The hero and the shadow: Myths in digital social movements

El héroe y la sombra: Mitos en los movimientos sociales digitales

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Abstract

The general subject of this analysis is the presence of myths on social media, a heritage of the previous century's mass culture, and in particular, for social movements. Social movements within networked communication are particularly endowed with mythologies, which draw on mass culture and on societies' archetypal and psychological backgrounds. This fact justifies the hypothesis that the most effective and popular social movements resort to deeper mythological forms. The specific objective is to describe concrete myths in the language of digital social movements and to review the aspects of mythology in the scholarly literature on mythology from four fields. After tracing contents and impact, a qualitative analysis, focused on two examples justified by their digital origin, is performed: the "Anonymous" movement and "Je Suis Charlie" social mobilisation. Results show the persistence of two mythological motives: the profound hero's monomyth, playing an essential identifying role, channelled through social networks, with hashtags as slogans, and the related myth of the shadow, the dark, "Anonymous" and hybrid identity. Connections and analogies with other recent examples are discussed −such as the "Me Too" and "Black Lives Matter" cases−. The conclusion is the clear connection between these two myths and the communicative strength of social movements transmitted through social networks.

Resumen

El tema general de este análisis es la presencia de los mitos en las redes sociales, herencia de la cultura de masas del siglo anterior y en particular, en los movimientos sociales. Los movimientos sociales en las redes digitales se dotan de mitologías, sean retomadas del siglo anterior sean formas del fondo arquetípico y psicológico intemporal. Esta presencia justifica la hipótesis sobre si los movimientos más eficaces y populares recurren a formas mitológicas más profundas. El objetivo específico es describir mitos concretos que aparezcan en el lenguaje de los movimientos sociales específicamente digitales. Se revisan los rasgos de los mitos de acuerdo con los autores más prestigiosos de cuatro ámbitos científicos. Se extraen del rastreo de contenido e impacto dos ejemplos de origen digital: el movimiento «Anonymous» y la movilización social «Je Suis Charlie». Aplicando análisis heurístico, los resultados muestran la persistencia de dos motivos mitológicos muy concretos: el profundo monomito del héroe, que cumple un papel crucial identificativo en las canalizaciones mediante redes como Twitter, a partir del uso específico de los hashtags como eslóganes, y el mito asociado de la sombra, la identidad anónima, híbrida y oscura. Se presentan las funciones y analogías en otros movimientos recientes −como «Me Too» y «Black Lives Matter»−. Se concluye la conexión entre estos mitos y la fuerza comunicativa de los movimientos sociales que se transmiten en las redes.

Keywords / Palabras clave

Social movements, digital networks, myths, hero, shadow, activism.
Movimientos sociales, redes digitales, mitos, héroe, sombra, activismo.

1. Introduction

If there is a standout feature in the social movements of the beginning of the 21st Century, it is their possible anchorage in imaginative forms related to myths. A peculiarity of the social movements manifested in digital networks is the way in which they seem to be linked to imagination and myth. It is possible to isolate and investigate living myths in digital social movements. The general hypothesis that guides this study is the presence in digital culture of essential mythologies, as an important factor of communicative strength. Myths reappear in digital media to continue fulfilling their vital and social inspiring functions.

The present study develops interdisciplinary research, with an extensive review of myth theories and psycho-social and socio-political literature on myths, to apply these findings to the specific field of digital social media. The fundamental objective is to detect how the most striking social movements in digital networks are endowed with myths, and what function they fulfill. After a selection of impact-related examples, whose current state is detected on social media, the qualitative analysis of two cases shows distinctive traits of fundamental myths. Their specific articulations are discussed, showing how two deep-rooted forms of myths appear in recent digital social movements: the identity of the hero, and the negative and contradictory form of identity, or shadow.

The general research question posed by this work is: What elements do myths, current social movements, and digital networks have in common? Three phenomena of different dimensions come together from within human activities. Myths are fundamentally forms of language whose function is to lend meaning to something that cannot be understood, or that needs to be structured, remembered, or brought to light in human life. As Pánikkar affirms (Kerényi et al., 2004), symbols are the building blocks of the myth. The symbolic formations and representations create mythical forms. As social movements gain strength, they build a gallery of symbolic forms whose last step may be the presence of the myth. This research specifically enquires whether digital language contains such forms.

