How romantic!" "How French!" "That's nice!" My sympathies to the author, he had no way of knowing it would get this weird.

Vivian says

There are times when I realize that I can be very lazy in my reading, and this book is the slap that reminded me.

I wish I had started with the second section first, Myth Today because it was an excellent review of semiotics, which I have minimal understanding of and what I knew was dusty and the terminology did not come easily or quickly. By the end of the essays I was skating along, but it is not speedy reading per se.

I feel like this book hasn't aged well. The ideas are still valid, but because Barthes utilized contemporaneous cultural phenomena of 1950s, which was a strength of his work and now a weak link because not all of them are immediately graspable. The examples are so pinned to precise moments in time that the arguments are no longer relevant for most individuals. Post modernism isn't my forte, and frankly, I feel like the brief exposure

to Saussure that I've had did Mythologies a disservice since good arguments are like structures, you build them.

Even with all these drawbacks, the value in Barthes' theories is clear, some easier to extrapolate than others. Some thoughts to tickle:

Where would be without the male gaze?

"Such is the world of *Elle*: here women are always a homogenous species, a constituted body jealous of its privileges, even more enamored of its servitudes; here men are never on the inside, femininity is pure, free, powerful' but men are everywhere outside, exerting pressure on all sides, making everything exist; they are eternally the creative absence, that of the Racinian god: a world without men but entirely constituted be the male gaze, the feminine world of *Elle* is precisely that of the gynoeceum."

Yes, this is boats.

"To possess an absolutely finite space: to love a ship is first of all to love a superlative house, one that is unremittingly enclosed, and certainly not loving great vague departures: a ship is a habitat phenomenon before being a means of transport."

And this tidbit--La! Substitute US or any nation state for France.

"When things become serious, abandon Politics for the Nation. For men of the Right, Politics is the Left: they are France."

I had already experienced much of Barthes peripherally, but sitting down and reading his work was good and I probably should have carved out time earlier. C'est la vie.

It might be an Old Fashioned, still good.

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Conversation while reading:

Me: There is nothing intuitive about French philosophy to me.

DH: How so?

Me: German philosophy I just get, this *waves book* this... just no. It's always a struggle.

DH: German philosophy is rational and assumes the reader will be rational; French philosophy does no such thing, makes no such assumptions.

Me: I don't like that about it.

(_/)
(O.o) ==<<>>== So, is it nonintuitive or am I subconsciously fighting it tooth and nail the entire time? Who

knows. But like Russian authors, it improves with alcohol. Just for different reasons.

The journey continues... 33% done and trekking.

Ellen says

In high school, I used to attend the wrestling meets. I'm not sure why. I hated spectator sports, having endured a brief period of sullen cheerleading where I found myself unable to whip up a frenzy over first downs or sis-boom-bah on command.

Among the high school wrestlers I watched, there were some who elicited greater and lesser degrees of sympathy or repugnance, while one--though otherwise an inarticulate hulk--was transformed on the mat into a figure of grace, performing pins swiftly and cleanly. Barthes' wrestlers comprise more explicit types, e.g., the bastard, the image of passivity, the image of conceit, the bitch, etc. Wrestling, in Barthes' view, becomes a starkly defined conflict, where virtues and vices as personified by the contestants, engage in a battle that is a virtual psychomachia.

Barthes' world of wrestling, then, emerges as allegory in its purest, most elemental sense. Wrestling's landscape, drained of entity save the combatants, emerges as the opposite of mimesis. Here, time and causality recede into the background. For Barthes, wrestling, like biblical narrative, occurs on a horizon so blank, every gesture becomes a clear act of signification. The rapidly changing positions of the wrestlers splinter the narrative into thematic junctures, like a slide show where each frame of action, perfectly fused with meaning, replaces another.

Our interpretation at these points of thematic juncture involves a movement into myth--as Barthes explains it--for we simultaneously generalize and impoverish the meaning of the action on the wrestling mat. Within the construct of myth we create for wrestling, there operates a coherent system of conduct, a sort of decorum of indecorum, where "foul play" becomes "legitimitized," but the "absence of punishment" (29), the rupture of the tit-for-tat balance, is taboo.

Wrestling, Barthes proposes, provides intense satisfaction for its audience, where for once there is "an ideal understanding of things; ...the panoramic view of a univocal Nature, in which signs at last correspond to causes, without obstacle, without evasion, without contradiction" (29).

In this essay, like the others Barthes presents in this collection, he emerges for me as the sharpest and most provocative of those writing on semiotics and structuralism.

