



## JCR MANUSCRIPT REVIEW HISTORY 002-2 (REVIEWS)

### Editor's Decision Letter

Thank you for resubmitting [your manuscript]. The manuscript was sent to the same readers as before. Reviewers A and C have recommended conditional acceptance, and their conditions are minor. Reviewer B raises some issues that I think of as constructive suggestions (very imaginatively so) rather than hurdles. I urge you to take up their challenges, but to signal your progress and consistent with the recommendation of the associate editor I am calling the decision a conditional acceptance. Nevertheless I think that the manuscript can go from a solid contribution to a very strong contribution ("the next big paper" as B puts it) with some close attention to Reviewer B's suggestions.

There are some stylistic points made by reviewers and I want to endorse them. I agree with B that getting to the goals earlier is a good idea. And then, perhaps a little pedantically, I found the introduction still rather slow going. I think one issue that impedes comprehension is a tendency to depend on instantiation to do the job of abstraction as you define terms. Consider this passage from page 1: "(P)opular myths work by glossing the consequences of historical contingencies, political conquests, and social conflicts as an essentialized and naturalized cultural order". Are these three glosses the only work that popular myths do? I don't know exactly how Barthes puts it, but surely he is not so restrictive? My point is that the reader does not know at this early point in the argument whether it is the concrete instantiations that are the point of the characterization, or whether the point is a more general essentializing.

The next sentence uses a similar instantiating principle to define a term.

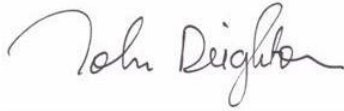
"Placing a Nietzschean spin on Barthes' critical structuralism, Foucault (1977) conceptualized countermemories as the linguistic, material, socio-cultural, and institutional traces of contradictory historical narratives, powers struggles, fractious voices of protest and dissent, socio-political oppressions, and tactics of resistances. These countermemories can be obfuscated, but never fully erased, through the invocation of grand mythic narratives such as the triumph of good over evil, the taming of a wild and dangerous nature by the rationalizing forces of civilization, and the inexorable march of progress."

The casual reader (and most readers are casual on page 1) may not see that you are introducing a central new concept, countermemories, into your nomological net at this point, and not just adding a layer of refinement onto Barthes' idea of myth.. But more important, countermemories are instantiated rather than defined, and the reader cannot tell whether it is the instances that matter to your thesis or the

abstraction. These are minor points, but I like this paper a lot and I am offering my own perspective as a reader on how the argument requires more reading ahead and reading back than seem strictly necessary. The bigger issue is to follow B and the associate editor and try to augment the conceptual extension.

If you resubmit, I shall send the revision to the associate editor only.

Sincerely,



John Deighton

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AE comments for the author(s)

The reviewers agree that the new positioning of the article provides a stronger and more original theoretical contribution. The one remaining concern articulated by Reviewer B is that the current emphasis on counter-memories does not take the paper far enough beyond Peñaloza's work. You certainly recognize her work in the paper, but you need to do more to distinguish your unique contribution here.

Other than that there remain several troublesome points in the paper that require attention. Both Reviewers A and B are rightly bothered by the organization and the lack of foreshadowing of where the paper is going early on. Both Reviewers B and C ask for more precision in terminology to refer to myth, cultural myth, and commercial myth, as well as more consistency in their use (see Reviewer C with regard to magnolias and moonlight).

I also have some remaining concerns that you should be able to address:

1. Conspicuously absent here is any mention of religion. The south is known as the Bible Belt for a reason, and this neglect may or may not be due to the textual material chosen for analysis. At several points you do bring in broad purportedly Christian motifs, but nothing about particularly Southern religiously.
2. On page 9 you suggest that "Rather, consumers interpret Splash Mountain through the lens of their operant cultural beliefs and identity projects whereas these historical ties to subversive African-American folk tales are a dead history, functionally equivalent to a dead metaphor: that is, a once invocative trope that has become a verbal cliché, divorced from its cultural origins, and which no longer generates imaginative elaborations (Lakoff 1987)." This seems doubtful, since the Disneyfied version still has an element of vernacular expression; this is like the days of minstrelsy and blackface white performers taking the mask of greasepaint as license to perform a caricatured lampoon of African Americans and to feel freed to imitate the emotion and style of black performance. Did you actually visit Magic Kingdom in Orlando to examine the performance being discussed or is this discussion based entirely on the secondary accounts cited? If you were talking about what Disney did to European folk tales like Cinderella, your argument would be much more acceptable. But here, lacking consumer data, calling African-American folk tales dead history seems indefensible.