Isolating two cases, their recent impact is proven using a software tool. The heuristic myth-criticism analysis is elaborated on its materials. The rationale of the two selected cases (the "Anonymous" movement and the "Je Suis Charlie" social mobilisation), resides, in addition to their persistence as influential hashtags, in their essential and native digital caracter, which differentiates them from other movements, and in their international dimension -both movements have different origins, but both became global. The two movements influence other recent ones with their symbolism, and both are representative of the new digital activism; they provide keys to study the communicative force of myths in the networks. Communicative force or energy is defined as the ability to activate and mobilise people, to fix the collective social memory, and to clearly mark the contemporary imaginary.

A recent example, associated with relevant social concerns and contemporary mass culture, shows the presence of simple mythological forms in the networks. One of the heroes most present in the expression of the youngest social media users, travelling from the mass culture of the 20th Century, is Spiderman. Spiderman is a superhero that we can associate with the "monomyth" of Campbell (Campbell, 2016). Spiderman, the hero of many young people in the global web of digital social media, throws communication threads. It is no coincidence that this hero was the myth chosen by those born in an era characterized by networks. In the midst of the Covid19 crisis, social media memes showed superheroes like Spiderman paying tribute to healthcare professionals (Figure 1). The myth of the youth hero was used to convey a collective social sentiment.

Figure 1. Video from @howard–lee appeared in Twitter in Spain in spring 2020 (https://bit.ly/3dj1ij9). Reusing popular mythology for social concern in the networks

Social movements are the most vital political expression of our time - feminism and environmentalism are theoretical traditions with a vibrant presence today. They are increasingly present and are highly valued by society (Aladro-Vico & Requeijo-Rey, 2020), becoming the basis of the legitimacy of political action, and placing themselves at the origin of contemporary social agendas (Zuckerman, 2019; Feliú -Albadalejo & Moltó-Berenguer, 2019). On social media, these movements are mediated by technologies (Maxwell & Miller, 2012). It is also necessary to investigate the essence of that relationship. From the traditional myth to the technical myth (Kerényi, 2012), instrumentalised for purposes beyond its meaning, there is a deep abyss in the digital world that is analysed below.

2. Review of the myth criticism and psychology fields: From the myth in culture, to mass mythology

The literature on myths, its evolution and contemporary cultural transmission, is vast. Not only in terms of quantity, but also of the quality of researchers who have analysed the role of myths in culture. The authors who have studied myths, from Campbell (2016), Jung (2009), Otto (2005), and Cassirer (2016; 1968), to Barthes (2010) or Lévi-Strauss (2005), remarked on their absolute importance in human life. The most prestigious researcher on myths, Campbell, did not hesitate to include forms of contemporary art and popular and mass culture, as myths (Campbell, 2016).

Campbell was, on the other hand, highly influenced by the psychological capacity of myths, identified by Jung (2008), who established the need for the presence of myths in the daily routine of human life. Both authors define myths as guides for the human spirit. This foundational definition is supported by all experts. Myths provide examples, images and directions to guide human beings in their lives. They are stories whose function is the call to be that hero in search of that gift that only he can achieve, and that will definitely improve the world we live in (Campbell, 2016). In Campbell's conception, as in Jung's, the myth has an individual value that is also social-evolutive.

Kerényi insists that the root of the myth comes fundamentally from the Greek etymology for spoken narration (Kerényi, 2012). This idea is shared not only with Otto (2005), according to which myths are a language, but also with the founder of modern anthropology, Lévi-Strauss. Myths communicate something essential in a way that cannot be otherwise achieved. In semiotics, Barthes (2010) defines his mythologies as a language that transforms and changes the mysterious and the questionable into the natural and inevitable (2010: 129). Another element of continuity in the knowledge about myths is constituted by the difference that Kerényi, Jung and Eliade make between the myth in its pure state and the instrumentalised, "infantilised" (Eliade, 2010) or "technified" myth (Kerényi, 2012). Cassirer, reflecting on the use of the myth for purposes of political power and social influence, affirms: "It has been the task of the 20th Century, our great technical age, to develop a new technique of myth. As a consequence, myths can be manufactured in the same sense and according to the same methods as any other modern weapon" (Cassirer, 1968: 333).

