

# Recreating, reforming and reframing narratives in oral and written culture: cognitive, anthropological and literary perspectives

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# Abstracts

**Pál Ács**

"Toldi" – A 16th century Hungarian epic poem on the threshold between oral and the written

The narrative poem "Toldi" is the work of the 16th century Hungarian Protestant poet Péter Ilosvai. It appeared in print in 1574. János Arany, perhaps the most outstanding Hungarian poet of the 19th century, adapted it into his epic poem of the same title, which is still regarded as a Hungarian national epic. This is why, over the last two hundred years, a number of theories have been put forward concerning the origin of the 16th century work. Ilosvai's work is a highly problematic one. Its literary elaboration is less than perfect and its structure is fragmented. The story is set in the 14th century, in the age of the knights. The fictitious protagonist, Miklós Toldi, who is an epic hero of the 'strong man' type, with extraordinary physical abilities, struggles his way from obscurity to the court of King Louis the Great (1342–1382) through various adventures and feats of strength, and thus becomes a real hero. His character is a blend of the European 'Strong Hans' with the characteristics of knightly epics. Ilosvai's 'Toldi' is an unparalleled and incomparable work, as its sources are unknown. The aim of this thesis is to show that the 16th century author wove together various unwritten traditions, tales and sagas from the oral culture of the time into a self-contained work. However, this work cannot be regarded as a transcription of an original 16th century folklore text, nor as a reworking of a medieval oral epic. It is therefore a genuine 16th-century Hungarian epic poem that probably never had written sources. The author recorded his text in writing, but his composition and versification imitated the poetic methods of oral poets.

**Pál Ács** is Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of History, Research Centre for the Humanities (Budapest). He is Honorary Professor at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, and co-editor of Magyar Könyvszemle (Hungarian Book Review). His research focuses on Hungarian and European Renaissance literature, intellectual history, among others the history of Reformation. He has participated in international research projects in Bologna, Edinburgh, Copenhagen, Cracow, Leiden, Leipzig, Oxford, Paris and Vienna. His recent book is *Reformations in Hungary in the Age of the Ottoman Conquest* (Göttingen: 2019).

**Sonia Maura Barillari**

Orality in medieval visionary literature

According to Ramon Lull, the *affatus* – that is, language as it is embodied in the voice – is man's sixth sense, through which he can perceive in their complexity the entities of inner space, giving them a body and a 'form' such that others can participate in them. It is also configured as the only instrument capable of reproducing that particular kind of inner experience that is the otherworldly visio. It is precisely in the *flatus vocis*, in orality, that visiones in the Middle Ages experience their truest dimension, landing only later on the written page where they become mediated narratives. A number of visiones will be analyzed here that share the common feature of having lay people as protagonists (*Visio Drytelmi*, *Visio Alberici*, *Visio Tnugdali*, *Visio Godeschalci*, *Visio secunda of Liber revelationis* written by Peter of Cornwall), and as such they were

expressed in languages other than Latin that necessitated translation by clerics, litterati. The result is a hybridization of languages but also a hybridization of cultures that allows us to grasp myths, beliefs, and traditions peculiar to the subaltern classes.

**Sonia Maura Barillari** is romance philologist and from 1991 carries out its research activities at the University of Genoa, from which in 2010 held the position of associate professor. She is mainly interested in edifying literature and medieval theater, supporting the interpretation of texts (latin and vernacular) with the data obtained from the analysis of folk traditions in their contemporary. His other fields of interest are codicology, Dante's studies, the relationships between text and image. Since 1996 she is member of the Scientific Committee of the "Laboratorio Etno-Antropologico" of Rocca Grimalda. Since 2006 she is member of the Scientific Committee of the "Istituto per i Beni marionettistici e il Teatro popolare". Since 2008 she is part of the scientific committee of the journal "Orma. Journal of Ethnological and Historical-Religious Studies". Since 2009, she is member of the Executive Board of the journal "L'immagine Riflessa. Testi, società, culture". Since 2011 she collaborates with the "Instytut Studiów Klasycznych, Śródziemnomorskich the Orientalnych" of the University of Wrocław (Poland). Since 2011 she is member of the Academic Board of the PhD course "Philology, interpretation and history of italian and romance texts" at the University of Genoa. Since 2012 she is member of the scientific committee of the magazine "Italica Wratislaviensia" (University of Wrocław, Poland). Since 2012 she is member of the scientific committee of the series "Metamorphoseion. Metamorphoseion. Collana di storia della scienze e delle tecniche", Rome, Aracne. Since 2012 she is codirector of the series "Autunnonero. Studi sul folklore e il fantastico", Rome, Aracne. Since 2012 to 2018 she was president of the SIFR-School national association. Since 2014 he is codirector of the series «Testoafrente», Aicurzio, Virtuosa-Mente. Since 2019 he is director of the series «Collectanea», Aicurzio, Virtuosa-Mente.

### Ronald J.J. Blankenburg

Turning rumor into delivery: collaboration and appropriation by the Odyssean editors

The oral origins of ancient Greek epic become apparent in the way smaller and larger scale narrative intertwine to express the inherited material and form as a unified and unifying 'container'. Narrators become compilers and editors in the process: both the Iliad and the Odyssey thus evidence their episodic and selective provenance, and provide clues for their post-materialization development as recyclable narratives. On a metapoetic level, the Odyssey is explicit about the editorial collaboration and appropriation of inherited material that characterizes epic's delivery of stories: as a secondary narrator, Odysseus gets, and grabs, the chance to practically replace the primary narrator in the Odyssey. In doing so, Odysseus turns himself into an editor collaborating with the Odyssey's primary narrator: his appropriation of tales told by others reflects the way in which Homeric epyllia were assigned to the poet who claimed them, and brought in line with the aesthetic and style of the larger whole. Together, the secondary narrator Odysseus and the poem's primary narrator, commonly referred to as 'Homer', build a narrative that presents the events of the past as eventualities that are relevant for the here and now. I propose to approach this distributed authorship as an attempt to accelerate the development of the epic genre, much like Shubha Pathak (Divine yet human epics. Reflections of Poetic Rulers from Ancient Greece and India. Cambridge, Mass. & London: Harvard University Press 2014, following Nagy) draws upon the rapid transformation of rumor into klea andron (Demodocus' song on the Greeks' exploits in the Trojan War) as an instance of self-affirmation.