3. You note on p. 13 that *Dukes of Hazard* “does not pull for consumers to read the Bo and Luke Duke characters as intolerant segregationists or reactionary white supremacists.” No, but it does portray the Southern sheriff who chases them this way; so do numerous film portrayals of those in authority in the South.
4. The countermemories that you portray as being enacted by powerful segments in the South may not be limited to the South or the powerful alone. You might also note the civil war re-enactors who portray the “lost cause” Confederate soldiers and officers as far North as northern Washington state—Wendy Bryce had an award-winning film on this topic in the first ACR Film Festival.
5. You refer at several points in the paper to portrayals of the Confederacy as gallant “Christian knights” and of Southern masculinity as a “Christian knighthood.” But note too the group of “knights” known as the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. Even though it started in the North, it is indelibly associated with the South, where indeed it has been most visible and notorious.
6. In footnote 3 you contend that the Southern gothic tradition supports the lost cause myth. Here I think you essentialize the work of a diverse and complex set of writers in an attempt to justify the existence of a cultural monomyth. For example, while this characterization might fit Eurodora Welty’s *Losing Battles* (and this is contentious), it in no way fits much of her other work. It also oversimplifies the Southern gothic subgenre.
7. You stress throughout the paper that we (the South as well as perhaps the world in general) live in a postmodern society. Yet the paper doesn’t demonstrate this; it merely invokes the template of postmodernity to argue that this is the way things are. This is a bit facile. In bringing up Baudrillard’s simulation, you should distinguish between his simulation and his simulacrum; also presumably you would reject his stereotyped characterization of America in his book of the same name.
8. In invoking the notion of collective memory, you should probably cite Halbwachs and perhaps Zerubavel.

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Reviewer A

Comments for the author(s)

This manuscript has improved in a number of ways, making it a much more coherent and directly communicating effort this second time around. Still a pleasure to read, I feel that most of my concerns from the first round have been addressed in this reworked version. The flag issue as well as the unnecessary informant table has been taken care of.

Concerning the paper’s contribution, it has definitely improved (even if it was not a prime concern of mine in the first round) with the focus on marketplace systems of mythmaking. It makes the potential contribution much more important (although I find this particular case and context slightly too weak to really contribute a path-breaking study).

As for the long and meandering introductory part, it is still long but better situated in its early phases and makes more sense with the renewed conclusive part. And here is my sole concern for this version of "Reconstructing the South". As much as I approve of the much more contributive conclusion that has replaced the former version, it now comes in mainly as a "tag", to use a musical metaphor, a nice ending, compelling in its own right but only in terms of the key attached to the remainder of the tune. Obviously, the model is an outcome of the analysis and cannot be presented up front, but I miss some more clear spelling out that this is where this paper is going, because it would make the substantial description of southern mythologies filling the pages until p. 25 much more comprehensible in terms of the exact contribution to the manuscript.

Other than that, congratulations on a fine revision.

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Reviewer B

Comments for the author(s)

I commend the authors of this manuscript for undertaking with energy and wit a revision that asked for a substantial change in positioning from the original manuscript. I see as appropriate and potentially quite productive the new focus they have adopted. My understanding of the new positioning is that the paper now addresses how marketers may work with historically contentious or conflicting cultural meanings/myths to effectively target their contemporary audiences (on page 8, the authors suggest they are addressing how and why, but I think the "why" question is kind of assumed rather than answered). Given the revised focus, I think there is some need and significant opportunity to push the current analysis further to extend the contribution of the current work.

One reason I feel the contribution needs to be extended is that it is not altogether clear how the current work goes beyond Peñaloza (2000) and (2001). These articles seem to me to have said a number (though not all) of the same things as the current manuscript does, albeit in different language.

I do recognize that Peñaloza does not invoke the concept of "counter-memory" to help readers fully appreciate the contradictory quality of cultural narratives linked to particular times/places/things around which contemporary marketers must navigate in order to effectively target current customers. But in her work she does emphasize that cultural themes must be "negotiated" (2000, p. 83), and she does emphasize how marketers selectively emphasize certain themes and invert prior cultural representations to de-emphasize those meanings unsuited to their audience or purposes (2000, p. 104). Other passages from the 2001 paper that the authors allude to on pages 4-5 of the manuscript to me reinforce the point that the ground being trod in this manuscript was visited at least partially by Peñaloza.

