**Mythologies**

1. **The Poor and The Proletariat**

In the starting of the passage, Roland Barthes uses the admirable film of Charlie Chaplin named “Modern Times” to provide an image of the poor and the proletariat. The myth suggests a seamless overlap between the "poor man" and the "proletarian". It has been believed that they are presented as one and the same, experiencing the same struggles and desires. It serves the idea that struggles of the poor man and a working-class man are the same and inter-linked to one another. Charlie’s representation considers the man to be blind and mystified, focusing only on his immediate needs and doesn’t worry about the political consciousness. The passage challenges this myth by presenting Chaplin's character. This worker embodies the harsh realities of work and alienation, but lacks a developed political view-point.

Barthes try to convey to the readers that a more nuanced understanding of the working class exists beyond the boundaries of the myth that has been formed by the modern world regarding a common man. It has been believed that a middle-class working man is well-organized and has the political awareness going on around in the world considering him different from the poor man. But this has become a myth since, the reality is something different. The Proletarian Man, considered under the guise of poor man, in this world has been very Anarchy and is indulged to look upon himself. He has become very self-centred and is not thinking about a revolution or welfare of the community. Usually, such reality of a Man is not shown to which Barthes takes an example of the movie of Charlie Chaplin to show that how reality contrasts with the myth which has been believed since long. By accepting the myth of the proletariat as inherently blind and mystified, society may overlook the structural injustices that contribute to their oppression.

Barthes discusses how Chaplin uses the concept of myth to use exaggerated or symbolic imagery to convey meaning. Charlie uses epic representations of the signs such as oversized sandwiches and rivers of milk in his film to symbolise that the proletarian man is hungry for his needs and indulged in maintaining his own sustenance. The Man in the film is always shown below the political awareness. Barthes comments that the Charlie’s idea is similar to that of Brecht’s. Chaplin shows the audience its blindness by presenting a man who is actually blind to depict that he is so much engrossed to fulfil his needs and requirements that he has become blind towards the upgrading world and society around him. The Man has been shown as the one who is unable to acquire the knowledge of political causes and collective strategy. This "primitive proletarian" exposes a different facet of the working class, one that doesn't fit neatly into the myth. The portrayal of strikes as catastrophic events reinforces the idea of the proletariat's powerlessness in the face of societal forces. The myth presents a fully formed, class-conscious proletarian ready for revolution, which is what we believe. Chaplin, however, portrays a worker who is still "blind" to the bigger picture, driven by basic needs and only achieving political awareness through suffering. By highlighting the limitations of Chaplin-Man character, it exposes the limitations of the myth itself. Chaplin deconstructs the myth of the proletarian by showing the different reality to the audience.

Chaplin's portrayal of reading the newspaper in cell under the portrait of Lincoln is a very strong and impactful visual. While Lincoln symbolises freedom and democracy, Chaplin-Man's confinement in a cell suggests the absence of those ideals. The scene suggests that simply embracing symbols of freedom and democracy without actively challenging systemic injustices is hypocritical and ultimately perpetuates oppression.

In Chaplin's portrayal, signifiers like hunger and alienation are linked to broader signifieds such as class struggle and societal oppression. Barthes reveals how these signifiers are manipulated to construct the myth of the proletariat as a noble but oppressed figure. The passage utilizes Barthes' concept of myth to analyse how Chaplin's film challenges the commonly held image of the proletarian. It demonstrates how art can serve as a tool to deconstruct these social myths and reveal the complexities that lie beneath.

1. Toys

In this passage, Barthes explores the cultural significance of French toys, their implications for children's perception and interaction with the world around them and how they reflect broader societal values and ideologies. He employs semiotics, the study of signs and symbols, to unpack the process of myth creation and critique the myths perpetuated by these toys. He begins by asserting that French toys serve as miniature replicas of the adult world, implying that adults view children as extensions of themselves. The toys, Barthes argues, are essentially reduced copies of human objects, suggesting that children are expected to assimilate into the adult world from a young age.

Barthes critiques the lack of imagination and creativity in French toys, making them users in this world rather than creators. For instance, he mentions toys related to the army, broadcasting, medicine, and transportation, which reflect modern adult life and its various occupations and technologies. The problem, according to Barthes, is that this message becomes so naturalized, like a common language, that we don't even question it. We start to believe that toy cars are just a natural part of being a boy, rather than a way of teaching a child a particular role This reflects a myth that the child is seen as another self of the adult, and toys serve to prepare them for their future roles and responsibilities in society. This corresponds to the myth that societal structures and functions are not to be questioned and followed as they are without any critical reflection. Children are provided with ready-made objects and scenarios, limiting their ability to engage in imaginative play and creative exploration which shows the lack of inventiveness. Barthes contrasts such toys with the potential of simpler toys, such as sets of blocks, which allow for dynamic forms of play and stimulate open-ended creativity defying the myth of pre-determined roles. Unlike the static nature of many French toys, blocks enable children to actively construct and manipulate their environment, fostering a sense of agency and exploration.

Moreover, Barthes discusses the materiality of toys, lamenting the shift away from natural materials like wood towards synthetic substances produced by chemicals which may cause harm. He argues that wooden toys offer a more tactile and sensory experience, connecting children with the natural world and encouraging a closer relationship between object and hand. The wooden toys connect with the child in such a way that it drops long-lasting memory for the child even when he/she has grown-up. Such warmth is lacking in the plastic toys, disconnecting from the physical environment. This leads to the myth of progress and modernity which looks at the comfort and ease rather than sensory experience and development of a child.

Overall, Barthes' critique of French toys underscores broader concerns about the socialization of children and the impact of consumer culture on their development. By emphasizing the importance of imaginative play and tactile engagement, he advocates for a re-evaluation of the types of toys provided to children and the values they promote. Instead of directly assigning the roles to the child by means of toys, the creativity within them needs to be brought out. The myth of behaving in a particular order in the society needs to be re-considered and taught to the child in such a way that the journey of growth is adventurous, wonderful and joyous. Through this critique, Barthes challenges the myth of childhood innocence and autonomy, revealing how toys serve as tools of training the young minds. He argues for toys that encourage exploration, creation, and a connection to the natural world.