Whereas the narrative of the Iliad and the Odyssey has been assigned to Homer, and the well-known stories-within-the-story of Meleager (Il. 9.529-599), though designed and presented as an epic epyllion by Nestor, and of Odysseus' actions at Troy (told by Helen and Menelaus in Odyssey 4.241-264, 270-289), remain without a named source, many of the embedded epyllia of the Odyssey are appropriated by its eponymous hero. When Demodocus, the singer of the Phaeacians, presents his stories during the dinner party which their king Alcinous hosts in honor of the anonymous guest, these stories take the form of embedded indirect discourse. The tales of the fight between Odysseus and Achilles (Od. 8.75-82), of the love of Ares and Aphrodite (8.268-366), and of the sack of Troy (8.500-520) are all gradually taken from the hands of the Phaeacian singer and presented as independent episodes. In presenting himself as the main character of the first and the last of Demodocus' songs, Odysseus claims status as an editor: he alone can decide on authorship and verisimilitude of the songs.

He even expands on Demodocus' songs, telling the story of the suffering and wandering of a man, that he now claims to be himself. Like Demodocus, Odysseus resorts to embedded indirect discourse: an epyllion (the Apologoi, 9.39-12.450a) that remains independent in a larger whole, but is furnished with an identifiable persona and deliberately given the outlook of the *klea androon*-editions: the glorious deeds of men, to be remembered by posterity. The collaboration between Homer and his co-editor regularly shows the signs of a misinformed primary narrator: Homer can only provide certain information after Odysseus presented it first. Together, Homer and his secondary narrator(s) testify to the workings of the process in which episodes, catalogues, and listicles grew into thematically unified larger scale narratives, possibly with a supportive role for the art of writing. As such, their testimony serves as a comparandum for instances of oral story culture from different times and locations.

**Ronald Blankenburg** is assistant professor of ancient Greek literature and linguistics at Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen, the Netherlands. In 2015, he defended his dissertation on Homeric prosody and phonology (Audible Punctuation, Harvard UP 2022.) His research focuses on the nature and impact of Greek rhythm. He also published on aspect in ancient Greek, Greek drama, the reception of Classics in popular culture, and the biological works of Aristotle.

## **Bartłomiej Błaszkievicz**

### On the Evolution of the Idea of Heroism in the Middle English romance

The argument seeks to explore the transformations and reformulations of the concept of heroism, which formed a central element of the cultural heritage of the classical antiquity, during the High and late medieval period. The analysis will focus on the literary manifestations of the heroic mode developed in the context of the literary persona of Sir Gawain – the pivotal literary character of the Middle English Arthurian tradition, central to the unique corpus comprising twelve verse romances representing the rhymed as well as alliterative tradition, and also appearing in the cornerstone Middle English texts of the stanzaic *Morte Arthur* and the alliterative *Morte Arthure*.

The discussion of this body of literary texts will attempt to account for the specific nature of the Middle English concept of heroism as distinct from the oral, Homeric conception of heroism defined by E. Bakker as a form of "remembering" consisting in a recreation of an act constituting a socially recognized and codified form of individual behaviour. The thrust of the argument will be that the ancient model is here transformed

by the developing ideas concerning mental individuation, which add a more specifically individual dimension to the concept of heroism.

The methodological approach adopted in the argument is designed to analyse the construction of the literary character through the context of the contemporaneous notions concerning the construction of the human identity and mental stimuli behind individual behaviour. Consequently central to the argument shall be the medieval model of human identity perceived as a hierarchy of the intellectual, sensitive and vegetative soul, as well interactions between the chief human mental faculties of the intellectus and voluntas with the intellectual habitus. Tracing the evolution of the concept of the habitus from the Ciceronian model of a sets of determining virtues to the Christian, medieval model perceiving the habitus as moral inclinations interrelated with the Will shall provide here a crucial context to the underlying thesis of the argument.

**Bartłomiej Błaszczewicz**, PhD is Professor of Medieval Literature at the Department of English Studies, University of Warsaw. He has published extensively on literature and culture of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance and continuation of these traditions, on medievalism and various aspects of oral culture in the Middle Ages, medieval versification, the genres of the romance and folk ballad, as well as modern fantasy literature.

His book publications include *Oral-formulaic Diction in the Middle English Verse Romance* (2009), George R. R. Martin's "A Song of Ice and Fire" and the *Medieval Literary Tradition* (editor, 2014) and *Medieval Contexts in Modern Fantasy Fiction* (2021).

### **Matylda Ciołkosz**

Bodies narrating stories: The case of modern postural yoga

The paper will explore how kinaesthesia – the feeling of one's own moving body – may provide a way to reframe and reinterpret culturally shared narratives.

The domain of abstractions – is which we, humans, seem to spend so much time thinking and speaking – is not as abstract as it may seem. To make sense of apparently disembodied concepts, we employ the very embodied experience of sensing, moving, and feeling in a rich, tangible environment. Nowhere is this tendency to use one's embodied experience as an interpretative frame for abstract narratives more palpable than in the practice of modern postural yoga.

Modern postural yoga systems, while focused on performance of complex sequences of bodily postures, strive to maintain a connection with an imagined lineage of yoga philosophers, whose most revered representative is the 4th-5th century scholar Patañjali. In trying to understand Patañjali's technical and abstract "yoga philosophy", modern yoga practitioners use their own sensing, moving bodies as an interpretative device. The bodily domain becomes for them a source of rich metaphors that allow them to retell Patañjali's narrative of suffering, transformation, and liberation as a story of healing and self-realisation through movement.

**Matylda Ciołkosz** is scholar of religions and an Assistant Professor at the Institute for the Study of Religions, Jagiellonian University in Kraków. In her research, she explores how religious concepts and doctrines are shaped by the sensory, motor, and social experience. As a longtime yoga practitioner, a rock climber, and a

musician, she is especially interested in the significance of movement as a meaning-making practice. In her studies she applies the methodologies of anthropology, phenomenology, and cognitive linguistics.

## Maciej Czeremski

Stable terms, changing discourses: The case of *axé*

Axé is a term that is originally associated with the culture of the Yorubas, an African people living in the Gulf of Guinea area (modern Nigeria, Benin, Togo). Its meaning corresponds more or less to the concept of mana currently used in anthropology, that is, a kind of energy that sustains the functioning of reality. Along with the slaves, the term traveled to Brazil, becoming an essential component of the local syncretic religion candomblé, and due to its influence on capoeira - a Brazilian-origin martial art - is now used by capoeiristas around the world.