Roz Foster says

Mythologies (1957) was recommended to me as a must-read for brand builders. Who better (or more fun) to read when boning up on brand strategy and semiotics than Roland Barthes? Each of Barthes's very brief and highly entertaining essays demonstrates his point of view and method as a mythologist--a sarcastic bastard with the insight to look a hole right through you.

According to Barthes, a mythologist is (not just an irreverent, cultural jester, but) an individual who

recognizes a cultural myth, separates its components, analyzes their workings and, thereby, reveals a myth's distortions. In *Mythologies* Barthes spots myths in consumer culture--the presented meaning of a story in a newspaper, the manifest message of an ad. Barthes takes just a few pages to deconstruct the overt message of each of his myths by showing a deeper distortion: a latent meaning. The comparison between the overt and latent calls both out as distortions and illuminates the mechanism for *making* meaning.

Take "The Writer on Holiday" for example. Barthes spots a feature in *Le Figaro* (a French newspaper) on Andre Gide (a writer who, apparently, wrote on how to fully be oneself) reading Bossuet (a theologian and bishop under Louis XIV who, it seems, argued that God attributed divinity to kings). Gide reads Bossuet floating down the Congo on holiday. Barthes frames this instance as a representation of all writers on holiday. He asserts that *Le Figaro* intends this image to "surprise and delight" its proletarian readers. The overt myth is that writers are workers, too, workers who need a holiday—like "shop assistants and factory workers" (30). But then Barthes asks: why is this so delightfully surprising?

It's because the latent message, its deeper meaning, is that a writer is so obviously *not* a wage worker who needs a holiday. Barthes says that the attempt that Le Figaro makes at mythologizing the writer as worker only points all the more to the cultural belief, the mystification, the myth, that the writer is not like the reader at all, but is, in fact, a godhead. The newspaper is not *de*mystifying the writer's divine qualities and bringing the writer down to the earthly plane as the overt message appears to be doing; the message is, in fact, performing the opposite task. Barthes writes, "By having holidays, [the writer] displays the sign of his being human; but the god remains, one is a writer as Louis XIV was king, even on the commode" (30).

There are twenty-seven other little essays just as rich (and hilarious) in *Mythologies*, such as "Novels and Children," in which he mocks the magazine *Elle* for asserting that women authors may produce one novel per child, and "Plastic," in which he momentarily raises the ubiquitous substance up as a tangible and elegant trace of the movement of infinity.

Barthes's closing essay, in which he explains his approach, is far less entertaining. But his reiteration of the Saussurean linguistic split between signifier and signified and his graduating that model into his own diagrammatical explanation for myth is so modest, clear and concise it had me wondering if Barthes's hand *had*, in fact, been imbued with divinity. In a remarkably brief fifty pages, he empowers us to push aside the distortions of consumer culture and to create our own, with the absurd delight of knowing that those we create may be just as fictional--and just as powerful.

In the end, the joy, humor and enthusiasm of Barthes's critical art fades, a myth pushed aside. He suddenly paints the mythologist in melancholy tones. His sign-off leaves the reader to envision Barthes himself in the role of the isolated and acerbic visionary, an alienated critic split off from the inhabitants of his social world who believe in the myths he cannot.

(The man probably just needed a vacation.)

Petre says

The second part of the book "Myth today", which is some kind of theory of myth, I think is one of the basic work for studying of the Culture.

Khashayar Mohammadi says

I feel this book would have had a much stronger effect on me, if I was somewhat acquainted with the bulk of its subject matter.

Since the majority of the chapters centered around prominent figures in French popular culture of the 1950s, the utter lack of information on such subjects by the modern reader thoroughly undermines any criticism; BUT, put in the context of its times, its a remarkable book which is still shockingly relevant

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Michael says

A collection of short essays on pop culture, politics, and media, Barthes's *Mythologies* dissects the cherished myths of the bourgeoisie that governed the daily life of France in the 1950s. Across fifty-four fast-moving essays, Barthes throws together a hodgepodge of trivial and topical subjects typically ignored by past intellectuals: French wrestling, children's toys, the Tour de France, astrology, and labor strikes are only a few of his many interests. Barthes scrutinizes the social assumptions of each of his topics, exposing all of them to be intricate systems laden with insidious meanings. As groundbreaking as the collection was when Barthes first published it, though, it hasn't aged well. So many of its once-shocking ideas have become commonplace, and Barthes's style reads as a bit simplistic when compared to the that of more recent cultural critics.

Tosh says

I am not a huge critical lit reader but there is something so enjoyable about Barthes' books or essays. I like the way he writes about an everyday object or subject matter - and just tears into it like a very curious scientist. "Mythologies" is one of his more well-known titles and rightfully so. Good writer and I think he's a great reader as well.

