

In my bachelor thesis I will focus on two important protagonists of American modern art, Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman, within the context of their historical situation. I will examine how their art and their thoughts, as reflected in occasional writings and statements, relate to period of World War II and how they coincide with other artists, poets and thinkers of their time.

In early 1940s they often talked about myth and mythology became one of the main elements of their art. I will try to elucidate this interest and explain the position of myth in modern society. For this purpose I chose to base my research on theoretical work of René Girard and Eric Voegelin.

My work is divided in three sections. In a beginning I will describe Girard's theory of myth and compare it with other opinions on this subject, I will also explain the relation between myths and ideologies of the 20th century. In second part I will outline the situation of those artists, significance of their Jewish origin and their position on American art scene. Two following chapters will be dedicated to analysis of Rothko's and Newman's art and opinions separately and the formal and emotional issues of their art will be discussed at the end. I believe that closer examination of the ideas that underlie their work will lead to fuller understanding of their message.

Keywords: Myth, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, World War II, American art, primitivism, Friedrich Nietzsche, René Girard, Jewish origin, tragedy