The article will discuss the history of this axé proliferation. It will also take up the issue of why exactly this term has survived the process of selectively incorporating elements of Yoruba culture into a syncretic form of Afro-Brazilian candomblé, as well as the transition from the world of religion, to martial arts, and the global expansion of capoeira. The article will put forward the thesis that this happened due to the peculiarities of human cognitive processes. Indeed, under the conditions of oral transmission, the correspondence of the ideas represented by the given terms with the natural intuitions of the human mind about the ways of the world is responsible for successful cultural transmission.

**Maciej Czeremski** (b. 1978) dr hab. Religious studies scholar, mythologist. Works at the Institute for the Study of Religions (Jagiellonian University). From a semiotic and cognitive perspective, he studies the specific way of thinking in traditional communities and their expressions, such as myth, magic, taboo, totemism. Monographs: *Struktura mitów. W stronę metonimii* [Structure of Myths. Towards Metonymy] Kraków 2009, *Mit i utopia* [Myth and Utopia] (together with Jakub Sadowski) Kraków 2012, and *Strategia mitu w marketingu. Jak wiedza o tradycyjnych opowieściach i ewolucji ludzkiego umysłu pomaga zarządzać marką* [Myth Strategy in Marketing. How the Knowledge of Traditional Stories and the Evolution of the Human Mind Helps to Manage a Brand] Kraków 2016, *Mit w umyśle. Ewolucyjno-kognitywne podsatwy form mitycznych* [Myth in Mind. Evolutionary-cognitive Foundations of Mythical Forms], Kraków 2021.

## Casey Dué

A New Song of Troy, with Tears: The Sack of Troy and the Captive Woman's Lament

This paper takes as its starting point a choral ode in Euripides' *Trojan Women* (511–552). Since the epic *Ilioupersis* does not survive except in summary form, this choral ode is one of the few surviving accounts in ancient Greek literature of the sack of Troy. (In art we are more fortunate; although the metopes on the North side of the Parthenon are ravaged by time and barely legible, several vase paintings depict the sack.) The ode is question, however, claims to be a "new" song of Troy (καὶνὸν ὕμνων 512). What is new about it? Building on the arguments of my 2006 book, *The Captive Woman's Lament in Greek Tragedy*, the seminal work of Margaret Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in the Greek Tradition*, and more recent scholarship on the play (especially Suter 2003, Sansone 2009, Munteanu 2010–2011), I will argue that while the

epic *Ilioupersis* was a song tradition composed by and for men—though perhaps influenced by the lament traditions of ancient women—Euripides has reframed the story as lament performed by captive women upon the destruction of their city. In this new retelling, the song of Troy is not *kleos*, but *akhos*. Given that Euripides and possibly fifth-century BCE audiences were male, what changes when women tell the story of Troy? What continuities remain? We will see that in fact Euripides has crafted this "new" song of Troy with more continuities than changes. The *Iliad* closes with the laments of the soon-to-be captive Trojan women. Odysseus is famously compared to such a woman while listening to Demodokos' epic performance of the sack of Troy. On the Mykonos *pithos* and in archaic Athenian vase paintings, women are taken captive and the atrocities of the sack dominate the imagery. Neither the tragic form nor the lamenting voices of Trojan women are new for Euripides, since he has already explored these poetic structures in the *Hecuba*. And so the question remains, what about the ode is new? Scholars are divided as to whether to link the play too closely to the events in Melos of the prior year, or the mounting Sicilian expedition. I suggest that we can find in such links a cognitive connection to oral tradition, in which a song is simultaneously traditional and ever evolving, the "same" and always changing, both old and always "new." Euripides' ode can be about Troy and Melos at the same time, a new song that has not changed.

Casey Dué [biblioblio note]

### Ronald M. James

A folkloric look at the storyteller and the scribe

Storytellers have practiced their art throughout history. Because storytelling is so central to humanity, some have offered the name *Homo narrans*, "human the storyteller," as a designation for our species. Many early examples of writing have hallmarks of being records of stories circulating at the time, and this phenomenon is echoed over the centuries. The interplay of written documents and oral tradition affected both profoundly: while many early scribes appear to have been attempting to record folktales and legends, written records of narratives likely affected what was circulating. This interplay continues to the present, a subject worth considering.

**Ronald M. James** is a retired American state historic preservation officer and former chair of the National Park System's Historic Landmarks Committee. With publications spanning more than four decades, he has written on history, folklore, archaeology, and architectural history dealing with subjects in Europe and the American West. James published *The Folklore of Cornwall: The Oral Tradition of a Celtic Nation* in 2018, a finalist for the Katharine Briggs Award of the Folklore Society. His most recent of sixteen books, is the newly released, *Monumental Lies: Early Nevada Folklore of the Wild West*. In 2016, James was elected to the Gorsedh Kernow, the bardic council of Cornwall, taking the name Carer Henwethlow, "Lover of Legends."

### Joanna Janik

Libanius and John Chrysostom on the riot in Antioch 387 AD

In the February 387 AD the vehement turmoil broke out in Antioch; the mob attacked the governor's palace, destroyed statues of the emperor and his family and dragged them through the city. The consequences of the riot might have been detrimental, but Theodosius finally pardoned the city; the dramatic events were described by Libanius (Or. 19-23) and John Chrysostom (21 homilies, PG 49); John Chrysostom, the freshly appointed preacher in the Christian church and the most talented student of Libanius, was composing and



delivering his sermons *De statu*s (On the statues) between February 27 and April 27 (Easter Sunday), his speeches were contemporary to the events in the city, whereas it is generally believed that Libanius, one of the most prominent intellectuals of the late antiquity, committed to the traditional pagan religion, prepared his orations, except Speech against the refugees, after the reconciliation. The existence of the two accounts, prepared by the contemporary authors, who were both witnesses to the events, yet might have had observed the situation from the different point of view, provide us with the excellent opportunity to compare the opinions, motivations and rhetorical technique of two influential personalities.

**Joanna Janik**, assistant professor in the Institute of Classics, Jagiellonian University, Kraków,

member of Polish Philological Society and the Commission of Classical Philology in the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences. She obtained her PhD in 2001, and her post-doctoral degree, habilitation, in 2013. Joanna Janik has been interested in literature of archaic and classical Greece, especially Greek political terminology, early epic poetry and rhetoric of IV century BC. She has published two books (*"Terms of the Semantic Sphere of dike and themis in the Early Greek Epic Poetry"*, Polska Akademia Umiejętności, Kraków 2003, *"Political Concepts and Language of Isocrates"*, Kraków 2012) and several articles (inter alia in *EOS* and *Classica Cracoviensia*).

