

Personal Data: Dr. Stelios Panayotakis
University of Crete
Department of Philology
741 00 Rethymno
Greece
panayotakis@phl.uoc.gr

Preferred panel: Continuity and Change in Late Antiquity

Title of the paper: FIGURING THE BODY
IN *THE STORY OF APOLLONIUS, KING OF TYRE*

Abstract:

The anonymous *Historia Apollonii regis Tyri* survives from Late Antiquity in various versions and is well known for its important afterlife. This romance of adventure features pagan and Christian elements in the story, and is commonly seen as a Christianised folktale of a sub-literary character. Scholars have so far viewed the *Historia Apollonii* as the confusing product of opposite literary and religious traditions (Greek vs. Latin, pagan vs. Christian), and focus mainly on questions of editing the text, seeking its origins, and exploring its afterlife. Whereas recent studies offer good remarks on narrative technique and genre, a critical discussion of the literary qualities of the text in a broad context is still needed.

It is my purpose in this paper, on the one hand, to explore how the body, viewed and described by both the author and the characters, is constructed as material organism; on the other, to investigate how the physical descriptions reflect contemporary ideas and values about sex, gender, and desire. Evidence from medical science and Christian narratives will be adduced as ancillary material, but my intention is not to test the accuracy or probability of physical descriptions and of corporeal language in the literary texts under investigation. I am interested in how different narrative traditions and dissimilar genres may complement and influence each other in a given social and cultural context. Through the literary analysis I intend to bring into light the interaction of pagan and Christian elements in the story, and to discuss how this interaction affects the character of the popular text. The proposed paper views *Apollonius of Tyre* as a crossroad in which the notions of pagan and Christian, Greek and Latin, popular and sophisticated, meet and interact in a complex way that reflects the polyphony of its age of production.