

Foreword

*Evidently, there is a paradox in this inextricable conjunction of the masses and the media: do the media neutralize meaning and produce unformed [informe] or informed [informée] masses, or is it the masses who victoriously resist the media by directing or absorbing all the messages that the media produce without responding to them?*¹

Jean Baudrillard

New media is that dominating force in the modern world that includes growing areas of politics, society, culture, memory and heritage. Using tools to inform, visualize and influence society, the media interact with each other, develop incredible virtual addictions and as dominant communication acts change the landscape of everyday life by transferring us to the ideal worlds where the stories of mythical heroes create present-day illusions and open gates to a promised paradise.

Discussing modern media, “new” mythology and a lack of cultural communication, Rita Repšienė examines the changes that are caused by shifting rhetoric of euro-integration and globalization and reveals the difficult circumstances of identity protection, nurturing and maintaining. She emphasizes that in the face of disorienting mediality and the dominance of network technologies, it is important to assess global threats and to shape a worldview capable of developing critical thinking, creative ambitions and unifying priorities. When new media become a dominant space, where societies experience substantially changes, it is important to reveal the complexity of the situation and to propose positive solutions. Investigating community from a social networking perspective, Aida Savicka discusses the evolution of virtual teams to fully-fledged communities based on shared values. Risk and opportunities of virtual media and information literacy are assessed by Divina Frau-Meigs, professor at the New Sorbonne University. Her publication is based on a paper presented at the conference of *Global Media and Information Literacy Week* that has been held in Kaunas 24 October 2018, co-organized by UNESCO.

In the publication “Myths as a Medium and the Media as Myths: a Few Philosophical Considerations”, Naglis Kardelis reveals an uncritical and progress-oriented confidence of modern man in new media and information technologies, and raises a philosophical question about a new myth that a man of today believes in and follows – namely technology myth and media myth. By emphasizing the positive

¹ Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*. Translated by Sheila Faria Glaser. Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1994, p. 58.

aspects of myth phenomenon and the negative aspects of media phenomenon, as well as the “mediality” of myth and the “mystery” of media, the author takes a critically look at the unprejudiced attitudes of modern society toward myth – every myth, myth in general, which is often regarded as an archaic relic, related to the past, and toward the media, which are still associated with the present and future.

Examining the spread of cultural myths, Loreta Poškaitė is trying to show how imaginations and myths about China, that have been created in the Western world and in China as well, manifest themselves and change in the 21st century, when cultural and geographical boundaries of China itself start disappearing (or are questioned), and the relationship between reality (“true China”) and fantasies (“imaginary China” and its representations) become extremely problematic because of globalization of the media and media audiences, along with contradictory narratives and goals.

Piotr Rudkouski, a researcher at the Institute for Strategic Studies in Belarus, in his publication “Is Social Constructivism an Appropriate Remedy for National Identity Problems? A Belarusian Case” explores the penetration of social constructivism as popular research method into debates on nationalism in the post-Soviet countries. The author reproaches constructivism for it is based on the argument of *ad novitatem* and the introduction of sophisticated vocabulary, it is not too concerned with the operationability of basic concepts and the explication of main assumptions, though pretending to be a dominant discourse on European nationalism. Mariusz Grygianiec, a philosopher at the University of Warsaw, continuing Polish analytic tradition makes a few comments on the ideas outlined by Piotr Rudkouski, naming social constructivism an intellectual exclamation.

Describing (contemporary) art institution as an ideological media, Kęstutis Šapoka relies on the concept of repressive state apparatus and the conception of ideological state apparatuses, formulated by philosopher Louis Althusser, according to which the essence of military, religious, educational and cultural institutions is the spread of ideological propaganda, ensuring ideological subjectivity. In the article art institutions are described as a ruphor of repressive neoliberal ideology, a kind of media, on the one hand, propagating the new neoliberal forms of consumption. On the other hand, the purpose of such institutions, apart from the dissemination of ideological propaganda, is self-legitimation and the assurance of functioning of the purposeful mechanics. The mythology of “art” and “aesthetics” as supposedly autonomous field, independent of ideology, is suitable for both purposes.

Odetta Žukauskienė analyzes an image as memory media, claiming that memory and visuality are two trajectories of the modern world that have led to a regular change of culture. From the second half of the 20th century nostalgia interacts with repentance, memory with reminiscence, turning our gaze back to the past and

bringing out specific collective and individual experiences. At the same time the supply of images increases, distinguished by creative engineering. Global visibility changes the field of culture not only by captivating the attention of audiences and shifting the trajectories of sight, but also influencing the representation of memory, cultural reflections and institutional practices.

The last chapter “Heritage and Europe” presents Dainius Junevičius’ article “Photographs by Lithuanian Photographers at the First All-Russian Ethnographic Exhibition in 1867”, which is based on newly discovered archival materials and publications of the exhibition organizing committee. The author investigates the contribution of photographers from Vilnius, Kaunas and Suwalki governorates to the exhibition, analyzing the photography funds of the Russian Ethnography Museum in St. Petersburg, which preserve the photos of exhibition of 1867, and where most of the photographs sent from Lithuania remain. It is a valuable iconographic material for Lithuanian history and ethnography, which fundamentally complements our early photographic heritage and our knowledge of the state and distribution of the Lithuanian photography in the sixties of the 19th century.

More than five years ago, 22 February 2013, Rita Repšienė, Vytautas Rubavičius, Naglis Kardelis and Stanislovas Juknevičius discussed the topic “Media Myths and Myths as Media” at the Vilnius Book Fair. In the 21st century, the theme of the media is particularly relevant; new study programs are offered by leading universities, such as politics and media, languages and media, and media technologies, creative media institutes and media research centers are been established as well. The media that have become an important part of our daily lives in the form of mobile phones, TVs and other devices raise a number of questions about identity and the media, what myths surround them and whether the media itself may be myths.

Expressing the idea that technological media is not always a bad thing, for they are themselves escaping from the sphere of influence of the controlling ones – and controlling those who believe that they control everything. It should be recalled that the text itself, like the language, is the media. If, following Heidegger, we say that language is the house of being, then the media is also the house of being. The challenge for 21st century man is to have a creative rather than mediated relationship with the media. Contemporary media wish that people do not to see the images behind the glass window screen, the purpose of which is to remain invisible. According to Naglis Kardelis, the challenge is to use the media as an instrument to look at the reality behind them. The discussion that stimulated to explore media myths and myths as the media remains relevant and meaningful to us, connected through the media as language and culture as mythology.

Let me finish the foreword in Umberto Eco’s words: “I suspect, though, that oxymoron has become more popular because we live in a world that has seen the

disappearance of ideologies that sought, at times ineptly, to reduce contradiction and impose unambiguous view of things. Debates are held from contradictory positions. If you want a glaring example, we have Virtual Reality', which is rather like Concrete Nothing"².

² Umberto Eco. From Stupidity to Folly. Conciliatory Oxymorons. In: Umberto Eco, *Chronicles of a Liquid Society*. Translated by Italian by Richard Nixon. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017, p. 282.