In Jung's theory (2009: 134), there are high and low energy channellings of the myth. The most infantilised or superficial forms of myths appear in the contemporary imagination, with less capacity for deep connection with the psychological side of the myth. There are aberrant transformations of the myth in political movements such as Nazism. Jung studied the use of the swastika on the Nazi German flag. The author was able to verify how a religious myth that disappeared in the secularised post-reformist Germany, reappeared forcefully as a socio-political resource aimed at empowering its user.

The strength of myths comes from their connection with the "shadow" of our own consciousness (Jung, 2009). As a totality, the being of each individual is a paradoxical complexity, a "*coincidentia oppositorum*." Myths express the human psychic identity but also its shadow, the unknown deep self. Barthes (2010) analyses the functions of the myth in contemporary society. Every myth is dense in the world of meaning. According to the author, and as Miller has pointed out, myths become natural parts of a language, ceasing to be debatable (Miller & McHoul, 1998). Myths "provide information about a culture in a non-reflective way" (Miller & McHoul, 1998: 16). They can "encapsulate" (the expression is Hoggart's (Miller & McHoul, 1998)) vital contents of human existence, expressing dilemmas in a liberating language.

3. Review of socio-political and communications fields: The theoretical tradition of the myth and digital revolution

Sorel analyses myths from a socio-political perspective. Myths do not have the function of stabilising, but rather of directing energies and inspiring the individual or social group to act (Sorel, 2005). Myths give shape to a dynamic vision of the vital movement. As "means of acting on the present", myths liberate from the dominant ways of understanding reality, and from the restrictions that habits, rationality or beliefs have established in social life.

In a similar vein, Gramsci gives a primary role to the myths that shape the great social revolutions. In his Notes on Machiavelli (2018), he explains that the imaginative power of mythical forms acts by generating cultural, passionate and moral changes, because "it is embodied in some image within popular beliefs" (2018: 10), in a way that overcomes simple doctrinal or ideological arguments.

In the field of current cultural studies, it is still interesting how it is possible to use myths as proper languages of social movements. Current research is specifically interested in how myths can serve for the "manufacture of new meanings" (Miller & McHoul, 1998: 15) that allow the expression and affirmation of new communities or identities, rejecting the dominant definitions.

Kermode considers that myths "are the agents of stability, and fictions, the agents of change" (2000: 39). Throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, social movements seek and trace myths in the fictions of mass culture. According to Frye, ideologies are considered to be applied mythologies (Frye, 1996: 5).

Myths and other forms of the imaginary can serve as the foundation for institutions and social activities of all kinds. Technologies come wrapped in a halo of mythology, as studied, through the myth of Athena and Ephestos, by Coomaraswamy (1947).

In the world of digital technology, the myth involves the sharpest aspects of its impact on our lives (Borisovna, 2019). As Treré and Barranquero (2013) have studied, there is a tradition of analysis of the mythical forms that we associate with the Internet and with social media, in which authors such as Mosco (2011), McChesney (2012) and Morozov (2012) work, from a political economy of communication. There is a mythological sublimation of social media. There are aspects that consider the emergence of the Internet and social media as the realisation of a utopia, in a discourse that acts as "witness of a reality: the technological revolution" (Almirón & Jarque, 2008).

As Morozov studies, the Internet is probably one of the technological phenomena in which, being a communication system, it self-represents a realised utopia. The arrival of a new form of intelligence, a new hyper-connected human being, finally materialises. The aforementioned authors study the double function of the myth of the Internet, because if, on the one hand, it constitutes a phenomenon as unique in human history as the invention of writing (De-Kerckhove, 2010), it is quite true that the technological determinism that this myth implies leads us to a great deception (Morozov 2012), to a make-up wearing and uncritical vision of the network. This technified myth has terrible consequences, as pointed out by Maxwell and Miller, due to its ability to whitewash the exploitation of the planet and the so-called digital "greenwashing" (Maxwell & Miller, 2012; Miller, 2020; Riechmann, 2020). Social media is the object of special observation in this regard, by authors such as Mosco et al. (2018) recently.

