



# “Bowiemythomania” as a Phenomenon of Pop Culture: Organic Hybridity and Special Temporality in Creative Work of David Bowie

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## Abstract

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The article examines the features of constructing David Bowie's mythology which has a pronounced hybrid character. The content analysis of D. Bowie's works showed that he often used images that go back to classical mythological plots, and many popular songs and concepts of D. Bowie's albums were created using mythologization mechanisms. The main creator of the myths was the performer himself, and the special mythological temporality constructed by the musician encompassed all modes of time, each of which could be correlated with a certain complex of myths. The specificity of such temporality in the case of D. Bowie was that it manifested itself in reverse chronological order: at the beginning of a career the future was mythologized, in the middle it was the present and at the end it was the past. Playing on various collisions of myth with reality and using the technique of myth reoccupation, D. Bowie demonstrated to the world all the creative power of “mythological reality”. It is noted that post-truth accompanied the musician's career from the very beginning, contributing to the genuine disclosure of his talent. It is concluded that in relation to the heritage of D. Bowie, the term “hybrid mythology” acquires positive meaning. The singer manages to bring pop culture to a new level, giving rise to a phenomenon that we can call “bowiemythomania”.

## Keywords

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Pop Culture; Myth; Hybrid Mythology; Post-Truth; Modes of Time; Mythologization of Time; Mythological Temporality; Musical Creativity; Artistic Image; “Bowiemythomania”



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# «Боуимифомания» как феномен поп-культуры: органичная гибридность и особая темпоральность в творчестве Дэвида Боуи

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## Аннотация

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В статье рассматриваются особенности конструирования мифологии Дэвида Боуи, имеющей ярко выраженный гибридный характер. Контент-анализ творчества Д. Боуи показал, что исполнитель часто использовал образы, восходящие к классическим мифологическим сюжетам, а многие популярные песни и концепции альбомов Д. Боуи были созданы с применением механизмов мифологизации. Главным творцом мифов являлся сам исполнитель, а конструируемая музыкантом особая мифологическая темпоральность охватывала все модусы времени, каждый из которых мог быть соотнесен с определенным комплексом мифов. Специфика такой темпоральности в случае с Д. Боуи заключалась в том, что она проявлялась в обратном хронологическом порядке: в начале карьеры мифологизировалось будущее, в середине – настоящее, в конце – прошлое. Обыгрывая разнообразные столкновения мифа с реальностью и используя прием реокупации мифа, Д. Боуи продемонстрировал миру всю творческую мощь «мифологической реальности». Отмечается, что постправда сопровождала карьеру музыканта с самого начала, способствуя подлинному раскрытию таланта. Делается вывод, что применительно к наследию Д. Боуи термин «гибридная мифология» приобретает позитивный смысл, а автору удастся вывести поп-культуру на новый уровень, породив явление, которое мы можем назвать «боуимифоманией».

## Ключевые слова

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поп-культура; миф; гибридная мифология; постправда; модусы времени; мифологизация времени; мифологическая темпоральность; музыкальное творчество; художественный образ; «боуимифомания»



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“Nothing remains / We could run when the rain slows  
Look for the cars or signs of life / Where the heat goes  
Look for the drifters / We should crawl under the bracken  
Look for the shafts of light / On the road where the heat goes  
Everything has changed / For in truth, it’s the beginning of nothing  
And nothing has changed / Everything has changed  
For in truth, it’s the beginning of an end / And nothing has changed  
Everything has changed” (David Bowie, “Sunday”, 2002).

## Introduction

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The modern social myth is a complex social phenomenon. Considering it, we should differentiate two levels:

“archaic” and “conjunctural” (“instrumental”). This two-level character distinguishes modern myth from archaic myth and ideological constructs. The first level, “archaic”, contains stable archetypes, images, mythologemes, rituals, which are developed mainly collectively. <...> The second level, “conjunctural” (“instrumental”), is a kind of “mythology of ideas” – the results of the purposeful activity of individual myth-makers, often presented in the form of ideologemes. (Ivanov, 2019b, p. 69).

