THE MYTH INSIDE THE DREAM

When it comes to technological development, Canada - among other countries -

has been perpetuating a myth inside a dream. The irony of this is that technological

myths, as Mosco writes about cyberspace, often point to an "intense longing" (15) for

democracy, yet Canada is a democratic country whose citizens seem content with an

incomplete democracy. (Barney 36) The deepened political understanding that both

Mosco and Barney refer to can only be achieved through the public's recognition of the

truths behind both of their analyses.

Canada's democracy, Barney argues, is incomplete because its citizens haven't

been openly questioning what he calls "ethical commitments to technology." (38)

Barney argues that Canada buys into "the dream of a nation made strong and whole by

technology." (36) This dream leads to a depoliticized (Barney 36) public mindset where

people prefer to be hands-off about technology, even convinced that it is "too important"

(37) for them to democratically debate over because the very strength of their nation

apparently depends on it. Mosco uses similar terminology at the end of his piece, (16)

stating that myths have the ability to depoliticize the public. Barney's dream and Mosco's

myth essentially refer to the same concept - fictions being built into the narrative of a

technology's development.

But there is often a myth inside that dream - a myth surrounding the specific

technology itself, as in the case of a public body hoping for some promised but

undelivered "electronic democracy" (Mosco 1) through cable television. Both authors,

then, clearly believe that the technological dream/myth can result in depoliticization of a

country. Barney also agrees with Mosco that democratic dreams are often inherent in the

technologies themselves, as in the aforementioned cyberspace and cable TV. We are

"culturally pre-disposed," Barney says, toward thinking that any new technology must be

good for democracy. (21)

In his article, Carey makes the same point as Mosco and Barney by explaining the

mythology surrounding the telegraph. There were promises that this technology had been

"divinely inspired" (159) and would bring about the "day of salvation." The popular myth

was that the telegraph - much like cable TV and cyberspace of years later - would inspire

a kind of worldwide democracy. People felt it "impossible that old prejudices and

hostilities should longer exist" (161) with this new technology that allows "an exchange

of thought between all nations." But why long for a democracy in a democracy, or - as in

the case of cyberspace - a virtual democracy in an actual democracy? Perhaps citizens

feel dissatisfied with their current democracy and are hoping for some technology to

come around that wipes the slate clean and creates a brand new democracy for them, thus

they are buying into the "myth-making process." (Mosco 7) But if only Canadians

understood the motivations behind creating this technological mythology, as Mosco

suggests, (16) perhaps they would finally feel compelled to ask the important ethical

questions (Barney 45) about technology, thereby creating a fuller real-life democracy for

their country and eliminating the need to pine for a virtual one.

What, then, is the motivation behind creating this technological mythology? Both

Mosco and Barney seem to attribute the origin of the mythology to those satisfied with

the status quo; in other words - people in power. Mosco calls the relationship between

myth and power "mutually constitutive." (7) Barney names the "captains of commerce

and industry" (36) as benefactors in this mythological construction, as through the myth

they are able to persuade citizens to think less about policy decisions and just "take what

they get" (Barney 24) when it comes to technology. Unlike Mosco, Barney actually

suggests to look at a particular institution for guidance in countering this problem - the

Danish Board of Technology. (30) It is Barney's hope that Canada might implement a

similar method for involving citizens in decisions about technology. Barney

acknowledges the mythology behind the technology, such as pointing out the hyperbole

behind calling the iPhone "revolutionary." (25) But rather than referencing a physical

entity like the DBT, Mosco digs a little deeper in suggesting exactly how citizens can

find it within themselves to question technological developments. Mosco asks us to

analyze the origin of why it was deemed revolutionary in the first place, thus imbuing it

with this mythology: "myths," he says, "can open the door to a deepening of political

understanding." (16)

        Barney is right in positing that Canada is not entirely a democracy if its citizens

withhold technology from political judgments. (24) But in order for its citizens to ever

feel compelled enough to ask the ethical questions (38) that he refers to, they must heed

Mosco's advice by unveiling the reasons behind the mythology's creation. (15) Citizens

might then realize that - as is often the case - the mythology has been created by

institutions merely to preserve the status quo. (Mosco 7) They might then finally realize

that the proliferation of the technology in question is in fact not inevitable, but very much

an issue to democratically debate over.

REFERENCES

Barney, Darin. *One Nation Under Google: Citizenship in the Technological Republic*.

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Carey, James W. *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society*. New York:

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    Press, 2005. Print.

INF1001 Assignment 1 Marking Rubric

Student Name and tutorial number: _GRANT DATTEN #5_

Assignment Components	Comments
Concise summary of the central claims of each piece	✓
Your reasoned opinion of their respective strengths and shortcomings from the point of view of this course	✓
Appropriate reference to at least one relevant source beyond the two focal articles	✓ Carey

Evaluation criteria	Grade range D	C	B	A	Comments
Understanding of the articles and other material reviewed				✓	
Ability to integrate and interrelate material from different sources and perspectives				✓	
Ability to make reasoned comparison, assessment and argument				✓	
Quality of writing, including clarity, conciseness, liveliness of style				✓	
Correctness, including spelling, citation, grammatical construction (proof read!)				✓	

Overall comments and grade:

A⁻

Good work Grant.
A few of Barney's key phrases (political judgement of technology + means, object, setting) could be included in your brief summary on pg. 1.

Your argument however does flow!