The reason for the Internet to be presented as a world of realised myth lies precisely on the fact that the origin of the network is a synergy of creations and contributions (Leporini, 2015). The idealism that inspired the first hackers favoured the Internet to appear marked by utopian myths (Lovink et al., 2017). The relationship between the spirit of collaboration, the great technological confluence, and the fact that they are media of great power, mythologised the new digital world.

4. Material and methods

To analyse two significant cases, two phenomena are selected that we must geopolitically frame in the Western world, although their influence extends globally. First, the choice of the social movement of "Anonymous" is justified because it is a global digital phenomenon, with a long and persistent history. "Anonymous" presents a chain of mythological resonances in its image galleries that is rich and complex (Alexopoulou & Pavli, 2019). It is also associated with the spirit and philosophy of the Internet.

"Anonymous" is the name of a social movement with diffuse profiles generated on the web around 2008. It communicates through a symbology under which different groups are assigned, following the hacker philosophy that was generated at the beginning of the Internet, in defence of freedom of expression and

intellectual creation. The movement takes on the fight against censorship movements, and in favour of democracy and free public opinion, essentially using digital hacking weapons and attacks on service distribution. It also filters sensitive information and points out the perpetrators and culprits of manoeuvres against said freedoms. It is committed to established social movements, environmental advocates, and opponents of corporate capitalism (Fish, 2015). "Anonymous" is legendary as a recognisable group, with actions since the early 2010s, despite the fact that the anonymous nature of its members' actions and even the non-closed group structure makes it difficult to establish an identity. The "anona" or members of the group, have appeared in image banks and documentation channels of memes, since the early 2000s.

The group undertook actions to defend the WikiLeaks platform as well as mobilised digital resistance against Islamic terrorist groups in the attack against the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo, in the fight for freedom of expression and information. In one of his latest actions in 2020, during full global alert over Covid19, it momentarily blocked Facebook and Instagram by issuing a message on Twitter, advising young people to read books and forget social media, a massive irony and paradox. Secondly, the digital social movement "Je Suis Charlie" was chosen for the richness of its creative manifestations, its continuity as an emblem of the fight for freedom of expression, its persistence, (in 2020, new attacks related to the French magazine have again led protesters from this movement to take to the street), and because of its specifically digital origin (Nugier & Guimond, 2016).

In January 2015, a Jihadist terrorist attack led to the deaths of 12 graphic humorists who worked at the French magazine Charlie Hebdo (Nougier & Guimond, 2016). Journalist and graphic illustrator Joachim Roncin devised a slogan identifying himself with the victims of the Paris attack, inspired by the Cold War-era slogan "Ich bin ein Berliner" by J.F. Kennedy. "Je Suis Charlie" became a viral phenomenon that generated more than five million messages/creations in three days, from the massive creative expressions of Twitter users, who in the days following the crimes flooded the web with illustrations, memes, graphic tributes and all kinds of anonymous or collaborative images (Pelletier & Drozda-Senkowska, 2016).

To illustrate the persistence and nature of the influence of both movements, a recent tracing of the hashtags #JesuisCharlie and #Anonymous was carried out using the Hashtagify software tool. Twitter was chosen because this social network has become relevant to social movements –and not only established politics– and has the greatest influence in shaping dynamic socio-political relations (Congosto, 2015). The tool used performs a rich monitoring of hashtags, with millions of labels in billions of tweets, in close terms. We determined its use to test the persistence of the phenomena chosen for analysis. Focusing on the period of the last two months (October to December 2020), we looked for the correlation between the two identifying labels of both movements, and current political events used as a base reference. Hashtagify provides the popularity percentage and with it, the presence of hashtags in the total set of messages issued in a given period. In the case of "Anonymous", the hashtag #AvengeAssange within the #OperationPayback, organised by the movement, to counterattack companies and organisations opposed to Julian Assange and his WikiLeaks organisation, impacts today, despite its coming from 2010, due to Assange's recent extradition and imprisonment in the Belmarsh high-security prison, after being arrested at the Ecuadorian embassy in London in April 2019.