The two-level nature of the modern myth should also be understood as hybridity, as we are dealing with overlaps of different nature, and respectively, go back both to the archaic and to the modern conjuncture.

But now, in relation to contemporary mythological discourse, it is also quite appropriate to use the word “hybrid”.

In particular, we come across the term “hybrid mythology” in the article devoted to the analysis of literary works: “...the situation arises in which Soviet mythology collides with more archaic mythological concepts, resulting in a hybrid mythology” (Novokhatsky, 2020, p. 196).

Not only researchers of the Soviet heritage but also prominent specialists in modern myths (H. Blumenberg, C. Bottici) wrote about such a superstructure, or imposition, of modern plots on ancient mythological complexes in one form or another. Moreover, the game between the modern and the archaic permeates many outstanding literary works of Latin American authors (there is even the term “neo-mythologism of the 20th century”).

The popular myth (pop myth) is also characterized by a two-level and hybrid essence: “...on the one hand, it can be a product of the activity of myth-makers, on the other hand, it “lives” among people (and in this sense, the “pop myth” can be called a mass myth and even a folk myth), and, most importantly, people live by this myth...” (Ivanov, 2019a, p. 52).

One of the features of hybrid mythology is that it manifests the processes of reoccupation, a kind of superstructure of new plots placed over classical mythologemes. The point is that myth does not function in a vacuum. The concept of “work on myth” by H. Blumenberg (Blumenberg, 1985) suggests that each version of



the myth, as well as each individual mythologeme, works on the basis of pre-existing mythological narratives. The previously existing material is further used in accordance with new needs and is transformed in order to give meaning to new circumstances. This process is called “reoccupation” by H. Blumenberg. For example, the mythologeme of Homer’s *Odyssey* is based on the recurrence of Ulysses’ journey, up to Leopold Bloom’s Dublin route from J. Joyce’s “Ulysses” (Bottici, 2007, p. 127–128).

According to the researchers of antiquity, myth was considered half true and half false in Ancient Greece. Thus the historian P. Veyne studying the attitude of the ancient Greeks to their mythology noted the following:

For the contemporaries of Pindar or Homer, the truth was determined either on the basis of everyday experience or on the basis of the truthfulness or falsity of the speaker; statements that remained foreign to experience were neither true nor false. Nor were they deceitful, for a lie does not matter, when a liar gains nothing from it and does not harm us in any way: a disinterested lie is not a deception. The myth was *tertium quid*, neither true nor false (Veyne, 2003, p. 40–41).

This understanding of the essence of a myth, which existed in antiquity, is quite consistent with the modern perception of post-truth as a reflection of circumstances in which less attention is paid to objective facts than to emotions and personal faith.

The statement offered by R. Keyes about the post-truth era in which the boundaries between truth and lies, honesty and dishonesty, facts and fiction are blurred (Keyes, 2004), looks surprisingly similar to the ancient understanding of a myth. Post-truth is compared with peculiar euphemisms, that is, with statements “...which may not be true, but which, nevertheless, are considered too soft to be called false” (Koretskaya, 2017, p. 137).

The active use of the term “post-truth” is associated with public administration and political practice, which in itself presupposes some engagement, a struggle to defend the interests of certain groups (Controllability..., 2019; Kalpokas, 2019). The spread of “post-truth” as a marker word has become, in a sense, a reaction to the crisis in the functioning of political institutions in the previously customary mode. Among the most famous “popularizers” of this term we note S. Fuller, who proclaimed in 2018 that post-truth had become an important feature of the intellectual life of the West (Fuller, 2021, p. 21).

Understanding post-truth as the dominance of form over content directly refers to the work of R. Barthes who believed that myth arises on the basis of a previously existing semiotic chain, in which the sign is the result of the association of form (image) and concept (meaning, signified). However, later this sign turns out to be only a form, which, in association with the new signified, gives rise to the myth (Barthes, 2004, p. 239).