### **Izabella Malej**

Pre-phenomenon of the Symbolic Forms. Vasily Rozanov's Reinterpretation of Egyptian Mythology

Vasily Rozanov (1856-1919) was a Russian philosopher, religious thinker and scholar, historian, writer and journalist. Along with Vladimir Solovyov and Nikolai Berdyaev, Rozanov became the most important creator of the intellectual movement at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. By being the critic of modernity, Rozanov was looking for a cure, which might heal it, in pagan cultures preceding the classical era – he focused on ancient Egypt, Aegean and the Etruscans' cultures. He first became interested in mythological stories from Ancient Egypt in 1916-1917 which, at the same time, can be treated as one of his stages of withdrawing from Christianity which he accused of supporting the forces of death against forces of life. As an apologist for life and freedom, he found their sources in Egyptian Mythology which he reinterpreted in his own way towards the end of the life. For the Russian writer, a myth on the level of fixed phrases, just like a panting on the level of graphic signs, represents a certain form which gives the possibility to elevate the sphere of "clean sensuality" to the rank of a domain characterized by axiology. Mythology to Rozanov is not really a collection of various myths belonging to one culture, but rather a certain outlook. Rozanov's peculiar way of thinking about Egyptian myths through signs-pictures proves his desire to uncover/reach pre-phenomenon of the symbolic forms that Ernst Cassirer wrote about. Osiris reborn as a symbol of fertility and indestructibility of life; a scarab which symbolizes the change from death to life; animals which express the "straightforwardness" of life – these are the three main pillars of Rozanov's interpretation of Ancient Egypt. In the mythical tales, the Russian philosopher found a civilization which supported life and fertility. Paradoxically, his journey in search of the eternal life ends with his apologia for the death as only what dies has a chance to come back to life via decomposition. Emerging in the world of the ancient potency, Rozanov tried to make his dreams true, not only about an ideal perfect world, but also about a search for a paradise which was lost in the past.

**Izabella Malej** (b. 1968) prof. dr hab.; Slavic philologist, Russian philologist. Professor at the Institute of Slavic Studies (University of Wrocław). Member of the Wrocław Scientific Society, Polish Rusycist Society,

Committee of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Foundation for the Promotion of Science: Kasa im. Józef Mianowski. Her research interests revolve around: Russian literature of the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> c., the phenomenon of modernism in European culture, correspondence between literature and fine arts, literary symbolism and its relationship to philosophy, anthropology, psychology/psychoanalysis, religious studies, Russian avant-garde. Monographs: *Tajemnice duszy. Michaił Wrubel i psychoanaliza* [Secrets of the Soul. Mikhail Wrubel and Psychoanalysis] Kraków 2017, *Eros w symbolizmie rosyjskim (filozofia – literatura – sztuka)* [Eros in Russian symbolism (philosophy – literature – art)] Wrocław 2008, *Syndrom budy jarmarcznej, czyli symbolizm rosyjski w kręgu arlekinady (A. Blok i A. Biely)* [The Syndrome of the Puppet Show or Russian Symbolism in the Circle of the Harlequinade (A. Blok and A. Biely)], Wrocław 2002, *Indywidualizm impresjonistyczny. Konstantina Balmonta świat wyobraźni poetyckiej* [Impressionistic Individualism. Konstantin Balmont's World of Poetic Imagination], Wrocław 1999, *Impresjonizm w literaturze rosyjskiej na przełomie XIX i XX wieku. Wybrane zagadnienia* [Impressionism in Russian Literature at the Turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Selected Issues] Wrocław 1997.

### Marko Marinčič

#### Vicissitudes of bardic performance in Virgil's *Aeneid*

The contribution is dedicated to Virgil's use of narrative patterns pertaining to orality in his re-telling of the Trojan war. The basic paradox is that whereas the *Aeneid* is a purely literary creation, oral sensibility was still very pronounced in Roman times due to the practice of oral reproduction of texts. This paper argues that Virgil's understanding of bardic performance (the "apologoi" of Aeneas) and even of intertextuality (intertextuality as "embedded speech") might have been much closer to modern oralist theories than anything before Parry and Lord.

**Marko Marinčič** is professor of Roman and Greek literature at the University of Ljubljana (Slovenia). His main fields of interest and publication are Hellenistic and Roman poetry (Catullus, Virgil, Appendix Vergiliana, Ovid, pseudo-Ovid, Statius), Greek and Roman prose fiction, and the reception of ancient literature in Europe. He is currently working on a monograph entitled *Moralised Lives and Cosmic Histories: Reinvention of Greek Myth in Roman Epic*. He is a prolific and renowned translator of Latin, Greek and French literature into Slovenian (Greek lyric poetry, Greek tragedy, Roman comedy, Catullus, Virgil, Ovid, Tertullian; Racine, Claudel, modern French poetry).

### Leonard Muellner

#### The Interpenetration of Verbal and Visual Art in Ancient Greek Performance Tradition

In the study of Homeric epic, the reflex, the unconscious assumption has often (though not always) been that the text is prior to the image, both in historical and in functional terms: that is, that verbal art came first and inspired visual art, and in order to understand visual art like vase painting, one must consult the verbal art upon which it depends. I will argue that making no assumption about the priority of either medium of expression is valid from a theoretical standpoint, in particular with reference to what can be learned from cognitive psychology about the relationship between verbal and visual memory and the functioning of visual

imagination. One theoretical reason not to think of verbal art as prior to visual art is to accept the integrity of each of these two arts as a coherent and effective system of representation, each with its own traditions, processes, qualities, and achievements, since representation in one by definition cannot ever be the same as representation in another. Another reason to do so is what we have learned from cognitive science about humans' visualizing imagination. There is general agreement that humans are generally aware of possessing a visualizing imagination, not just a visual memory. Humans' visual imagination is a faculty that stores and recalls and creates visual images of objects and persons and events that are not physically present. Cognitive psychologists have even shown that the parts of the brain involved in processing the visual perception of objects and real events that are physically present and ongoing are the same as those involved in the process of imagining and manipulating mentally objects and events that are not present or ongoing, that are merely being spoken of. As a result, if we try to reconstruct the moment of the simultaneous composition and reception of traditional verbal art, it is proper to posit that there is a third simultaneous process going on, a visualization process taking place within the mind's eye of both the singer and the members of the audience, who are not passive listeners or readers but actually passive performers. So we can imagine that as the ancient singer sang, both he and his audience, consciously or not, visualized what was being described in the epic narrative. In other words, in a performance tradition, the boundary between visual and verbal art is blurry, and the two arts are in fact complementary: in performances of verbal art, visualization is present but recessive; and in the creation and reception of visual art, verbalization is present but recessive. There is in fact no need to posit that one is inspired by the other: each has its own processes, and in a world like that of Ancient Greece through the 5th Century BCE, it is also reasonable to posit that both were dependent on a third source of images and words, what C. J. Herrington has called "the song culture" that is part of everyone's worldview and that is the source of all verbal and visual instantiations of myth. My paper will illustrate and explore these general principles with specific examples of vase painting, of the description of objects of visual art in verbal art, and with models of the way to understand and interpret medium.

