



**Myth and the Market**  
**Call for papers for a special issue of *Culture and Organization***  
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### **Why Myth?**

Myth maintains a powerful hold as an object of celebration and denigration. This remains true in thinking about the market, commerce, products and marketing. The celebrants of myth see it as a place of sanctuary for those oppressed by the barrenness of scientific positivism (Levy 1981); it is a way of enflaming consumer desire; it animates and frames moral judgements (Luedicke et al. 2010); it inspires romantic journeys of discovery (Belk et al. 1989); it helps in explorations of liminality; it enables us to reflect on the secularisation of religion and the sacralisation of the secular (Gabriel 2004; Dyck and Wiebe 2012).

Yet myth is also denigrated by the children of the Enlightenment, that great project that sought to dispel any sense of the metaphysical, including fanciful stories of superstition, religion and myth. From a strictly positivist position, myth (and its cousins – dreams and fantasies) is at best flotsam and froth or, at worst, dangerous and delusional. Within this tradition, myth's proper place is as an object of research, and indeed it has long been studied by psychoanalysts, anthropologists and cultural theorists. While Freud (1946) drew inspiration from myth, Marx (1970) sought to expose it as a dangerous illusion, while for Barthes (1957) it was inscribed into consumers' everyday use of objects, nurturing invidious ideologies. This take on myths continues in recent critiques that seek to 'expose the mythological basis' of the market, the marketing concept, advertising, 'sustainable' marketing, GNP growth, and so on (see Jones 2013; Peattie and Crane 2005). Myth, in this sense, is used as a pejorative label in what are best understood as political moves that seek to supplant one myth with (what will in time be seen as) another. Others argue that the greatest lie of all is for modernism to deny its own myth.

This special issue enables exploration of the ghosts in the marketing machine, whether as celebrating, critiquing or re-imagining the founding narratives that pervade marketing. Can we explore the mythic basis of our academic praxis by enquiring into the myths that give shape to current marketplace ideals, for instance, that Puritanism constructed and continues to sustain the American Dream (Alvesson and Willmott 1992)? As marketing and consumer research mature, they are themselves subject to heightened internal critical attention, a major focus of which is to expose, debunk and celebrate the disciplines' mythologies and myth making practices. Perhaps, because marketing theory has yet to develop a history of the field, its accounts of the past are essentially mythological and narrative.

It is argued by some that the politics of finance capital today are reliant on a powerful mythology, to which theory in marketing and consumer research is a key signatory. What then of the mythic basis of 'green' and 'sustainable' marketing? Does myth permeate critiques of the market? Can we enlist ancient myth to better understand our relation to the market, or to re-imagine marketing and the market? Or is myth, wherever we find it, to be identified as mystification to be exposed and exorcized? What then of the paradox that the rational and objective system of modernism itself constitutes an ideology that vouchsafes its own meaning, constituting the 'big lie' that we can experience the world as meaningless (Curry 2012, 82)?

For this special issue we welcome explorations of myth-making and the market, whether positive or negative, from perspectives such as psychoanalysis, history, critical theory, textual analysis and visual culture, as examples.



## Potential themes

We list some themes that have animated scholarship below, and would like to encourage contributions that creatively engage with the mythic imaginary and envisage mythic forms of change and renewal.

*Marketing Myths.* Perhaps exploring the high-mindedness of marketing scholarship as a response to the low deeds of marketing practice. The idea of myth is foundational to the interpretive and cultural turn that took place in marketing and consumer research. This was visible in argument and debate about epistemology, but also a fundamental aspect of the popularity of anthropological and cultural approaches to the study of consumption.

*Journey.* Homer's classic journey involves encounters with giants, Hades, Sirens, gods, monsters, and strange peoples. Remaking *Ulysses* for the modern world, whether through the genius of Joyce, or the consumer odyssey, animated by the hope of understanding quotidian marketplace behaviour in new ways. But where is this taking us? Is western marketing and its creature, the consumer, on the road to nowhere?

*Place.* Exploring the mythologies of the market-place, from the *agora* to the pluriform market spaces that exist today. Deconstructing the myth of the market as natural and eternal. Revisiting the idea that myth provides a place of respite from modernism.

*Spirit.* Academic misrecognition - before the Berlin Wall came down most western academics mistakenly believed Soviet citizens were atheists. Acts of consecration (Heaney 1972), and desecration (McDonald 2008) in relation to the commodity. How myths and myth-making might reshape Enlightenment ideals in the context of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. How myth (re)-enchants the marketplace and production systems, and the morality of such enchantment.

*Mythic Heroes.* From Cúchulainn and Sile na Gig to the Green Giant. From Achilles and Heracles to Marlboro Man. Hero worship and our need for heroes to frame our understanding of time, history and consumption.

*Mythic Things.* Mythological readings of quotidian products. Why are our longings for freedom, or our need for heroes, linked so readily to travel guides, plastics, and laundry detergent?

## Submissions

Please ensure that all submissions to the special issue are made via the ScholarOne Culture and Organization site at <http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/gscs>. You will have to sign up for an account before you are able to submit a manuscript. Please ensure when you do submit that you select the relevant special issue (volume 22, issue 1) to direct your submission appropriately.

The deadline for manuscript submission is **31st January 2015**.

Style and other instructions on manuscript preparation can be found at the journal's website at: <http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/gscs20/current>. Manuscript length should not exceed 8000 words including appendices and supporting materials. Please also be aware that any images used in your submission must be your own, or where they are not you must already have permission to reproduce them in an academic journal. You should make this explicit in the submitted manuscript.

Please direct informal enquiries to the Special Issue editors who are: John Desmond ([jd26@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:jd26@st-andrews.ac.uk)), Donncha Kavanagh ([Donncha.Kavanagh@ucd.ie](mailto:Donncha.Kavanagh@ucd.ie)), Norah Campbell ([norah.campbell@tcd.ie](mailto:norah.campbell@tcd.ie)) or James Fitchett ([j.fitchett@le.ac.uk](mailto:j.fitchett@le.ac.uk)).



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