David says

Barthes' most famous contribution to the semiotics school of structuralism, post-structuralism: though not his most-read according to GoodReads (an accolade reserved for *Camera Lucida*). While I love all of the Barthes that I have read, I think this should be required reading somewhere (the first part, anyway). Barthes is brilliant; his eyes seem always turned to the world as it is, and yet remain mindful of the world as it seems: that is the premise of *Mythologies*. Intentionally or unintentionally, everything we observe has a meaning and a counter-meaning, which change and reverse roles based on the society which views them. The actor's casual headshot: symbolic of his 'everyman'-ness, or rather his apotheosis above every man? The *Tour de France*: a meritorious battle of bikes, or rather the stock-puppet sitcom-drama of bikers' personalities? Toys: innocuous playthings, or instruments of class-shackling and occupational pre-fitting? Drinking wine: a symbol of French national, equalizing pride, or an instrument of expropriation from French capitalists over the Algerian farmers? These are the kinds of dualities which Barthes discusses in his *Mythologies* (so well

written and well argued you may not even remember you bought it hoping for a sultry summation of Leda and her cygnus-seducer. No grey-eyed goddesses or illustrious Joves here, save the moonfaced Greta Garbo or the Romanesque Marlon Brando)

I have not viewed the world with the same naive glaze since reading Barthes' *Mythologies*, and whether it has caused me to overthink is debatable, but it has forced me to think more critically about the world of messages around me. Not just the message-laden world of advertisements, of which I was already dubious, but also of objects, cult-classics movie posters, favorite-books, cover-art, newspaper articles from *The Wall Street Journal* to *The New Yorker* to *Home & Garden* and *Men's Fitness*, *Food Network Magazine* and so forth. For example, from *Los Angeles Times*, today:

> A city's unrealized ambitions in 'Never Built Los Angeles'
> The article describes a new, permanent exhibition of the passed-over projects of Los Angeles: the phantom freeways, the might-have-been monorails and suggested subways, the sky-scrapers of could-have-been and the plush potential parks. While the the exhibition and the article offer this alternative-history on display as a wistful reminder of the many potential Los Angeles-es that could have existed, there is a more sinister criticism of the mayoral governance that the city has had, which aborted the many better projects. The exhibition comes in stride with a new mayor, Eric Garcetti, and makes the political statement that the unhappy denizens of Los Angeles want more of these projects to be brought to fruition, not left unrealized on scraps of stock-paper.
>
> The exhibition is a sign. The signifier is the "never built Los Angeles" though the intended message is "should have been Los Angeles" - perhaps not wholly should have been, but at least in part. This signified message is in turn the signifier to the latent message of a sort of Marxist equalizer: that capitalism in cahoots with bureaucracy has bastardized the Los Angeles skyline, stunted its greatness, handicapped its potential. The signal is not of a great city, but of a Lost Paradise. While the message is that the past should educate the future, the ultimate message is that Los Angeles is a future foregone. Tossed tramways and abbreviated bikeways overshadow the ill-concieved and rightfully miscarried monstrosities averted. The remote past, and more significantly the unchosen past has simultaneously the luring life of the future and the death of the past. Instead of being a pivot for the city's projection, the exhibition serves instead as a tombstone.

Now, I'm not as brilliant as Barthes, and I am not well-informed in the culture of Los Angeles, but that is the kind of though-process which Barthes utilizes in dissecting French culture. *Mythologies* is about digging in to every sign, asking what is this *supposed* to signify to me? what does it *actually* signify? It is a thought process which does not require genius, for as Barthes proclaims: "*myth hides nothing*: its function is to distort, not to make disappear. There is no latency of concept in relation to the form: there is no need of an unconscious in order to explain myth." The world is populated with distorted messages, it is our responsibility as readers, thinkers, participants in our cultures to reconstitute the messages which reach us in distortion, not to let it lead us into complacency.

> *tautology dispenses us from having ideas, but at the same time prides itself on making this license into a stern morality; whence its success: laziness is promoted to the rank of rigor.*

We must not be slaves to our own laziness, but rather discover the truth about us: we must uncover with a vigor. For myth is a sly mischief-maker, it masquerades as truth, as the obvious and the assumed. Myths are

like puns: they have different meanings to the casual auditory observer and the close reader:

> *No, syntax, vocabulary, most of the elementary, analytical materials of language blindly seek one another without ever meeting, but no one pays the slightest attention:* Etes-vous allé au pont? --Allée? Il n'y a pas d'allée, je le sais, j'y suis été.