In the case of "Je Suis Charlie", the recent event selected is related to a new Islamist terrorist attack. The French satirical magazine republished the Muhammad cartoons at the beginning of September 2020, on the occasion of the start of the trial against those responsible and collaborators in the Charlie Hebdo attack. At the end of the same month of September 2020, a man attacked several journalists from a news agency that occupies the former headquarters of Charlie Hebdo, with a knife. A few weeks later, on October 16, history teacher Samuel Paty is beheaded in Paris for showing the same cartoons to his students in a debate about freedom of expression. The following tables show the current popularity of the two main labels, and their correlation with other popular ones, which exemplifies the degree of diffusion and dispersion of influence. The study period established is from 06-10-2020 to 08-12-2020 (Table 1).

Table 1. Popularity and correlation of hashtag #"Je Suis Charlie" in present days		
Hashtag	**Popularity**	**Correlation**
#JeSuisCharlie	68.8%	Reference
#CharlieHebdo	70.9%	0.1%
#ToujoursCharlie	36.4%	0.1%
#jesuisprof	33.6%	0.1%

Note. Data from 06-10-2020 to 08-12-2020. Software hashtagify.

The hashtag #JeSuisCharlie maintained a high popularity during the study period: 68.8%. Its correlated hashtags are also highly popular: #CharlieHebdo (70.9%), #ToujoursCharlie (36.4%) and #jesuisprof (33.6%) (Table 2).

Table 2. Popularity and correlation of hashtag #"Anonymous" in present days		
Hashtag	**Popularity**	**Correlation**
#AvengeAssange	4.2%	Reference
#Ecuador	73.9%	50%
#FreeAssange	58.5%	50%
#ReconectJulian	43.1%	50%
#OperationPayback	21.6%	Reference
#"Anonymous"	71.5%	23.5%
#Wikileaks	68.2%	8.8%
#fineart	66.2%	8.8%
#comtemporaryart	62.5%	5.9%
#graphicdesign	66.8%	8.8%
#artgallery	55.6%	8.8%
#arthistory	53.8%	8.8%
#whatisart	34.3%	2.9%
#Anonymiss	41%	2.9%
#Snowden	64.9%	2.9%
#TeaParty	72.4%	2.9%

Note. Data from 06-10-2020 to 08-12-2020. Software hashtagify.

With the hashtag of the #OperationPayback campaign, data from #Anonymous (71.5%) and #Wikileaks (68.2%) were retrieved, both elements were widely disseminated on social networks. The hashtags correlated with high popularity are framed in the world of social movements for the fight for freedom of expression and privacy on the Internet (#Anonymiss and #Snowden), conventional politics (#TeaParty) and art (#graphicdesign, #fineart, #comtemporaryart, #arthistory). The relationship with tags such as #arthistory, #artgallery and #whatisart shows the link of the art world with the actions of "Anonymous" in the Assange case. Multiple accounts on social media, portals and websites collect representations of the group of hacktivists and Assange, or develop artivist actions to support them. Given their hidden identity, they usually represent "Anonymous" with the Guy Fawkes mask and the head covered with a hood. For its interest, in the following visualisation we observe the persistence of the strategy of the slogan "Je Suis Charlie" in hashtags and derived slogans (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Persistence of the verbal auto-identificative strategy of "Je Suis Charlie" in recent hashtags
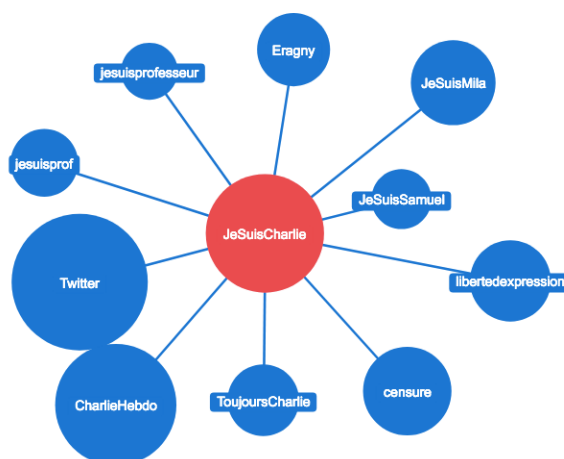
The hashtag #JeSuis has become a symbol that represents unity and support in the face of different tragedies since the 2015 attack, and which, as we will see below, fulfills profound psychological functions. Heroic identification had already been used before by social movements such as the Mexican #yosoy132 but it did not have the same impact as in the French case. #JeSuis has also been used to criticise the fact that other tragedies and attacks similar to those of the weekly Charlie Hebdo have not had the same international repercussion.

