As part of my new non-fiction kick that I seem to be going through, and for research purposes for an essay idea that I’ve recently been formulating, I decided to pick up *Mythologies* by Roland Barthes. I have never read any of his texts before as primary sources, but read a few essays in my studies which reference him. As far as I was aware, he had some interesting theories that can be utilised well.

Having finally got around to reading his writing personally, I feel that perhaps I had been misguided as to what I thought his ability was. This collection of essays/reviews and concept argumentation for modern day mythologies was not what I had expected to be. It will be with trepidation that I will pick up any more of his work unless necessary in my studies.

What I was expecting from this collection of essays was how myth making is perceived and constructed in our modern world, albeit the world of the 50s when most of these were written. However it strayed more to a semiotic reading and analysis of popular phenomenon in our society. Which is fine, perhaps, if that was what you wanted. And don’t get me wrong, I like and appreciate and also use semiotics myself. But… well I wasn’t keen on how Barthes used it. I rated this text a 3 stars overall, which I think was kind for I could quite comfortably have given it 2. Some essays and chapters were really five star reads, interesting, enlightening and well articulated. Others were one star reads, dull, structurally messy, and lacking in any real depth. My favourite parts were *The Writer on Holiday*, *Blind and Dumb Criticism*, and *The Brain of Einstein*. These, I felt, were great analyses that actually touched upon important societal issues, questioning how we place value and for what reasons. They were the ones, among few others, which seemed like they were well thought out and well argued, showing just how much potential this book had.

Unfortunately, many of the essays were not up to a standard I had come to expect. A lot of them seemed very subjective in which he placed himself firmly in the centre of ‘objective truth’, failing to see beyond his own political position and ideals. A lot of his words were very critical of institutions which, it seemed to me, had personally offended him. He was deconstructing images and ‘myths’ that he had noticed in modern day living, but I personally felt as if sometimes he was just writing about something to fill up space. His semiotic analyses seemed to be missing a lot of information which would allow them to be seen and explained more efficiently, partly because of his limited
expression of semiotics as a tool. A lot of the time, it seemed like the reader had to do more connecting of the dots than he himself did to instil their own meaning on what he was trying to say. There was just a distinct lack to many of his essays, which is quite ironic because in the final section of the book titled *Myth Today* he goes on to extensively explain how myths are made through a semiotic understanding of language. This part was the weakest part of the book. He convolutes an idea/concept which is otherwise quite simple and abstracts it beyond recognition and sense in an attempt to explain away any of the flaws which he made in his previous analyses. It just weakened all his arguments, in my opinion at least, and proved that what was lacking was an articulate understanding of what he was trying to say on his own behalf.

Overall, this is not a book that I would come back to for future inspiration and utilisation. Whilst I did learn a few things and became aware of some interesting concepts which could be exploited in my future essay writing, it is not something I hold to great esteem and value. Whilst I am unsure as to whether or not I will read more of his future stuff, if I do, it will be on trusted sources who can persuade me to visualise his writing as something better in perhaps a different field. Friends of Saussure might appreciate this book, but people like me who prefer Peirce may not.