At a minimum, I don't think that the current summary of her work is sufficient to make it clear to readers what questions she left unaddressed that this works takes up. One possibility is that the authors might make more clear the uniqueness of their contribution if they could compare and contrast their context to that investigated by Peñaloza, to show how their analysis complements, extends, or even contradicts hers. Obviously, I'm not asking how "The West" differs from "The South" (the current paper is more than eloquent about The South, as was Peñaloza's in

regards The West). What I am suggesting is that the authors might articulate more fully at a conceptual level how they see the challenges facing marketers in Western stock shows as differing from those facing magazine marketers trading on/targeting those who are or might be associated with the South.

Another possibility might be for them to argue that the focus in Penaloza was on revisionist reclamation (though she didn't call it that) while you identify an additional tactic used by *Southern Heritage* (mythological conflation), and a quite different tactic used by a marketer with a different set of constraints (i.e. the symbolic gentrification used by *Today's South*).

Whether the authors choose one of these possibilities or something else altogether, I do think the positioning of this work's questions and contributions relative to Peñaloza's should be more fully articulated.

Further, I think that the authors may be missing an opportunity to push their own contribution even further in the direction they are now heading. I note that the authors state on page 26 that they are profiling their "two most influential mythmakers, in terms of their national recognition and audience reach." I am wondering about the tactics for dealing with cultural myths and counter-memories that are *less* successful – and why. Is it the case that the same approaches handled less deftly are those that are unsuccessful? Or are there actually other approaches that appear to be less successful ... and if so what would these unsuccessful approaches be? Do the two successful approaches identified exhaust the range of those found in the data... or are others apparent but less well developed? Can the authors tell us anything about failed attempts to create commercial myths?

I also felt that the authors repeatedly alluded to "competition" but did not systematically take up this notion. I suspect that in the title, and at some points in the manuscript, the authors are referring to counter memories that compete with the cultural myths marketers might like to mine. At other points, however (on page 4 and in Figure 1, where there is a reference to "competing commercial myths"), the authors appear to mean competition *between* marketers promoting contrasting myths. My question is whether the use of symbolic gentrification tactics by a marketer like *Today's South* actually has implications for others in the same general market space, such as *Southern Heritage*, which tends toward revisionist reclamation? Do the actions of one restrict or impinge upon those of the other in any way, or can multiple marketers manage cultural myths and counter-memories in quite different ways without there being any problem for direct or indirect competitors? If one competitor is attempting to leverage a cultural myth, does it preclude or facilitate the use of other such myths by direct competitors?

While I'm not expecting that all these questions can be addressed, I believe that if the authors can re-examine their data to consider some of them, the paper's contribution would be enhanced.

A little more conceptual clarity is also required in some spots. In particular, I found myself unclear on the distinction between a cultural myth and a commercial myth. I understand that commercial contenders draw on cultural materials to create their own myths... I'm just not sure what contains or bounds a myth as "commercial" versus "cultural."

I'll make one final point that may be more stylistic than substantive, but that may reflect some lingering confusion (mine perhaps) in regards to the positioning of the paper. As my remarks above will have made clear, I see this paper as being about how marketers manage to work with cultural myths when there are abundant counter-memories in regards to those myths. I don't see the focus of the paper as counter-memories per se, despite the fact that the first paragraph is about counter-memories. To me, it would be preferable if the ordering of the paper were re-arranged such that the research goals that now solidify around page 8 of the manuscript were moved to a much more front and centre position (I refer in particular to the statement "we seek to interrogate how and why a given commercial myths elides particular counter-memories that hail from its genealogical heritage," which to me signals the purpose of the paper). Preferably, the "illustration of the impending genealogical analysis" would come after rather than before the statement of purpose.

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Reviewer C  
Comments for the Author(s)

#### Overall Comments

Fantastic! This manuscript has really improved, and I really liked the last version. I think it will make a fine addition to the literature.

#### Specific Comments

My specific comments regard relatively minor issues. First, sometimes the authors use myth to refer to what appear to be variations on the same myth. That practice is confusing to the reader. For example, on p. 17 they refer to the Moonlight and Magnolias variation (on the Lost Cause myth) in one sentence. Then in the next the authors refer to Moonlight and Magnolias as a myth. If memory serves this was not the only place where this inconsistency occurs. Similarly, the authors also use terms like myth, thesis, and stereotype interchangeably. Don't assume the reader will know that these are synonymous. Either use the terms consistently (my preference) or provide notation to the reader on which terms can be interchanged (e.g., Celtic Thesis, p. 19, becomes Celtic myth, p. 24).

#### Ticky Tac Stuff

- "po' and uneducated white folk" probably needs quotes so that po' doesn't look like a typographical error (p. 24)
- check the formatting of your data excerpts (e.g., note the difference between Rob and Candice on pp. 28, 34)