Trevor says

This was much more interesting than I expected it to be – and I could even go as far as to say some of it was quite fun. I mean fun in a relative sense, of course, as this is a text with quite some ‘resistance’ and so some of it was also quite hard to read.

Most of the text is a series of short essays that discuss what the author refers to as ‘myths’. Now, these aren’t really the kinds of things that you might automatically associate with the word ‘myth’. There is a longish (longish for a book that isn’t even a couple of hundred pages) essay at the end of the book that works a bit like that old trick of philosophy where the definition is only provided at the end of an enquiry – Hegel says that is how things ought to be, no point defining the term your entire work is setting out to explain up front. The reader needs to make their way to the definition through the hard work of coming to understand.

The short essays are a joy. The first one, ‘The World of Wrestling’ is particularly good. This is the only one I am doing to discuss as I want to get onto his philosophical points and wallowing in the glow from these essays (something all too easy to do) would distract from that and only involve me in retelling half as well what he has already done so well here.

I’d never really thought about wrestling before – oddly, it has never really been something I’ve paid the least bit of attention to since I was about eight-years-old. As Barthes points out, you might consider betting on a boxing match, but no one would ever consider doing such a thing on the outcome of a wrestling match. The idea is not limited to the fact that wrestling matches are obviously ‘fixed’ – it is that the point of wrestling is a kind of drama, not really a sport. There is a nice line in this essay where Barthes compares the spectacle of suffering that wrestling always involves with the suffering of Christ. In the fight between good and evil, the good must invariably end up in some scissor-hold or half-Nelson or some such and then the crowd (also an essential part of the drama in a way that is no longer true in actual drama) are forced to witness the extremity of his suffering. It is this which makes the final victory of good over evil – the eventual ‘making him pay’ – redemptive.

But this book is much more than just a kind of high criticism slumming it amongst the fripperies and ephemera of low culture. For Barthes myth is a kind of speech, as he explains in his final essay. In fact, this whole book is an application of Saussure to cultural signs – and this makes for fascinating reading.

Saussure was a linguist and like all linguists he is not to be read in his original texts, but rather in commentaries and explanatory notes. It is, of course, one of the great unexplained mysteries of the universe that the greater the linguist the harder they are to read. The simple version of his ideas on language (about all I’ve ever been able to understand) is that there are three parts to language – there is the idea of whatever you are talking about, there is the word you use to talk about it and then there is those two things brought together. In Saussure’s language you have what is signified, what is use to signify it and finally the sign itself.

Let’s take the idea of apple. An apple is a particular kind of fruit. That fruit is something that can be pointed to, and so on. That is, it is rich in content and has a ‘real’ life of its own – it is the signified. Then there is the word we use to describe that fruit. Apple in English, or mela in Italian, or pomme in French – the word used to signify the thing is arbitrary. This signifier is empty of meaning, but becomes full of meaning when it becomes a sign – a bringing together of the word and the concept of the thing the word points to.

Barthes’ point is to do exactly the same thing with cultural signs. His most famous example is from the essay at the back where he describes the cover of a magazine with the photo of a young negro boy saluting. For Barthes this boy obviously has a rich and full life – spending a week living with this boy would give us quite a different view of what this photo ‘means’. However, it certainly does ‘mean’ something as it stands on its own, something much more than just ‘here’s some kid saluting’. The fact it is an Algerian child, that this was at a time when Algeria was seeking independence, that the child is ‘proudly’ performing a French salute all of these things mean and are the intended meanings of this sign. And this fits with Saussure’s view of the world too – with the boy becoming the signified and the image the signifier but the ideas this is to bring to mind the sign or what Barthes calls the signification.

Barthes makes it clear that virtually everything you can say just about anything about in our society has this three level meaning. We have already mentioned apples as an example of linguistic meaning, but what about the cultural meaning of apples? And here we could go on for days, apples as the ultimate cause of Christ’s death, as the epitome of ‘fruit’ (of nature), but actually not ‘natural’ at all, only being able to be grown on grafted trees – therefore, cultivated. Or what of sayings like, ‘she is the apple of my eye’? Or the computer company, or the Beatles, or ‘A is for apple’, or an apple a day keeps the doctor away, or Johnny Appleseed . . .

But even these are not the point that Barthes is making. His point is that bourgeois culture presents itself as if it is all culture and that in doing so it says no other culture exists. It makes itself eternal, but to do this it must first suck the life out of the objects it takes over. Bourgeois culture discusses things in metalanguage, and, ironically enough, this is how the mythologist must also discuss the products of bourgeois culture.