It turns out that a bare form (image) is far from being a myth, but it contains the potential to become one; in order for it to become a myth, it is necessary to give a certain meaning, a definite content. It doesn’t matter who assigns this meaning;



the main thing is that it becomes universally significant, equally understood by many. In this case, both the form and the myth formed around it will have every chance to firmly gain a foothold in the mass consciousness. Roughly the same mechanism is involved in the formation of post-truth: a bright form or image as it attracts ordinary people (listeners, viewers).

In addition, the emotional dimension of post-truth allows us to consider it as a phenomenon that is fully consistent with the specifics of the modern media environment.

In the latest studies of contemporary media it is the emotional aspect of post-truth that is emphasized: “...the essence of post-truth is reduced to faith, for which a personal-emotional attitude to the subject of the message is fundamental. <...> An emotionally colored attitude acts as a filter for streams of heterogeneous content. Through post-truth, people both cognize and, at the same time, express themselves, create identities and enter into collective actions” (Tikhonova & Artamonov, 2021, p. 29–30).

The terms “hybrid mythology” and “post-truth” that, in our opinion, are appropriate to be used in relation to the images created by David Bowie.

Although D. Bowie’s works have never lacked researchers’ attention coming from different fields of knowledge, nevertheless, interest in the performer has grown especially strongly in the last few years. Various scientific conferences and exhibitions were held (for example, “David Bowie is” – a touring museum exhibit displaying history, artifacts and information about the life, music, films, tours and art of D. Bowie), numerous biographies (Trynka, 2011; Leigh, 2014; Egan, 2017b), thematic issues of magazines (for example, the magazine “Celebrity Studies” # 1, vol. 10, March 2019) and even original proceedings (David Bowie: Critical Perspectives, 2015; David Bowie and Transmedia Stardom, 2020) have been published. It is also worth highlighting the fundamental work of N. Pegg (Pegg, 2016) in which the author manages to achieve the necessary balance between the descriptive and analytical parts.

Sure it is hard to be under the pressure of the corpus of texts on the interpretations of D. Bowie’s work. However, we would like to suggest our own ideas based on the original source: the lyrics and the interview of the musician himself. Moreover, some topics that are significant for our research have been considered in a number of publications (McCarthy, 2019; Perrott, 2019; Schott, 2019).

Further, it will be shown how hybrid mythology and post-truth organically combine in the art of music through the demonstration of striking examples from the work and biography of David Bowie, as well as the critics’, media, and public reactions to them. The mechanism of “reoccupation” in pop culture will also be considered in action. We’ll be able to judge how the performer not only managed to create his own mythological reality, but also intrigued the audience with reverse chronology during the imposition of created, mostly heroic, mythological plots on the complexes of myths known from ancient times.



## Hybrid mythology and post-truth of D. Bowie

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D. Bowie's work is characterized by a variety of images that the musician invented and demonstrated throughout his career. In fact, we can say that the performer expanded and deepened the popular musical culture of his time, creating several memorable images that refer to well-known mythological plots: heroic, cosmogonic, eschatological ones, etc. In this case, the performer himself became the starting point of the mythologizing processes. Journalists in this regard even noted that "...Bowie went further in the mythologization of his image and created a series of alter ego, thus building a career on the identity crisis" (Egan, 2017a, p. 325).

D. Bowie was widely known by the character of Ziggy Stardust, from the 1972 concept album "The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars". Ziggy is a Martian who seeks to give songs of hope for a brighter future (for example, "Starman") to humanity dying due to the lack of natural resources. The extraterrestrial origin of the created image indicates the desire to solve the problems of the future by forces of a universal scale and the cosmic nature of what is happening. Eschatological motives are also visible here: after all, according to the plot, humanity and the Earth itself had 5 years to live.

Another conceptual work, the 1974 album "Diamond Dogs", is also associated with myths about the future and is aimed at rebuilding the future world through the identification and exposure of imperfections of the earthly socio-political order. The second side of "Diamond Dogs" was inspired by J. Orwell's "1984":

A set of five Bowie songs, "1984", "We Are the Dead", "Big Brother", a short "Chant of the Ever Circling Skeletal Family" and not "Dodo", that wasn't included in the final version of "Diamond Dogs", cannot be considered a musical adaptation of the novel "1984" in the traditional sense of the word. However, in a sense, it is even more. These songs combine the reading of the novel, Bowie's own life experiences and his personal idiosyncrasies, as well as a wide variety of cultural references (Brooker, 2021, p. 125).

