

Contemporary scholarly definitions of and approaches to myth, though influenced by the fieldwork and findings of anthropologists and folklorists working with living oral traditions over the last hundred years, are still grounded in venerable literary classics that purport to sum up ancient traditional stories about gods and goddesses, heroes and heroines, primal events, and the beginnings of the world. Such texts, which assemble related narratives into “mythologies,” become canonical formulations that can function as sources, templates, and inspirations for other literary and scholarly works, both within their own literary-historical contexts and beyond them. There are cases, however, where these codified mythologies serve as epitaphs, seemingly marking the end of particular (oral) traditions instead of their (literary) revival.

This conference will examine the various factors (literary, cultural, political) that led to the production of mythological compendia in the Classical and Late-Antique world, and the extent to which the agenda that produced parallel works in certain medieval cultures of northwest Europe (Ireland, Wales, Iceland) operated along similar or even historically related lines. Presentations and discussions will focus on the cultural and literary contexts behind the “mythographic urge” in Classical Greek and Latin literature, as well as in Western European traditions of the Middle Ages (particularly Celtic and Norse), and on the possible historical links and typological parallels among works such as Apollodorus's *Library*, Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Snorri Sturluson's *Edda*, the Irish *Battle of Mag Tuired*, and the Welsh *Four Branches of the Mabinogi*. Some of the questions to be considered are: What was the transmission history of pre-medieval mythographic works in the Middle Ages, and to what extent and to whom were they available as models to the post-Classical world? How “authentic” are ancient and medieval mythographies, and how do we determine that authenticity? To what uses were they put? Are they attempts to negotiate received or developing concepts of history, or are they formulations of an anti-historical poetic? And what are the differences in function, approach, and subtext between these pre-modern “write-ups” of myth and modern learned and popular handbooks of mythology? Mythographic issues in other cultures will also be considered

Organized by UCLA Professors Joseph F. Nagy (English) and Kendra Willson (Scandinavian), and UCLA graduate students Malcolm Harris (English), Eric Kristensson (Scandinavian), Katherine McLoone (Comparative Literature), and Anna Pagé (Indo-European Studies).

Registration

Advance registration is not required. No admission fee.
Seating is limited and available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Parking

Campus parking permits may be purchased for \$9 each day from any UCLA Parking Services kiosk.

Information Contact

cmrs@humnet.ucla.edu | 310-825-1880

First Class
U.S. Postage
PAID
UCLA

UCLA Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies
Box 951485
Los Angeles CA 90095-1485
MD43

Writing Down the Myths
April 16 -18, 2009

The CMRS Ahmanson Conference Series

Writing Down the Myths: The Construction of Mythology in Classical & Medieval Traditions



April 16 – April 18, 2009
University of California, Los Angeles



Writing Down the Myths: The Construction of Mythology in Classical & Medieval Traditions



Thursday, April 16, 2009
Royce Hall 314

5:00 Opening Reception on the Royce 306 loggia

6:00 Welcoming Remarks

Brian P. Copenhaver (UCLA)
Director, Center for Medieval & Renaissance Studies

Joseph F. Nagy (UCLA) and **Kendra Willson** (UCLA)
Conference Organizers

6:15 UCLA Sounds Presents
“Lamento d’Arianna” (Rinuccini/Monteverdi)

6:45 **William Hansen** (Indiana University)
“Packaging Greek Mythology”

8:00 “Mythic Film” Presentation

Friday, April 17, 2009
Royce Hall 314

8:30 Coffee, pastries

9:00 **Richard Martin** (Stanford University)
“There was a Myth before the Myth Began”

10:00 Break

10:15 **Rahim Shayegan** (UCLA)
“The Evil Brothers in Iranian History and Epic Tradition”

10:45 **Darcy Krasne** (University of California, Berkeley)
“Ovid and Mythography”

11:15 **Craig Melchert** (UCLA)
“Motivations for Hittite Mythological Texts”

12:00 Lunch break

1:30 **Jan Ziolkowski** (Harvard University)
“Latin Mythology as Death and Resurrection of Myth”

2:30 Break

2:45 **William Bodiford** (UCLA)
“Myths and Counter Myths in Early Modern Japan”

3:15 **Stephanie Jamison** (UCLA)
“India and the Graphy o’ Myth”

3:45 **Kathryn Morgan** (UCLA)
“Saving the Myth: Atlantis and the Philosophies of Preservation”

4:15 Break

4:30 Discussion, featuring speakers, with conference organizers
Malcolm Harris (UCLA) and **Elizabeth Thornton** (UCLA)

Saturday, April 18, 2009
Royce Hall 314

8:30 Coffee, pastries

9:00 **Sioned Davies** (Cardiff University)
“‘Venerable relics’? Revisiting the *Mabinogi*”

10:00 Break

10:15 **Kimberly Ball** (University of California, Irvine)
“The Metamyth of Supernatural Vessels”

10:45 **Katherine McLoone** (UCLA)
“Myth and Geoffrey of Monmouth”

11:15 Break

11:30 **Bernhard Maier** (University of Tübingen)
“Dead Men Don’t Wear Plaid: Celtic Myth and Christian Creed in Mediaeval Irish Concepts of the Afterlife”

12:30 Lunch break

1:30 **Margaret Clunies Ross** (Sydney University)
“Snorri Sturluson and Norse Mythology”

2:30 Break

2:45 **Gísli Sigurðsson** (University of Iceland)
“Thor and Midgard Serpent. Whom Should We Read: Snorri or Finnur?”

3:30 **John Lindow** (University of California, Berkeley)
“Some Thoughts on the Mythography of Saxo Grammaticus”

4:15 Break

4:30 Discussion, featuring speakers, with conference organizers **Eric Kristensson** (UCLA) and **Anna Pagé** (UCLA)

Cover illustration: Title page, Melsted’s *Edda* (SÁM 66), an 18th-century paper copy of the *Prose Edda* (Snorri’s *Edda*) in the Árni Magnússon Institute, Iceland.

This conference was made possible by the generous support of
The Ahmanson Foundation
The UCLA Center for Medieval & Renaissance Studies
The UCLA Vice Chancellor for Research
The Humanities Division of the UCLA College of Letters & Science