**Leonard Muellner** is Professor Emeritus of Classical Studies, Brandeis University. His scholarly interests center on Homeric epic, with special interests in historical linguistics, anthropological approaches to the study of myth, and the poetics of oral traditional poetry. His recent work includes "Theory and Practice of the Absent Sign," in *Interdisciplinary Uses of Homer: in Dialogue with Douglas Frame*, ed. I. Papadopoulou, 2021; "On Plato Not Misquoting Homer and What's 'New' at Republic 424b-c," *Classics@ Issue* 22, 2022, ed. G. Grewal; and "Odyssey 15," 5/1/2023, preprint of chapter for *Oxford Critical Guide to Homer's Odyssey*, ed. J. P. Christensen, in *Classical Continuum* 2023.05.01

**Gregory Nagy**

**Łukasz Neubauer**

ONGAN PA WORD SPRECAN WUDU SELESTA: a Close Look at the Interpersonal, Oral-styled Discourse between the Man and the Cross in the *Dream of the Rood*

The *Dream of the Rood* occupies an important, perhaps even central, position in our endeavours to understand the character and spirit of Christianity in Anglo-Saxon England. Its syncretic framework makes a bold attempt to marry Christian theology with the rudiments of pre-Christian beliefs and traditions. The

homiletic character of *The Dream of the Rood* also finds a perfect outlet in the poet's employment of two narrators, perhaps in some measure reflecting the nature of many a verbal exchange between a homiletician and his audience, one in which the former more or less directly addresses the latter in order to facilitate his reception of the Word of God. What is more, the poem's central narrator, the Cross, clearly relates to the listener's cultural heritage, skilfully interweaving its vivid account of the Passion with elements of early Germanic heroic tradition. This, it seems, strives to replicate the discursive character of oral, if for the most part, monological practices of Christian missionaries in early Anglo-Saxon England, where, following the directive of Pope Gregory the Great, they are said to have been trying to, first and foremost, appeal to the listeners' imagination and sense of wonder. The proposed paper seeks to tag and subsequently study in detail the oral-styled elements of the narrative in *The Dream of the Rood*.

Łukasz Neubauer [biobiblio]

### Mariusz Plago

Renarration and Continuation of the Jason myth in Jan Skorski's *Lechus*

*Lechus: Carmen heroicum* by Jan Skorski is a large poem written at the end of the Baroque era. This work, which tells the prehistory of the Polish state, was intended to be a Polish national epic. The forefather of the Poles is Lechus, a newcomer from a distant land (from the Dalmatian coast). As in many works of this type, the author is heavily inspired by the *Aeneid*. He draws numerous motifs and scenes from it, constructing his main character as another Aeneas (the Trojan tale is also mentioned explicitly in the poem). However, the ancestors of the Poles were not indigenous inhabitants of the northern Adriatic coast either. They came to this area from Colchis, the land of King Aetees. In my paper, I intend to focus on how Skorski uses and renarrates the myth of Jason. First, this myth, mentioned several times in the poem, undergoes significant modifications. It begins to resemble another founding myth that was popular and very important in antiquity: the Theban myth. In addition, Skorski's story of the golden fleece is linked to the Trojan myth. And finally, it becomes part of Polish ethnogenetic and ethno-political myths, becoming a voice in ongoing discussions.

**Mariusz Plago** is Classical Studies Scholar and Associate Professor at the Institute of Classical, Mediterranean and Oriental Studies, University of Wrocław. His research interests focus on the Roman epic poetry of the Augustan and Empire periods (especially Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Lucan's *Civil War*), the civil war theme in Roman literature, modern literary theory in the study of ancient literature and reception of antiquity in modern literature and art. A co-editor of a monograph: *Ars recusandi. Odmowa jako zabieg literacki w tekstach greckich i łacińskich od starożytności do końca XVIII wieku* [*Ars Recusandi. Refusal as a Literary Device in Greek and Latin Texts from Antiquity to the End of the 18th Century*], Warszawa 2022. He is currently working on a Polish translation with an introduction and commentary of Maffeo Vegio's *Antonias*, the Christian epic of the early Renaissance.

### Gregor Pobežin

Speech made to believe? How history(iograph)y became dependent on patterns of oral culture

The article examines how, despite the methodological and rhetorical efforts of its protagonists, patterns of oral culture were never completely 'shaken off' by historiography. Even when history, as a genre that 'tells the

truth about past events', was apparently separated from its older literary predecessors, it continued to flirt with all sorts of epic techniques. From the few surviving examples of chronicle historiography we get the impression that the characters did not have to speak, but even in the earliest (surviving) historical texts the historical protagonists speak - sometimes at great length. There is no doubt about some of these recorded speeches - one such example is probably Pericles' speech after the first year of the Peloponnesian War (Thuc. 2,34-46). But many of the speeches function as a kind of philosophical exercise in style, even if in these cases we allow for the possibility that they were at least roughly sketched in some form of official records. Moreover, in those rare cases from antiquity where more than one author writes about the same situation, the content of what is written can also vary widely. By examining some of these speeches (e.g. Caesar's and Cato's speeches in Sallust *Bellum Catilinae*), as well as some characterisations, we will look closely at some of the most indispensable narrative techniques of historiography.

**Gregor Pobežin** (b. 1975) is a researcher in ancient historiography and the question of sources for ancient historians, the author of several original scientific articles and the author or co-author of several monographs. He is an associate professor at the Faculty of Humanities (University of Primorska, Koper) and the head of the Institute of Cultural History of the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. He was or still is actively engaged in other institutions, e. g. the University of Zadar (Croatia), the University of Ljubljana, the Masaryk University in Brno, the University of Gdansk and others. As a lecturer, he has also intensively built contacts with the foreign professional community at international conferences, e.g. at the University of Tours, University of Oxford, University of Essex, University of Trnava, University of Pecs, University of Wrocław etc. Within the framework of these international connections, he was involved in the COST research initiative "Reassembling the Republic of Letters" as a representative for Slovenia and is currently involved as one of the principal investigators in the H2020 project INTAVIA: In/Tangible European Heritage Visual Analysis, Curation & Communication.