The creative rethinking of the well-known dystopia is quite consistent with the process of reoccupation. Here the words from the song "1984" "They'll split your pretty cranium and fill it full of air" are perceived as an organic addition to Big Brother's actions. And the image on the cover of D. Bowie in the body of a dog is a hybrid creature turning out to be another allusion of hybridity.

The demand for archetypal mythological subjects in new circumstances is also evident in the artist's creative imagination. The characters invented by David Bowie, from Ziggy Stardust and the Thin White Duke (D. Bowie's image in the second half of the 1970s) to Nathan Adler (from the 1995 album "1. Outside") and Button Eyes (from the 2016 album "Blackstar") seem to be taken from the list of myths.

Obviously, the author uses the invented characters to include them in the context of traditional mythological systems: Ziggy Stardust complements the cosmological narrative, Nathan Adler – the eschatological one, Button Eyes –



the mythological archetype of a dying god. The hybridity here is a mixture of the hero myth with other well-known categories of myths.

In 2018, D. de Angelis, inspired by his collaboration with D. Bowie in the design of the albums “1. Outside” and “Earthling”, released a deck of cards “Starman Tarot” (de Angelis, 2018) which had a certain popularity. The very fact of the imposition of the images of D. Bowie’s characters on the Tarot system testifies to the possibility of effective use of the symbiosis of ancient esoteric, mythological and symbolic knowledge and products of pop culture.

Sometimes there was even an identification of creator with his characters, and the “truth” told by them faced an ambiguous reaction from the public. Thus in the late 1970s, having become the Thin White Duke “flirting” with Nazi ideology, D. Bowie made a scandalous statement that Great Britain could benefit from the fascist leader. It is remarkable that the musician himself accused later the created image of negative influencing.

Vivid images including those of a hybrid origin are sure to attract attention and at the same time they turn out to be a space for the formation of post-truth.

Post-truth accompanied D. Bowie’s career from the early days. At first, the performer himself set the tone for post-truth production, telling semi-fictional stories in an effort to attract as much audience as possible. Thus,

...in 1967, Bowie told a journalist for the British music magazine *New Musical Express* (NME) that at the age of eight he moved with his family not to Bromley, but to Yorkshire. He stated that he lived with his uncle in an old farmhouse, “surrounded by wide fields and pastures for sheep and cows”, and nearby there was a cave where Catholic priests hid from Protestants in the 17th century. The interviewer obligingly assented, saying “What a romantic place for a child’s life”. There is a grain of truth in this seemingly pure fabrication. The author Kevin Cann points out in the documented book “*Any Day Now: The London Years*” that David visited his uncle Jimmy in Yorkshire on vacation in 1952, and later he presented those trips as a long stay (Brooker, 2021, p. 36).

Later, listeners and critics offered “suitable” explanations. For example, when discussing the June 2002 album “Heathen”, many people expressed the opinion that it represented the author’s reaction to the events of September 11, 2001 in New York. But this is not so: “Although some of the songs on *Heathen*, with their atmosphere of sorrow and desolation, seemed to speak of the eleventh of September, they were actually written before that date” (Egan, 2017a, p. 429).

The goal, both in the case of fibbing the childhood circumstances and in the case of the press claims about the 2002 album, was the same: to create a beautiful, memorable story.

Here it is, the real post-truth, inspired both by the singer’s ambitions seeking to hook the public through the mass media, and by the audience blurring the lines between the true state of affairs and fiction.

In reality, the lyrics of the album “Heathen” expressed a reflection on such modern global things as, for example, religious experience. Thus, one can feel



disenchantment with the organized religions: the album cover contains stylized photographs of the books by F. Nietzsche, Z. Freud, A. Einstein; and the author himself leaves the following comment: “A man of the 21st century is a pagan: he has no inner light, he destroys a lot and creates little; and, most importantly, he does not feel the presence of God in his life” (David Bowie’s Rules..., 2021).