In the case of "Anonymous", the hashtags show us greater dispersion in their correlations with organisations, the media, associations and cultural manifestations. The correlation of the #"Anonymous" movement, without its own diffuser, and all manner of subjects, also disseminates a series of characteristic images, which we analyse below, in which famous artists and cultural organisations are involved. The related images fit perfectly into the shadow mitema that we mentioned above and that we will study further below (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Presence of "Anonymous" in different present subjects
(visualisation with Hashtagify)
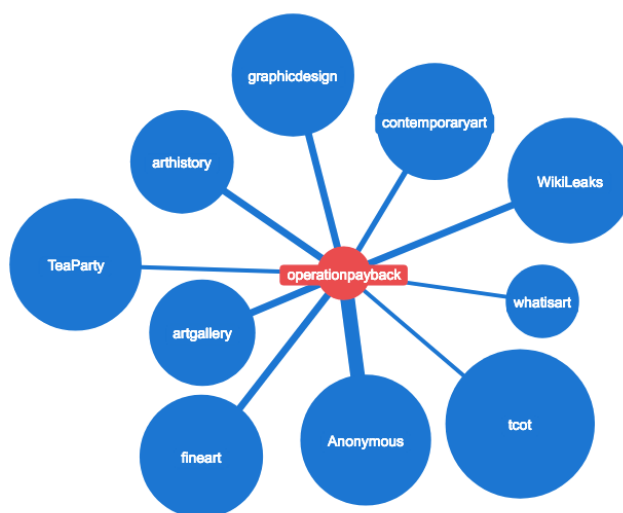
Once the persistence and quantitative importance of both movements has been verified, we use a heuristic method validated in myth-criticism, such as the identification, analysis and classification of mythological contents (Losada, 2015), in the analysis that follows.

5. "Anonymous": A mythology with fictional genealogy and activist functions

1) The image of "Anonymous" is an interesting symbolisation of contemporary identity, associated with an archetypal motive of great antiquity, which we have cited above: the shadow, the double or the hybrid. The "Anonymous" non-hero is an important archetype of personality, contradiction and ambiguity: He unites identification and anonymity in his idea (a coincidence of opposites, also an archetype that is well developed in mass culture (Morin, 2001)). It responds to a long chain of representations, linked with Campbell's monomyth and with the Jungian shadow.

2) "Anonymous" is anchored in mass culture. It is associated with the image of the 1982 comic, and later 2004 film, "V for Vendetta" created by the British artists Moore and Lloyd, in the culture of the 20th century. Much further back, it is related with the mask of an English conspirator Guy Fawkes, from 1605, who tried to blow up the British Parliament in the so-called "gunpowder revolution" in favour of Catholicism and against the country's dominant Protestantism. The trace of modern cultural aspects stemming from fiction is important in this myth.

Figure 4. Image of "Anonymous" (bit.ly/2DTJsYu). The edited photograph documents the myth

3) As we can see in figure 4, "Anonymous" is a dark hero, that has a double moral character, he is both a hero and a villain. Moral ambiguity is a deep mythical trait. It perfectly encapsulates an ambiguous identification beyond the moral canons of the traditional solar hero, towards more sombre and archaic forms. The hero "V", endowed with a lunar sign symbol, currently translates into an indefinite figure, whose valuation we cannot clearly associate with "good" or "evil". He is the reader of the comic, or anyone who watches the later 2005 film, decides if their actions are saving or vindictive. This trait fits perfectly with the nature of the activist group's actions.