### **Elżbieta Przybył-Sadowska**

Title: "Savior of nations" - modern reinterpretation of the traditional Russian state idea and its representations in Orthodox art

In the tradition of Russian Orthodoxy are inscribed the mechanisms of sacralising the history of the Moscow State and later Russia, and Russian power. The most well-known and widespread concepts embedded in this mechanism were the ideas of Holy Russia and Moscow as the Third Rome. The political changes initiated by the Bolshevik Revolution changed the nature of these concepts, but did not completely abolish them. According to the official ideology, the USSR still remained the "savior" / "savior of nations," although already only in secular and political terms, as a country bringing deliverance from the oppression of capitalism (later - "imperialism"). However, the collapse of the USSR created an ideological void. There was a lack of an idea capable of replacing the previously load-bearing concepts that gave meaning to Russian history and justified the actions of the authorities. Attempts to fill this void have been observable in recent years, and their most interesting aspect is the attempts made to reinterpret and sacralise 20th-century Russian history. The inscription of the history of the USSR in a religious context can be observed at various levels. In this article, I will focus on a semiotic analysis of the space and iconography of selected Russian Orthodox churches built in the last twenty years, which may be examples of such efforts: (1) the Church of All Saints in the Russian Land of the Shining (the so-called. Orthodox Church on the Blood) in Yekaterinburg, brought to the site of the

assassination of the Tsar's family in 1918, consecrated in 2003; (2) the Church of the Resurrection in Kubinka k. Moscow, sometimes referred to as the Russian Army Orthodox Church or the Church of War, consecrated in 2020; (3) All Saints' Church in Volgograd, part of a complex dedicated to soldiers who took part in the Battle of Stalingrad, consecrated in 2005. All the sites selected for analysis are examples of recent attempts to incorporate the history of the USSR into the concept of the sacred dimension of the history of the Russian state. The purpose of the analysis will be to try to capture the ways in which this sacralization is accomplished through the architecture and iconography of the church buildings. All of the selected buildings are fused with museum complexes, which will also make it possible to study the relationship between the iconography of Orthodox churches and the narrative of historical events presented in museum programs.

The analysis presented in the article will provide a better look at the traditional ways of justifying Russia's aggressive actions in the international arena, including the attack on Ukraine.

**Elżbieta Przybył-Sadowska** (b. 1968) religious studies scholar. Professor at the Institute for the Study of Religions (Jagiellonian University), Editor-in-Chief of "Studia Religiológica. Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego", since September 2020 director of the Institute for the Study of Religions of the Jagiellonian University. She conducts research on the history of religious ideas and the history of Christianity, especially the history of Eastern Churches and Catholicism in Poland. Monographs: *W cieniu Antychrysta. Idee staroobrzędowców w XVII wieku* [In the Shadow of the Antichrist. The Ideas of Old Believers in the 17<sup>th</sup> c.] Kraków 1999, *Prawosławie* [The Orthodox Church] Kraków 2000 and 2006, *Wyznania wiary. Kościoły orientalne i prawosławne* [Creeds. The Oriental and Orthodox Churches] Kraków 2006, *Triuno. Instytucje we wspólnocie Lasek 1911–1961* [Triuno. Institutions in the Community of Laski 1911–1961] Kraków 2015, and – together with Jakub Sadowski and Dorota Urbanek – *Rosja. Przestrzeń, czas i znaki* [Russia. Space, Time and Signs] Kraków 2016.

## Ad Putter

Keeping it in the family: from history to ballad in some medieval ballads

Although it has been argued that popular ballads are a post-medieval phenomenon, there exist in a number of vernacular songs which have all the characteristics of traditional ballads. This paper looks at some traditional in Dutch and English in which histories have been reimagined in ways typical of orally transmitted ballads. Particular attention will be paid to the tendency of ballads to situate actants in the context of their families and to rationalise events and motivations as arising from familiar family tensions. Max Lüthi termed this tendency 'der Familiarismus der Volksballade'. Recognizing this tendency, I will argue, can explain why and how histories have been reshaped in a number of ballads surviving in written sources from the late medieval period and the sixteenth century.

**Ad Putter** is Fellow of the British Academy and Professor of Medieval English Literature at the University of Bristol, where he directs the Centre for Medieval Studies. Publications include *An Introduction to the Gawain Poet* (Longman, 1996), *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend*, co-edited with Elizabeth Archibald (Cambridge University Press, 2009), and *North Sea Crossings: The Literary Heritage of Anglo-Dutch Relations, 1066-1688*, co-authored with Sjoerd Levelt (Bodleian Library, 2021). His work on orally transmitted stories can be found in collections such as Karl Reichl (ed), *Medieval Oral Literature* (2016) and Philip Bennett and Richard Firth Green (eds.), *The Singer and the Scribe* (2004).

## Jakub Sadowski

Marxism in the mirror of the Catholic narrative. The Italian ecclesiastical discourse of the encyclical "Divini redemptoris" (1937)

Pius XI's encyclical 'Divini redemptoris' (On Atheistic Communism) was the first official dogmatic document of the Catholic Church devoted entirely to the condemnation of communist doctrine. The existence of the totalitarian USSR, the ideological confrontation and civil war in Spain, and the activities of communist parties in Europe made the Catholic Church perceive in Marx's doctrine (and especially in its Soviet redaction) a fundamental civilisational threat—and it was strongly supported in this regard by the Mussolini government. Under such conditions, the content of Pius' encyclical was systemically disseminated by the structures of the Catholic Church and the Italian Catholic Action, controlled by the Church. Commentaries in the press and books, textbooks, methodological and didactic literature became elements of the document's discourse. Communism was critiqued in this discourse along the doctrinal line of the encyclical, but also portrayed through Catholic imaginations. This article attempts to reconstruct a portrait of communist doctrine, sketched using biblical representations and categories of Catholic dogmatics.