It is significant that quite recently, in the song “I’m Afraid of Americans”, 1997 album “Earthling”, D. Bowie sang literally the following: “God is an American”.

### **Time mythologization in the work of D. Bowie: reverse chronology**

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It is interesting to examine, using the example of D. Bowie’s legacy, whether the following assumptions about the mythologization of time that we have expressed earlier will find confirmation: 1) “...it seems promising to consider the modalities of the mythologization of time in terms of their implementation as types of being in different spheres of society: for example, in art, in politics, in the media” (Ivanov, 2020, p. 85); 2) “...a special – modern – mythological temporality arises, in which the mythologized past becomes a part of social memory, the mythologized future becomes a utopia, the mythologized present is objectified in mythological practices” (2020, p. 83). The said mythological temporality could arise as a result of active mythmaking work with historical time as well as a result of sacralization and ‘creation’ of sacred time. It should be clarified that mythologization of time is “...the process of endowing aspects of being (social, artistic) belonging to any mode of time with mythological imagery and mythological symbolism...” (2020, p. 83).

The peculiarity of mythological temporality in the case of D. Bowie is that all modes of time are present in it; however they appear, in our opinion, in reverse chronological order: at the beginning of a career it was the future, at the end – the past, and the pursuit of the present accompanies the main period of creativity.

The mythologization of the future is concentrated in the period from 1972 when the album “The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars” was issued to the release of another conceptual album in D. Bowie’s discography – “Diamond Dogs” in 1974.

The very fact of addressing space (in the 1972’ album) and dystopia (in the 1974’ album) already in the early period of D. Bowie’s creative work makes one recall antiquity with a cosmocentric picture of the world and Plato’s projects of creating an ideal state. An important role in this was played by the myths perceived in ancient society not only as the elements of the world picture but also as moral regulators. In particular, Plato, in his work “Republic” (Plato, 2021), expressed belief in significance of myths which told lies for the benefits of the state, and myths were an influential tool for the education of an individual, being the moral regulators mentioned.



The mythologization of the future in the early work of D. Bowie had the form of alternative projects for changing the society. Disagreeing with reality, the singer created versions of a new reality through the forces of a space hero.

From 1975, the soul-imitation album “Young Americans”, to 2003’s “Reality”, Bowie sought to keep up with the time: recall the fascination with the ambient electronic atmosphere of German bands in the late 1970s that was reflected in the albums of the so-called “Berlin trilogy” (“Low”, “Heroes” and “Lodger”); the pursuit of popularity in the mid-1980s (albums “Let’s Dance”, “Tonight” and “Never Let Me Down”) which brought D. Bowie to the rank of A-list pop stars and made him one of the most commercially successful performers; experimenting with trendy musical styles (for example, the drum and bass album “Earthling” in 1997) and so on.

But the climax of such reflection of the present in D. Bowie’s work, in our opinion, is the albums of the early 2000s. At the same time, texts that express reflection on actual contemporary things come to the fore in them. Thus, in the album “Reality” of 2003 D. Bowie is completely absorbed with the problems of the present, in the reality of what is happening and literally invites us into it, saying: ‘Welcome to reality’. Speaking about the work ‘Reality’, the author honestly admitted: ‘First of all, this is an album about the time in which it was created’ (Egan, 2017a, p. 429). And further:

It has become very difficult to say simply “reality” – not “virtual reality”, not “reality show”. Reality has depreciated, but on the other hand – what, in fact, has depreciated? Reality now is something permanently changing, elusive. Each person has his own reality” (2017, p. 431).

In particular, D. Bowie tried to capture and express his reality of New York, the city in which he lived since the 1990s:

I wrote these songs here in New York. Here you feel a special energy. I can feel the sidewalks. Here, the steps have a special ringing sound. I know this sound. And I wanted it to sound on the record (2017, p. 413–414).

The mythologization of the present manifests itself in imitation and adherence to fashionable musical practices of the corresponding time – the time of writing and performing songs. D. Bowie tried to correspond to the spirit of the time, to take the most popular styles and enrich them with songs in his own manner.

