Inventing Origins? Aetiological Thinking in Greek and Roman Antiquity

Edited by

A.B. Wessels
J.J.H. Klooster
On the cover: “Who left the tap running?” by Simon McGrath located at Bondi Beach in Australia. Photo by NAPARAZZI (CC BY-SA 2.0). Source: https://www.flickr.com/photos/naparazzi/6372234773. This 2011 sculpture was a part of a series titled Sculptures by the Sea, which aimed to stimulate discussion on the environmental responsibility of human beings in light of climate change. Yet, as every artwork, it produces multiple meanings, beyond the artist’s original intention. The features of a technical device (here: a tap) imitate nature (here: a swan). The tap/swan seems to explore its origin (looking at the water, where a real swan should be). Furthermore, the artwork visualizes a ‘growing circuit’ (the tap makes use of the water and at the same time fills up the water level) – an aspect that can be related to the idea of aetiology as a tool for thinking, which uses the past, or rather, an alleged origin, while simultaneously shaping the future.
Contents

Introduction: Inventing Anchors? Aetiological Thinking in Greek and Roman Antiquity  1
   Antje Wessels and Jacqueline Klooster

PART 1
Aetiological Thinking: Old & New, From Present to Past to Future

1  Anchoring Innovations through Aetiology  17
   Annette Harder

2  The Parallels between Aetiology and Prophecy in Ancient Literature
   Hindsight as Foresight Makes Sense  31
   Jacqueline Klooster

PART 2
Aetiology and Politics

3  Veterem atque antiquam rem novam ad vos proferam: A New Drama,
   a Surprised Audience, and a ‘Live Aetiology’
   Performing the Origin of the Amphitruo  49
   Andrea de March

4  Callimachus Romanus
   Propertius’ Love Elegy and the Aetiology of Empire  65
   Alexander Kirichenko

5  The Origins of Rome in the Renaissance
   Revival & Reinvention, Rejection & Replacement  101
   Susanna de Beer
PART 3
Aetiology in Myth and Science: From Religion to Research

6  Resistance to Origins
   Cult Foundation in the Myths of Dionysus, Apollo, and Demeter  125
   Susanne Gödde

7  Beginning with Hermes
   Promoting Hermeticism through Aetiology in Corpus Hermeticum 1  149
   Sean E. McGrath

8  The Aetiology of Myth  164
   Hugo Koning

9  Patroclus was a Parasite
   Lucian’s Satirical Aitia  183
   Inger N.I. Kuin

10 Crossing Borders
   Aetiological Overlap in Plutarch’s Collections of Questions  199
   Michiel Meeusen

Index  215