Barthes makes a wonderful point when he says that people don’t talk about capitalist culture – because in appropriating culture, capitalism subsumes itself as if all culture is inevitably capitalist. In seeking to understand this culture we also learn to defend ourselves from the automatic assumptions it presents us with.

I really enjoyed these essays – they were playful and intellectually challenging and had some remarkably insightful things to say about a huge range of subjects. Read the essays on ‘toys’ or ‘steak and chips’ or ‘The Great Family of Man’ to get an idea of the breadth of subjects covered. This is one of those books that makes you want to play with a concept in the same way that Barthes has, in the same way that reading Shakespeare’s Sonnets might make you want to write a sonnet of your own.

And given the game he is playing is one in which we are forced to look again at how we are being manipulated, to look again at what is being presented to us as if it was ‘eternally true’ – such playful reappraisals of these myths is not just fun, but the essence of self-defence.

Riku Sayuj says

On Arranging My Library

Arranging a library is no easy task:
I think Tolkien will be happy to share his space
With Virgil and Homer,
In my Library.
While I can feel the glare in my back
as I stack
Nabokov next to that one copy of
Dan Brown I own.

Arranging a library is no easy task:
To do so this seriously is almost to practice
In an amateurish and private fashion,
The art of literary criticism.
And once that notion entered my library,
My authors took to their relative positions
With none of that dismissiveness
That they usually profess
for the critics!

Arranging a library is no easy task:
For instance,
Here are two patently great minds,
Placed together in a corner;
Each anxious and sensitive to
Human suffering, and quite lofty in thoughts.
But as I leave them together,
I can begin to hear them fidget:
The noble Seneca not so comfy,
With my postulation
Of his neighborliness, with a mere entertainer
such as Shakespeare.

Arranging a library is no easy task:
It takes much argument and much
Angry venting.

You can’t satisfy all these great minds.
We hardly ever part on good terms,
my books and I.

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Melissa Rudder says

I only had to read half of Roland Barthes' *Mythologies* for my Critical Theory class, but I was so engrossed that I set aside George R.R. Martin's *Game of Thrones* (you'll understand how impressive that is if I ever get to that review) and spent a day of my spring break reading the whole thing. In *Mythologies*, Barthes, a theorist I previously (and less amiably) met during my Media and Rhetoric class, does a semiotic reading of different aspects of society in order to identify the ideological beliefs that support them. Thus "mythology" is mode of communication that signifies what supposedly goes without saying in society, the language that makes unrealistic "truths" seem natural. It doesn't sound entertaining, but it is.

Barthes concludes his preface with the declaration, "What I claim is to live to the full the contradiction of my time, which may well make sarcasm the condition of truth." And boy is he sarcastic. And witty. And insightful. I found myself reading his little essays and scrawling "Yes!" in the margins (because "OMG! This guy is right on! Hahaha!" took too long to write).

The book's design make it a quick and lively read. Each month, between 1954 and 1956, Barthes wrote one essay about the myths of French society. The essays are rarely over three pages, but packed with analytical might, clever criticisms, and compelling calls to action. Even though the book is a study of French society in the fifties, it still is so pertinent today. My favorite chapters were "The World of Wrestling," "The Writer on Holiday," "Blind and Dumb Criticism," "Novels and Children," and "Striptease." Yes, this internationally acclaimed theorist wrote essays on strippers and WWF-style wrestling. So. Entertaining.

I highly recommend Barthes' *Mythologies*. Not only is it intelligent and entertaining, but it will affect how you view the world. Without realizing it, you'll be walking through the mall writing mythologies of your own. (I wrote one on Starbucks.)

Paul says

This is a great, thought-provoking set of essays that suffers from age, despite the lasting relevance of its core arguments. My main gripe was that Barthes' method of choosing bits of contemporary pop culture to illustrate his arguments is of course destined to become dated, and so a few of the chapters when over my head. I'm just not familiar with Chaplin or the Dominici Trial, and I don't know who or what the Abbé Pierre is. However, the central arguments were easy to grasp despite this, and I can't really hold m own ignorance against Barthes.

Secondly, all shock value is lost because the structuralist ideas presented by Barthes have since become very commonplace in academia and the humanities. Again, I can't really blame Barthes for this - if anything it shows how influential he was that now, the conditioning effects of children's toys are well-known and debated, for example, or that the underlying ideology of the 'woman-as-mother' symbol is widely acknowledged and contested.

So even though these complaints are not really the fault of Barthes, I can only rate this book as 'OK' because it failed to deliver the cognitive revolution it promised, and lacked shock value. Also, it would have been better had the longer essay on mythology been truncated slightly and moved to the beginning of the book.