An important moment, a kind of starting point for the mythologization of one’s own past, was the year 1993, when, in search of his identity and a sound that would correspond more to his own ideas and tastes and not follow the lead of the audience, D. Bowie gave an interview to the journalist of “Rolling Stone”. Then, nostalgic for the period of the late 1960s – early 1970s, the musician took D. Sinclair on a tour of his favorite places in London. The journalist recalled:

Bowie put in a lot of effort himself... He dug up old diaries, designed the route and marked the places he wanted to visit, provided a driver and a car. It seemed that he had a mission... As if his life flashed before my eyes (2017, p. 242).



N.P. Greco who released the book “David Bowie in Darkness: A Study of 1. Outside and the Late Career” (Greco, 2015), in which the period of “1. Outside” is discussed a lot, also considers the 1990s to be a spotlight in the creativity of D. Bowie. The author noticed that since mid-career, D. Bowie has presented himself as a figure in darkness, progressively more hidden: Bowie requires an audience for his continued celebrity but works against that audience in creation – or rather the destruction – of his star artistic image.

However, the listeners learned about the mythologization of previously created images and life experiences from D. Bowie’s work only in 2013, when on January 8, on the artist’s birthday, the single “Where Are We Now?” was released, and exactly two months later the new album “The Next Day” appeared. It happened when many music critics quite reasonably began to talk about the ending of the singer’s career. But the performer was assisted by his artistic images. The video for the song “The Stars (Are Out Tonight)” in which the Norwegian top model Iselin Steiro played the role of the young Bowie of the late 1960s – early 1970s, became a vivid confirmation of the revival of the mythological images created by D. Bowie throughout his career.

It turns out that D. Bowie’s mythologization of the past consists in an appeal to the previously created and rather strongly mythologized images that live in the minds of the public. We can say that the author was carrying out a kind of revision of his own “mythscape”. At the same time, in the 2010s, D. Bowie was able to fulfill his old dream: staging a musical based on his own works. The premiere of the musical “Lazarus” took place a month before the death of a singer, and was attended by D. Bowie himself (it was his last appearance in public). Of note is that in this production, there was a place for all the periods of creativity that we distinguished almost in equal proportions. All the mythologized modes of time merged into one performance, and in such a new syncretic whole, the multidimensionality of Bowie’s heritage was seen.

Finally, we would like to add the generalizing statement of T. Cinque:

Through studying David Bowie and the “stories” of his fans one can learn a great deal about how one mythopoetic mechanism of meaning-making, Bowie, this hybridized star worked in a number of societies, led by his own inquiry about life and took us, his fans, on that journey (Cinque, 2017, p. 604).

### **“Mythological Reality” of D. Bowie**

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It should be noted further that the relationship with time literally permeates the entire hybrid mythology of D. Bowie: history, modernity and the future are vividly intertwined in the mythological images proposed by the creator. The research of mythological time conducted by V.Yu. Kuznetsov revealed that “...in the developed mythological systems, a fairly holistic projection of the temporal structure is set: ‘past – present – future’” (Kuznetsov, 2006, p. 105). Each mode of



time could be correlated with a certain complex of myths: the past – with etiological ones, the present – with calendar ones, the future – with eschatological ones.

The references to eschatological myths are especially visible in the late work of D. Bowie. The release of the album “1. Outside” in 1995 which presented a number of characters with their expectations of a dark apocalyptic world on the eve of the 21st century was an important part. At the same time, the plot of the album can be viewed as a kind of reincarnation of the calendar myth, which is imposed on the eschatological one (and here we also deal with a kind of hybrid mythology).

It is interesting to note that at the end of 1973, shortly after the theatrical parting with the image of Ziggy Stardust, D. Bowie met the writer W. Burroughs, who got the musician interested with the cut-up technique: “...the text is literally cut with scissors into pieces, which are then folded again into pieces in a random order, giving rise to amazing combinations” (Brooker, 2021, p. 108). Can the cut-up technique be considered as a kind of mythologization mechanism? We believe that it is possible, since a new mythological imagery can be born in such variety.

