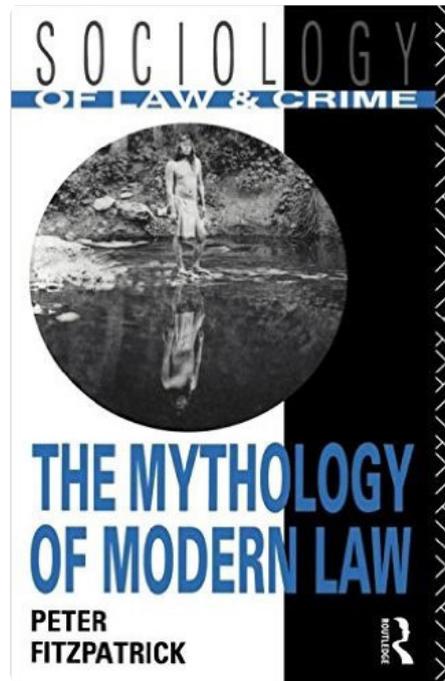


Call for Papers

The Mythology of Modern Law: At 25 Years Melbourne Law School, 12 May 2017



In the opening sentence of Peter Fitzpatrick's seminal book, *The Mythology of Modern Law*, first published in 1992, the claim that "law as a unified entity can only be reconciled with its contradictory existences if we see it as myth" is described as the first chapter's "suspiciously simple argument". Few perhaps would regard even that sentence, let alone the argument of the chapter or the book, as simple. What are law's 'contradictory existences'? What does the author mean by myth? By what mode of reconciliation shall we come to understand the idea of a unified law as myth?

None of these are, of course, simple questions. The claim to simplicity, like the book itself, is a provocation. Its simplicity lies in the audacity of its challenge: everything you think you know about the foundations of modern law, and their relationship to myth, is wrong, and more pointedly, inverted. If this *appears* to be hard to grasp, the author seems to gesture, it's not because of the complexity of the argument but because of how conditioned we have become to the claims that modern law's foundations are solid.

The provocation is also a generative invitation – an invitation to think through the implications of modern law's supposedly coherent, secular and universal pretension being exposed as contradictory, mythic and imperial.

In considering the (still unfinished) legacy of *The Mythology of Modern Law*, this conference seeks to engage with the scholarship of those who have responded to Fitzpatrick's provocative invitation or been influenced by his thinking, whatever their field of study.

We are interested in producing a discussion amongst and between scholars of legal theory, legal history, law and society, law and imperialism, law and colonialism, law and anthropology, and international law, as well as scholars of modernity, mythology, anthropology, sociology, development, race and colonialism, and related disciplines.

We are interested in receiving proposals about papers on (but not limited to) the following suggested topics:

- Engagements with Fitzpatrick's conceptions of law, myth, colonialism, modernity and related themes.
- Reflections on how Fitzpatrick's work, with a (non-exclusive) focus on *Mythology*, has influenced your own work.
- Reflections on how the arguments of *Mythology* relate both to current intellectual debates and current events.
- Critiques and adaptations of Fitzpatrick's work – how, for example, do the provocations offered in *Mythology* need to be updated, reworked, or responded to today?



The conference will be held on Friday 12 May 2017, at Melbourne Law School, University of Melbourne, Australia. If you would like to present a paper, please send an abstract of up to 500 words to Chris Pidgely, law-iilah@unimelb.edu.au by **30 March 2017**. If you would like to attend but not present a paper, please apply to register using the below link. Unfortunately, no funding for travel or accommodation is available to participants. There is no charge to register for the event. Any enquiries can be directed to Sundhya Pahuja, s.pahuja@unimelb.edu.au.

The events around Professor Fitzpatrick's visit are being organised by Kathleen Birrell, Ben Golder, Fleur Johns, Richard Joyce and Sundhya Pahuja with the support of the Melbourne University Institute for International Law and the Humanities (IILAH), the McKenzie Postdoctoral Fellowship, *Counter Narratives*, and the Birkbeck Law School. An address will be given by Professor Fitzpatrick at the conference. An Early Career Researcher workshop will also be held, on 11 May. Details available in due course on the IILAH website.

[Apply to register](#)