

13th Conference of the FIEC

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Panel: Language of the Body

Title of paper: “The Poetics of the Body: Constructing Desire in the Twelfth Book of the *Greek Anthology*”

(The paper will be delivered in **English**)

**The Poetics of the Body:
Constructing Desire in the Twelfth Book of the *Greek Anthology***

The epigrams of the *Greek Anthology*'s twelfth book, which is known as Strato's *Musa puerilis*, are thematically focused on the depiction of homoerotic desire between males. This depiction is influenced by various conventions of imagery and theme, which are found in ancient erotic epigrammatic poetry. Yet the epigrams of the *Musa puerilis* are differentiated from the poems of the genre in a way which is determined by their thematic orientation, and this is reflected in their imagery and their portrayal of emotion.

What emerges as a significant feature of these poems is a vivid interest in the depiction of male bodily beauty, which consists of recurrent images concerning specific parts of the male body as well as bodily movements, gestures and postures. A careful study of those images shows that they constitute a kind of culturally determined language that marks and safeguards the type of communication which occurs between young men and their potential lovers. The same kind of language has a signifying power and conveys meanings pertaining to the ways in which desire and its manifestations are represented throughout these poems. It is a language which is related to the sexual interests and the emotional response of those who use, understand and react to it, while it depicts social relations, tensions and hierarchies developed within the cultural frame reflected in these poems. This language is also related to the poetics on which these poems' depiction of desire is based.

The aim of this paper is to provide a typology of the elements that constitute this bodily language and explore the ways in which their signifying value is produced and conveyed. It will be shown, in particular, that it is a powerful type of language which is capable of formulating those poems' poetics and cultural identity.

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