**Jakub Sadowski** – dr. hab., historian and cultural semiotician, professor at the Jagiellonian University, director of the Institute of East Slavonic Philology at the Jagiellonian University, head of the Department of Linguistic and Cultural Communication at the Jagiellonian University

## Andrzej Szyjewski

Miraculousness in Slavic carol songs

In the traditional Slavic areas, carol groups focused on two types of activity, oral and performative. As part of the oral framework, they sang ritualized songs (*carols, shchedrovkas*, etc.) on themes referring to myths telling about the activity of sacred forces in the model threshold period. These songs were addressed to different groups of household members (host, hostess, maidens and bachelors). For the interpretation of the meaning of the winter holiday, an important role is played by symbols and motifs presented in carols, organized in narrative schemes forming a specific model of the world. Since the community of symbols and motifs covers the whole of Slavic culture, one can assume their archaic character, despite their tendency to permutation, to absorb syntagmas from other types of ritual songs (wedding, spring [*konopielki*], midsummer [*kupalne*], etc.), and to be contaminated with ideas proper to the Christian model of the world.

**Andrzej Szyjewski** (b. 1963) prof. dr hab.; religious studies scholar, anthropologist of religion. Professor at the Institute for the Study of Religions (Jagiellonian University). Head of the Department of Phenomenology and Anthropology of Religion. His research field includes the theory of myth, shamanism, the religions of Australia and Oceania, the processes of transformation of religion in traditional communities, and Tolkienism. Monographs: *Symbolika kruka* [The Symbolism of the Raven] Kraków 1991, *Religie Australii* [Religions of Australia] Kraków 1998, *Etnologia Religii* [Ethnology of Religion] Kraków 2001, *Religia Słowian* [Religion of Slavs] Kraków 2003, *Od Valinoru do Mordoru* [From Valinor to Mordor] Kraków 2004, *Szamanizm* [Shamanism] Kraków 2005, *Religie Czarnej Afryki* [Religions of Black Africa] Kraków 2005, *Mitologia australijska jako nośnik tożsamości* [Australian Mythology as a Bearer of identity] Kraków 2014.



## Sławomir Torbus

### Textualisation of oral tradition in the synoptic gospels

The paper aims to demonstrate that certain features of the written composition of the text of the synoptic gospels testify to the process of reoralizing the textualized oral tradition. The thesis presented is based on the proved by M. D. C. Larsen assumption that the synoptic gospels are composed of notes (*hypomnemata*) containing a written recording of the story of the words and deeds of Jesus. Various collections of elaborated notes, respectively, over time took the shape of textual traditions called the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark and Luke. However, the manner in which the notes were compiled and arranged for practical use in church teaching indicate a reoralization of the written material. Adopting such a perspective has far-reaching consequences for the interpretation of the material contained in the synoptic gospels, first and foremost avoiding the application to them of anachronistic notions associated with the author's modern process of creating and publishing books.

**Sławomir Torbus** (b. 1975). Assistant professor at the Institute of Classical, Mediterranean and Oriental Studies at the University of Wrocław, Poland. Lecturer in Biblical Greek and New Testament Exegesis at the Evangelical School of Theology in Wrocław. He specializes in the field of the rhetorical analysis of the letters of the Apostle Paul. Author of the book *Listy św. Pawła z perspektywy retorycznej* („The Letters of St. Paul from a Rhetorical Perspective”). He conducts research on the relationship between the text of the synoptic gospels and the oral tradition behind them.

## Bogdan Trocha

### Texts of the Slavic oral tradition – myth, epic and magical fable – in contemporary popular culture renarrations

The subject of analysis will be contemporary novels by authors from the USA, Poland and Slovakia who have created literary texts closely related to the Slavic oral tradition. The analyses will be based on the basis of the rhetorical theory of renarration in the functional perspective of the texts described, and on Vladimir Propp's formal concept in the structural perspective.

The first group of texts is related to the magical fairy tales dedicated to Maria Moriewna, Vasilysa, Koschei the Immortal and Baba Yaga. The renarrations associated with these fairy tales are not explicit. The functions in which they are used are both reductive and speculative. In the first case, the emphasis is placed on the comic aspects of semiosis; in the second, however, there is a function that problematises the symbolic content present in the texts of the fairy tales. These contents are constructed in such a way as to point to the possibility of extending the symbolic meaning of certain motifs from these fairy tales with contemporary connotations.

The second group of texts is centred around the epic songs of Kievan Rus, that is, the bylines of the Kievan cycle. The Slovak trilogy based on the Kiev perennials combines two elements; the epic and the historical. The result is novels in which both epic and historical elements are used in such a way that both a specifically aletheic and reductive function can be indicated.



The last group of texts is related to literary attempts to reconstruct or rather construct Slavic mythology. The most important text in this case is the book "Dary bogów" ("Gifts of the Gods") by Witold Jablonski, an attempt at a fictionalized reconstruction of the mythology of Western Slavs.

The three groups of novels presented show how renarrations of the oral tradition of Slavic culture take place. They also indicate the specific mechanisms of semiosis present in them. They also allow a preliminary identification of the cultural conditions of these treatments present in the contemporary world.

**Bogdan Trocha**, PhD, DSc, ProfTit. Philosopher and literary scholar. Head of the Mythopoetics and Philosophy of Literature Laboratory at the Institute of Polish Philology, University of Zielona Góra. Scientific director of the series of international conferences on fantasy literature FANCUD (2007-2012) and an annual cyclic conference on Slavic fantasy co-organised with the Philological Institute of the Taras Shevchenko University in Kiev, Ukraine (since 2017). Head of the research grant team: *Investigación de las relaciones culturales polaco-ibéricas y polaco-iberoamericanas* (2012-2016). Co-editor of monographs: *Homo mythicus Mythische Identitätsmuster* (Frank&Timme 2013), *In the Mirror of the Past. Of Fantasy and History* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2013) *Antiquity in Popular Literature and Culture* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing 2016) Author of monographs: *Degradacja mitu w literaturze fantasy* (Zielona Góra 2008), *Zbrodnia w fantastycznych światach. Motywy kryminalne w literaturze fantastyczne* (Zielona Góra 2017). He researches the anthropological and mythological contexts of popular literature, especially fantasy and speculative fiction

### Simone Turco

"So then faith cometh by hearing". Notes on the role of orality in unorthodox religious literature between England and Germany (1649-1704)