Everyone was so accustomed to the fact that the real life of the artist was not particularly represented in his works (this was facilitated by the absence of Bowie’s autobiography) that only after his death they were able to decipher the messages from the clips of the last album. The album was released on January 8, 2016, on his birthday and two days before D. Bowie’s death: “On January 11, The Guardian newspaper, which only four days ago disrespectfully greeted the return of ‘the guy in the bandage and with buttons instead of eyes’ asked: ‘Did Bowie give us a goodbye with the album ‘Blackstar’” (Brooker, 2021, p. 208). But just a few days ago, the audience was not surprised by the harsh phrases. For example, on January 7, critic Harriet Gibson wrote the following passage, commenting on the video for the song “Lazarus”:

Unafraid to cast a shadow over his serious art, Bowie in a bandage and with buttons instead of eyes returns to us! Hooray!

She described the imagery in the clip as “the way to Narnia through Nosferatu” (2021, p. 207).

Isn’t it another, characteristic of post-truth, victory of the form over the content and the collective construction of a myth that has no formal boundaries?

The myth collided with real life, but, all the same, the public associated the words “Look up here, I’m in heaven. I’ve got scars that can’t be seen. I’ve got drama, can’t be stolen. Everybody knows me now”, with which the song “Lazarus” begins, with an artistic hero, but not with the performer himself.

Yet quite recently, in the last song of the album “The Next Day”, D. Bowie warned that post-truth continues to accompany him constantly; he

...sings several times: “And I tell myself, I don’t know who I am”. The song ends with the line: “I am a seer, I am a liar”. We can add to this that Bowie is a seer because he is a liar. Falsity does not compromise the true content of his work. Thanks to the falsity, it is revealed (Critchley, 2017, p. 25).



Post-truth here is based on the representation of personal subjective experience of cognizing the world: the core of post-truth “... is ordinary knowledge, on the platform of which personal history, personal experience and personal truth are formed, substituting objective data” (Tikhonova & Artamonov, 2021, p. 30).

The album “The Next Day” was recorded in absolute secrecy and was released after ten years of the author’s creative lull. The only “leak” of information was the 42-word list that D. Bowie sent to writer Rick Moody. Later, in April 2013, the writer prepared a brilliant reflection, which was, so to speak, a review-revision of the musician’s work in the framework of the album “The Next Day” and an epistle as a set of separate words (so mysterious, for example, “Chthonic” or “Effigies”) (Moody). The words of A.F. Losev from “The Dialectics of Myth” (Losev, 2014) that myth is a given personal story in words are instantly recalled.

In addition, it seems that D. Bowie began to apply cut-up technique to his own heritage in his last works.

The single “Where Are We Now?” from the album of 2013, is “...an accidental burst of memory, a scattering of synecdoches, scraps of memories connected by the names of the places – Potsdamer Platz, Jungle Club, KaDeWe department store and Bösebrücke Bridge, a former checkpoint on the border of East and West Berlin. Bowie is a ‘man lost in time’ who is ‘walking the deads’” (Critchley, 2017, p. 83). On the cover of “The Next Day” there is a white square, outside of which Bowie’s image of 1977 is clearly visible, and the words with the title of the album of that year “Heroes” are crossed out. It turns out that after a quarter of a century, new plots are superimposed on the narratives of the Berlin Trilogy (that is, on the lyrics of the albums “Low”, “Heroes” (recall, for example, the hero-lovers at the Berlin Wall) and “Lodger”). Observing the artist’s life ups and downs persistently points to the ideas of another famous researcher of mythology, Joseph Campbell: namely, his myth about the hero’s journey or “monomyth” (Campbell, 1997).

In the album “Blackstar”, which the producer and D. Bowie’s colleague Tony Visconti described as a “farewell gift”, we find many references to the pieces from the 20th century, both in lyrics and music videos, and in music itself. There are 1970s slang in lyrics for “Girl Loves Me”, the references to Major Tom (a character from the 1969 song “Space Oddity”) in the video for “Blackstar”, a striped suit in the video for “Lazarus” (the same as on the cover of the 1976 album “Station to Station”) and breakbeat rhythms from the 1997 drum and bass period in the song “Sue (Or in a Season of Crime)”.