4) "Anonymous" is a hive identity. The plural identity, finally anchored in digital media hackers, is constantly fed back. Its attractiveness in the world of social networks used by youth is linked to this specific trait. "Anonymous" is actually a network, and not an individual identity. It breaks and overcomes the polarity of the self/others, allowing the identification of many young people with the group. It is not a movement, but, as Landers puts it, "It is a group, in the sense that a flock of birds is a group. Why do you know that they are a group? Because they travel in the same direction. At any given time, more birds could join, leave or completely change course" (Landers, 2008).

5) "Anonymous" symbolises digital identity. The idea of a community of meaning, built on action, and collaboration without its own features, timely, free and fluid, is one of the features of digital identity, congregated in activities and interests, but not physical, and fluctuating or liquid. (Bauman, 2005; Robinson, 2007)). In digital modernity, the free circulation of content and the free grouping of authors is the key to a new cultural system. It also embodies the idea of self-invention and free choice of identity, mythical elements of the Internet (Kendall, 1998).

6. "Je Suis Charlie": A social network creating a verbal and visual encyclopaedia of an activist movement

1) The *"Je Suis Charlie"* movement emerges as a large demonstration against the attack on freedom of thought and expression. The force of language fights against intolerance of beliefs and repression in *"Je Suis Charlie"*. The movement links with the values of French, European and Western culture, in favour of freedom of thought.

2) In the archive of images that we have compiled for this study, examples of which are presented in Figure 5, this social media movement links up with a mythical chain of immense cultural value: the sacrificial hero. The hero-victim is a profound myth: It self-sacrifices or immolates itself in the fight for value. This myth, with millenary religious antecedents (from "You are that" of the Great Forest Upanishad to "This is my body" Christian), emerges in a stylistic pragmatics common to other social movements, with the identifying motto "Je Suis Charlie". This potently identifying phrase with the murdered victims is conveyed through the hashtag, automating the identification of the group through indexical semiosis. But this verbal identification is reinforced with a pragmatic action. In *"Je Suis Charlie",* thousands of people become cartoonists, reviving the murdered illustrators. The crime response force against communicators is carried out through identification with their actions, generating a fighting response that denies death.

Figure 5. Examples on the #JeSuisCharlie movement meme website (bit.ly/379wsKE).

The image is a sample of the iconic encyclopaedia created in the digital social movement

3) As in the case of "Anonymous", we found a collective and essentially anonymous flow of communication. The creations of this chain of manifestations do not claim authorship. They promote identifiaction with the other, with the cartoonists of the French newspaper assassinated by fundamentalism. The culture of impersonal creation and expressive multiplicity is clearly manifested. The heroic identification becomes massive, giving a new force to the movement. The National Institute of Intellectual Protection of France refused to register the slogan "Je Suis Charlie" as a copyrighted creation, because it considered that the message should be available for use, symbolising freedom of expression and its defence (Provost, 2015).

4) The digital movement triggers the myth of the Internet with a new ethical sense: Creation is an act of protest, and at the same time, the object of said act. This is a deeply valuable aspect of this movement. The anonymous cartoonists and creators who contributed with millions of images to the movement gave symbolic density to it. Each visual message is an immaterial blow that defeats fear and censorship, building a new society. The digital world reaches the myth of its own origin in the expressive strategy of "Je Suis Charlie".

5) "Je Suis Charlie" creates a visual and verbal encyclopaedia associated with contemporary freedom of expression. Multiple modulations with cultural resonances (political, religious, comic book culture, historical political posters) are all linked to the radical defence of the free movement of creation (Titley et al., 2017). Around the myth of the hero-victim, and creator, an encyclopaedia appears (Eco, 1995), that is, a semantic universe full of connotations that is inhabited by the users' community, and that is formed by adhering new encodings to a previous semantic node. *"Je Suis Charlie"* is the first digital social movement that symbolises the power of digital communication in the face of physical violence. The force of creative energy on the web fights over destruction. The psychological and quasi-religious depth of the myth, in addition to its subsequent influence, is clear (Pelletier & Drozda-Senkowska, 2016).