A notable phenomenon in the context of religious dissent in early-to-mid-seventeenth-century England was the formation of groups of preachers who shared rebellious or at least non-aligned doctrinal views. Their variegated teachings were mainly presented in streets and in public meeting places, were loosely based on biblical subject matter, and resulted from a combination of Scriptural exegesis and narrative, or even poetical, inventions. Interestingly, preachers in groups such as the Ranters (which flourished starting in 1649) were able to write down and publish their sermons, but due to the risks connected to their unorthodox positions, they had to act so promptly that their transcriptions, as regards their contents, style, and textual appearance, betray their utterly oral and revolutionary aspect. Therefore, an analysis of such writings may shed light on the resurgence in Europe of a custom of oral religious tradition and narrative at a time when orthodox Christianity had long chosen the fixed written form as a conveyor of meaning and truth. The aim of this paper is: to underline (1) how such oxymorically 'oral writings' amounted to a need to return to an original format of preaching where the spoken word would be preferred both for practical and psychological reasons; (2) to show how this format not only affected doctrine but also entailed a creative, narrative effort that can be considered productive from a purely literary point of view; (3) to draw an ampler connection with comparable phenomena existing in continental Europe, especially the ones that share with the English specimens a doctrinal facet having broadly theosophical connotations. Thus, a core part of the analysis will be carried out in a comparative fashion taking into account, in particular, German followers of Jacob Böhme, whose thought had a deep influence on an entire tradition of – mainly oral – religious teachers in England unto the first half of the eighteenth century, notably through the work of mystic Jane Leade (1624-1604). Far from being solely an English or German-literature investigation, the article intends

to apply the tenets of the comparative critical method to a specific case study in order to show, in turn, its potential validity also for the study of other cases of oral transmission.

**Simone Turco** specializes in Comparative Literature and History of Ideas. His research revolves around semantics, the aesthetics of poetry, and religious studies, particularly focusing on the connections between religion and literature. He taught courses in Comparative Literature, Hebrew, and General Linguistics at Università di Genova, and he collaborates with Università Cattolica (Brescia) in the field of Comparative Literature. Along with Rosa Ronzitti, he is the founder and chief editor of the scientific, international peer-reviewed journal «Lumina. Rivista di Linguistica storica e di Letteratura comparata». Among his publications: translation of John Baillie, *Essay on the sublime* (Ro Ferrarese 2014; first Italian translation); 'Adel' eckhartiano, 'nobilitate' dantesca. La nobiltà nel pensiero di Meister Eckhart e nel Convivio, Trattato IV (Pisa 2011); *The Marble Faun. Art, Nature and Morals Between Classicism and Aestheticism* (Rome 2020).

### Grażyna Urban-Godziek

In search of the relicts of traditional women's songs: A methodological approach

The hypothesis of lost ritual women's songs as the basis for Troubadour poetry emerged in the 1880s. Heavily resisted back then, it only returned in the middle of the 20th c., strengthened by the discovery of Mozarabic Kharja, and by the development of comparative studies and studies on oral tradition. A scholar who dares to reach for those original forms of oral female songs has to unveil successive layers of mediation in the surviving written records: the hypothetic women's songs were adapted by males, the men of literature who changed their function, filtered through their education (Classical and vernacular), transferred to the system of Troubadour's courtly love with their genres, or to the Latin poems of the clergy. The other source of knowledge of that poetry represents the Poetics written a posteriori, and trying to define the Troubadour genres using Aristotle's categories. My paper aims to identify those layers and illustrate them with the example of alba genre.

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### Małgorzata Zadka

Boundaries of a medium: mnemonic devices between oral and written

Graphic and spatial mnemonic devices (such as Lukasa memory boards in Africa or Winter counts calendars in North America), cannot be assigned exclusively to the oral tradition, as the stories they represent are both

narrated and written down. Even if they are sometimes denied being 'written', by limiting this term only to alphabetic texts, for their authors the content is precisely recorded and the material form is not only an addition to the story but an integral part of it. From a complete story perspective, graphic memory devices are partly written, and this part remains immutable and permanent, and partly oral, changeable and re-created each time the story is told. This duality puts mnemonic devices on the boundaries between permanence and changeability, orality and literacy.

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### Karol Zieliński

Intentionally created myths in the *Iliad*

The aim of my project is to show how the stories in the *Iliad*, which in the later literature are classified as myths, are adapted to the discourse context according to intentions of epic characters. Well-known changes in the mythical narratives are not recognised here as an original concept of the author of the *Iliad* but, according to the cognitive point of view, as discourse strategies of characters animated in performer's imagery. Therefore, the adaptation process is a result of composition in performance.

A point of reference to these Iliadic stories is how average people tell what happened in their lives. A life-story can be reformulated many times according to needs of narrative, especially according to performance circumstances. A life-storyteller may confabulate and transform his/her own memories to reach his/her persuasive goal. A story is a part of discourse, so such a goal results often from association with a topic raised during a conversation.

Therefore, persuasive aims of the speeches in the *Iliad* are not analyzed from the point of rhetoric but as changes in traditional stories adapted to the here and now context. It means using selection in tradition, but it means also mixing traditions, adding some new elements and reinterpreting traditional stories. Some changes may seem illogical in a view of the entire story, but they are logical regarding to the persuasive goals of a performer.

The comparison with how life-stories are being told helps to understand what a kind of creativity in oral tradition is in use. This ephemeral effect does not destroy the story - it remains the same, because its entity relies on multiformity. But the problem arises why one form of the story, including its contextual reinterpretation, may substitute the former ones but the other not. Another words, this may help in the question why some changes are more stable than others in oral tradition.

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### **Michał Żerkowski**

Geomythology and the "new euhemerism"

Interpretations of mythological narratives that are widespread in contemporary cultural anthropology and religious studies are primarily associated with phenomenological, psychological, sociological, and structural definitions of myths. In this perspective, the historical understanding of the etiology of the latter and thus the crucial problem of time and the mnemonics necessary for their effective transmission has been relegated to the margins of modern theories of myth, usually associated with nineteenth-century euhemerism. However, methodologically consistent and scientifically sound new studies point to the existence of a possible link between a whole class of myths and geological events. The term to describe this field of research is known as geomythology and was coined by American geologist Dorothy Vitaliano in 1968 to define interdisciplinary studies focusing on traditions of prescientific cultures where, apart from folk explanations concerning specific landforms, geomythologists look for mythologized descriptions of actual and often catastrophic geological events from the past. Paying attention to such etiology of certain myths sheds new light on the functional problem of mythogenesis and its possible explanation in ecological, evolutionary, and cognitive terms. The essay is an introduction to geomythology as a field of research and is a proposal to discuss it in a broader context of approaches, which in this text are collectively described as the "new euhemerism".

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