The eponymous clip from the “Blackstar” album immediately became a source of theorizing for many researchers: the ideas of R. Barthes and even the popular actor-network theory of B. Latour were used. R. Barthes’ theory on denotation/ connotation helped M. Kokkidou and V.E. Paschali to enrich their interpretation and discuss “Blackstar” video’s potential meanings. The authors concluded: “In the ‘Blackstar’ song and video, Bowie opened for us a door to his mind to communicate his hopeless present, making at the same time an indirect statement for his passing...” (Kokkidou & Paschali, 2019, p. 69). And D. October sees, in the clip



“Blackstar”, further evolution of the hero from the film “The Man Who Fell to Earth” featuring D. Bowie: “This evolution is not attributable to a single authorial source, as Bowie himself acknowledges by insisting on the involvement of the audience in the ‘grey space’, but the results of active agencies within a network including readers as agents of continuation” (October, 2020, p. 114).

Having visited, a month before his death, the production of the musical based on his own works, D. Bowie quite clearly completed his cycle and approved his own heroic myth. The biblical name of the musical “Lazarus” speaks for itself but it also turns out to be another reoccupation, that time the last in the life of the author: the biblical tradition is imposed on the formed image of the pop culture hero. In our opinion, awareness of the imminent death made it possible for D. Bowie to complete his life’s journey effectively, let alone staging another performance. In the video for the song “Lazarus”, there are two D. Bowies: one is a dying man lying on the bed, Button Eyes, pronouncing the frightening words “I’m in danger, I’ve got nothing left to lose”; the other is a dancing person, passionately composing and nervously writing down a text on a piece of paper, whose creative energy is far from exhausted.

Moreover, in the article “‘Look up here, I’m in heaven’: how visual and performance artist David Jones called attention to his physical death” G. Schott states that “...with Lazarus Bowie transformed customary ways of dying into performance, in doing so, turning what has become an impersonal private medical process into a profoundly public spectacle” (Schott, 2019, p. 146).

There was no post-truth anymore, but David Bowie’s hybrid mythology began to be perceived naturally and organically.

## **Conclusion**

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In the case of D. Bowie, the term “hybrid mythology” acquired an additional, namely, positive dimension associated with the successful exploitation and adaptation of classical myths and mythologemes to contemporary time: the hero myth at first place, and its combinations with cosmogonic, eschatological and cosmogonic plots. D. Bowie case allows us to note that any mode of time can be a subject to mythologization in popular culture (this way is especially easy in situations where recognizable images have already been created and are successfully functioning), and the main agent of mythologization processes and constructor of the corresponding temporality is the performer himself, while the public can only interpret the “encrypted messages”.

Playing on various collisions of myth with reality and using the technique of myth reoccupation, D. Bowie demonstrated to the world all the creative power of “mythological reality”.

Thus, due to the appeal to the well-known mythological plots and images, functioning in a special temporal mode – in reverse chronology, D. Bowie brought pop culture to a new level, where post-truth and hybrid mythology organically



coexisted with each other, and the singer himself and his fans literally lived in a world of created mythological images, – lived by myths.

The result of these processes was a phenomenon that should be called “bowiemythomania”. It is of interest that in 2016, the year of D. Bowie’s death, the Oxford English Dictionary declared *post-truth* the word of the year. At the same time the expression “fake news” became widespread.

In conclusion, we note an interesting circumstance that clearly indicates that the fictional life of the performer in the view of the audience is perceived much more naturally than the real one. Thus, the release in late 1996 of a song with the self-explanatory title “Telling Lies” was accompanied by an online chat on David Bowie’s website. D. Bowie himself and two other people answered the public questions. D. Bowie answered truthfully and the other two lied (according to the song title). After the chat, a vote was taken to determine which of the respondents was the real Bowie. The real Bowie came in third place (Telling Lies..., 2021). Will this news be considered fake in 25 years?

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