7. Results, discussion and conclusions

In the two selected examples we find analogies in specific strategies. The most essential is the recovery of the myth of the hero's identity and his shadow. These mythical motifs appear in all their psychological richness, duality and openness to the other (Deseriis, 2012).

The strategy that identifies the hero with the activist powerfully draws attention, through a recreation of the deictic identifying language ("I am", "We are", "I cannot", "You are") that accompanies and verbalises the mobilisation. The creative practice of the activists creates the heroic narrative, the fight against evil. The *"Je Suis Charlie"* movement, as in the case of "Anonymous", becomes the matrix for future social movements on the web, such as #MeToo and #ICan'tBreathe ("Black Lives Matter"). Note the reuse of identification with the victim in these global digital movements in defence of freedoms, acting through hashtags/slogans in the first person.

Digital activism appears as a spontaneous diffusion, on different supports and with multiple resonances, of a self-identifying language of images, slogans, symbols, created and disseminated by activists.

In the two movements analysed, there is a mythological background whose expression comes together - there is a symbolic identification between "Anonymous" and "Je Suis Charlie", with the use of the same slogans ("We are Legion"), and with other later movements, through the creation of visual and verbal encyclopaedias. In two recent, more hybrid social movements, such as "Me Too" and "Black Lives Matter", the same strategic use of hashtags as slogans and self-identifying deictic labels ("MeToo", "ICan't Breathe") are used, in encyclopaedias rich in fictional, artistic and symbolic resources. The mythological narratives in which they are inserted are the same social actions where they appear. They are myths called out to go to the streets and change the world.

"Anonymous" is a matrix of strategies for other digital social movements. Hive identity and anonymity are essential keys to other subsequent assembly social movements such as Occupy and Extinction Rebellion,

which reproduce patterns of rejection of the group hierarchy of traditional social movements. The unknown and masked hero is a myth of digital culture (from the artist Banksy, to the cyborg movement or to the leaderless rebels of Hong Kong). Zuckerman (2019) indicates that movements such as "Anonymous" are especially suitable in a society like the current one, due to their surprising way of combating the global control of information and dealing with it through unexpected resources.

In conclusion, the activist-heroes of the digital social movements analysed appear marked by paradoxes: they are either hero-villains, hero-victims, or shadow individuals (Encarnación-Pinedo, 2020) taking on contradictory natures. The two analysed examples of social movements in social networks show us a digital language associated with heroic mythologies with deep psychological roots, and culturally enriched: The hero and the shadow, the identity and the counter-identity, return with force.

In the cases analysed in their semiotic and symbolic aspects, we appreciate the link between mythology and popular imagination, characteristic of the revolutionary forms of myths that we have studied as a socio-political trait. As indicated by Pinazo-Calatayud et al. (2020), social movements not only become effective when they are conveyed through social media. These researchers indicate that it is necessary for such movements to link their causes with emotions for action. That is where myths act, bringing to light their strength in the deep memory of the human psyche and showing their power in their digital expressive development.

We have used both, a quantitative and a qualitative approach to the phenomenon we wanted to study. From them, in continuity, derives the presence in the digital culture of essential mythologies, as an important factor of communicative force, confirmed in two movements of clear social purpose that persist over time as indicated by the study of their presence in networks. The identity of a sacrificial hero, and that of an anonymous or collective hero, in which contradictory aspects come together, returns to the hyperpersonal society of networks, to appeal to activism.

These conclusions, based on the mythocritical analysis of the psychological and semantic aspects, unite the myths, the current social movements, and the networks, in their languages for action. There are mythological forms in digital movements as the cases studied show. The new activism also joins the fluidity, anonymous collaboration and creativity of the networks. These communicative values also feed the movements studied. The myth of the Internet lives on in digital activists.

Social movements that become myths in the networks transcend the individual/group dichotomy. Beyond logic and rationality, the monomyth of the hero and his sacrificial identity, and the shadowy ambiguous identity, revive in the communities of online activists. With their active naturalisation of the fight for change, shared and recreated by millions of users, these myths in the digital activism networks are the millennial and present call to change the world.

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